

The Highly Needed Of Communicative English Textbook for Junior High School in Malang

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Abstract

In English teaching, a communicative textbook is important in order to help students develop their communicative competence since the goal of learning a language is to be able to use the language learned communicatively. This article will present the criteria of the communicative textbook based on Cunningsworth (1995). Considering the condition of Indonesian Junior High students, the criteria of English textbook that must be fulfilled are: the topic and subject content, the reflection of students' needs and interest shown by the textbook, the quality of authentic materials, and the availability of cross cultural understanding aspect.

Key words: Basic Writing, learning material, digital module, Android, learning media.

1. Introduction

Indonesian education has implemented *KTSP (Kurikulum Tingkat Satuan Pendidikan)*. This curriculum is implemented to empower regions and schools in planning, implementing, managing, and also assessing the learning outcomes based on their condition and aspiration (Muslich, 2008, pp. 10). Since *KTSP* is flexible in which its implementation is based on the region and school needs, teachers as the actors of teaching, may use any strategies and methods, kinds of media, and evaluation techniques in their teaching as long as the learning objectives are reached. In addition, they may use any relevant materials from any learning sources. It is stated by Sanjaya (2008, pp. 174) that "Learning materials must be obtained from any learning sources relevant to the competencies that must be achieved." Maghfiroh (2011, pp. 5) adds, "Regarding the implementation of *KTSP*, ideally, teachers get the opportunity to select and develop their own materials which are appropriate to their class and meet their students' needs but still in line with the curriculum." Indeed, the selection and development of materials are the teachers' rights. They can employ materials that they obtain from any learning sources or develop by themselves.

In the case of English teaching, in spite of the availability of varied strategies and methods, media, materials, and the evaluation techniques, English teachers should consider Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) as the approach to the teaching of language. Students' communicative competence should be developed by using every single aspect in language teaching, such as strategies and methods, materials, and learning activities employed. In this research, the focus will be on the materials used in the form of a textbook entitled *English in Focus for Grade VIII of Junior High School*.

Course book has a significant role as an instructional material to reach the success of teaching and learning process. Cunningsworth (1995) explains that the role of course book is to be at the service teachers and learners but not to be their master. It implies that not all parts of the course book can really suit the learners' needs. Teachers as the ones who know the need of their students well have to play their roles to take action regarding the use of course book. In case, the teachers find some parts of the course book which are not appropriate, they should decide what to do next. As pointed out by Harmer (2007) there are some alternatives that the teachers should do if they encounter any part of course book inappropriate such as adding, adapting and replacing. In short, evaluating a course book used in teaching and learning process is important to pursue the teaching and learning goal.

According to Grant (1991), there are two kinds of course books: traditional course book and communicative course book. The traditional course book tries to get students to learn the language as a system. In contrast, communicative course book tries to create opportunities for the students to use the language in the classroom, as a sort of 'halfway house' before using it in real life. The communicative course book aims to develop students' communicative competence by presenting real-life condition for the students to be learned. In other words, communicative course book will lead to a successful Communicative Language Teaching (CLT).

Communicative textbook gives emphasis on developing students' communicative competence. Grant (1991, pp. 13) argues that communicative textbooks create opportunities for the students to use the language in the classroom, as a sort of "halfway house" before using it in real life. Communicative textbooks will stimulate students to apply their language in their nearest environment first, their classroom, with their teacher and peers. Grant goes on to identify some characteristics of communicative textbooks as follows:

1. They emphasize the communicative functions of language – the job people do using the language – not just the forms.
2. They try to reflect the students' needs and interests.
3. They emphasize skills in using the language, not just the forms of language, and they are therefore activity based.
4. They usually have a good balance among the four language skills, but may emphasize listening and speaking more than a traditional textbook does.
5. They tend to be very specific in their definition of aims.
6. Both content and methods reflect the authentic language of everyday life.
7. They encourage work in groups and pairs, and therefore make heavier demands on teachers' organizational abilities.
8. They emphasize fluency, not just accuracy.

The analysis of the communicativeness of a textbook is important to be done by teachers in order to obtain the advantages and minimize the shortcomings of the textbook. Teachers should be more selective when choosing a textbook as their material source. Riska (2012) has investigated an English textbook for Junior High School in Malang. In her study, he found that the English textbook used by some school was still not communicative. There were some criteria that still unfulfilled. In line with Riska, Nestin (2012) also stated that some textbooks used by several Junior High School in Malang still lack of authentic materials. In order to reach the communicativeness of English textbook, the textbook must consider the quality of authentic material. The authentic material will help the students to connect the materials they learn in to their real life.

According to Wozzley (2004), communicative approach in a course book is a course book which provides activities that are based on real-life communication because that is what we learn languages. Communicative course book is considered as important material which can make the students able to relate what they have learnt in the classroom and apply it to the real life situation. Knowing that it is important to learn English and how to reflect it to real life, it is true that the existence of communicative course book is a great help to fulfill the need of the language function of communication.

II. DISCUSSION

Textbooks play a prominent role in the teaching /learning process as they are the primary agents of conveying knowledge to learners. As stated in Richard (2001), he claimed that any learning program may have no impact if it does not have textbooks as they provide structure and a syllabus. In order to reach the goal of teaching and learning process, the appropriate textbook must be designed. In this case, we need the communicative textbook. For Junior High school in Indonesia, especially in Malang, the criteria of English textbook that must be fulfilled are: the topic and subject content, the reflection of students' needs and interest shown by the textbook, the quality of authentic materials, and the availability of cross cultural understanding aspect.

The Topic and Subject Content of the Textbook

Another criterion is that the topic and subject content of a textbook should be interesting, informative, challenging, amusing, and exciting (Cunningsworth, 1995). The textbook has to provide real topics inside that would interest students. Then, the contents must be relevant and useful to the present and future needs of the students. Moreover, the textbook must contribute to expand learners' awareness and enriching their experience by presenting features and activities that are interesting and challenging, for example, students are asked to fill in a passport with their personal identity, replies an email, and recognize the first aid kit equipment. The textbook must be relate to and engage the learners' knowledge system in which it would help motivate the learners in learning English. It will be in line with Cunningsworth's (1995) idea that "Learners come to class with, among other attributes, knowledge, attitudes, skills, cognitive abilities, curiosity, and experience. Language learning as a process will relate to and engage these attributes so that the learning process is enriched and made more meaningful."

Nunuk (2012) has investigated content analysis of English textbook in SMPN 13 Malang. She stated that the textbook used by the school is well organized. But, it still needed some revisions to make it better in the topic. The topic has to be more interesting. It means that the topic must provide the real topic to make students interested to the material. By fulfilling this first criterion, the textbook will fulfill one of the communicative criteria of the textbook.

The Reflection of Students' Needs and Interests

The reflection of students' needs and interests in the Indonesian context can be seen in standard of competence and basic competence from the government. Standard of competence and basic competence for Junior High School

require students to learn various kinds of language function, short functional text, and genre types of text. Thus, a course book should contain these three main materials in its units. However, the existence of language contents, such as grammar, vocabulary, and pronunciation should not be left behind as they are the actual items of language taught which form the foundation of everything else contributing to the complex process of language teaching (Cunningsworth, 1995, pp. 31).

The Quality of Authentic Materials

One of the many important characteristics of communicative textbook is the integration of authentic materials inside the textbook. Cunningsworth (1995, pp. 141) states, "Authentic content is using real facts and information instead of made-up content. The language used for this authentic content may itself be authentic, semi-authentic, or specially written, depending on the level." Furthermore, there are arguments in favor of the use of authentic materials since they provide cultural information about the language target, they provide exposure to real language, they relate more closely to learners' needs, and they support a more creative approach to teaching (Richards, 2006, pp. 20).

Nunan (1999, pp. 212) stated that the use of authentic sources leads to greater interest and variety in the material that learners deal with in the classroom. This authentic material helps bring the contact to life, and ultimately makes learning and using language more meaningful and easy for students". It means that it is important for the communicative course book to present authentic materials to help the students bridge the gap between the language they study in the classroom and the real condition they find in reality.

The Cross Cultural Understanding Aspect

Cross cultural understanding aspect is an important part in a course book to introduce and bridge the differences of Indonesian and the target language cultures. As stated by Putri (2012, pp. 2), "For whatever reason, learning culture attach to a language is encouraged." Moreover, The Board of Standards of National Education, abbreviated as *BSNP* (*Badan Standard Nasional Pendidikan*) states that since English is a global communication medium, the mastery of English should help students understand and strengthen local and national culture as well as recognize and understand international culture (*BSNP*, 2011, pp.1-2). In this case, the international culture refers to target language culture, or USA, UK, and Canada (Putri, 2012). A Course book can provide cross cultural understanding aspect through the materials and activities in its chapters.

III. CONCLUSION

There are so many textbooks in Indonesia nowadays. As the teacher, we have to be selective and careful in choosing a textbook. Moreover, the textbook we choose need to have communicative criteria. One of the ways in choosing textbook is by using the model of selection from Cunningsworth (1995). By considering the condition of Indonesian Junior High students, the criteria of English textbook that must be fulfilled are: the topic and subject content, the reflection of students' needs and interest shown by the textbook, the quality of authentic materials, and the availability of cross cultural understanding aspect.

In order to make the English language teaching and learning process successful in term of Communicative Language Teaching approach, both of teacher and author have responsibility. For English teachers of Junior High School, it is strongly recommended that the English teachers use supplementary materials to cope with the weaknesses of the textbook. For authors of English textbooks or material developers, it is important to bear in mind the communicativeness aspect of the materials they develop.

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