DESIGNING A MODEL OF RESEARCH PAPER WRITING INSTRUCTIONAL MATERIALS FOR ACADEMIC WRITING COURSE: TEXTBOOK EVALUATION

M. Ali Ghufron
alghufron.87@gmail.com
Semarang State University, Indonesia

Mursid Saleh
mursids@hotmail.com
Semarang State University, Indonesia

Received: 30 December 2015. Revised: 30 January 2016. Accepted: 3 March 2016

ABSTRACT
This study attempted to evaluate an academic writing textbook used in English Education Study Program of Language and Art Education Faculty of IKIP PGRI Bojonegoro, East Java, Indonesia. The fourth edition of a book entitled “Writing Academic English” written by Oshima and Hogue was critically evaluated based on two major points, namely general attributes of the textbook and the learning-teaching contents of the textbook. The general attributes of the textbook cover the book in relation to syllabus and curriculum, the methodology, the book’s suitability to learners, physical and utilitarian attributes, and efficient outlay of supplementary materials; and the learning-teaching content of the textbook covers general elements (move of the tasks, tasks’ objectives, etc.), academic writing (specified on research paper writing), vocabulary, grammar, and exercises. The questionnaires developed to evaluate the textbook were adapted from textbook evaluation checklist developed by Mukundan, Nimechisalem, and Hajimohammadi (2011). The results indicate that the lecturers and students were not really satisfied with the book since it does not represent the students’ needs and curriculum (the curriculum of English Education Study Program of IKIP PGRI Bojonegoro mandated to teach research paper writing for Writing IV course). The materials provided there are not specified to research paper writing. However, the textbook is very good in some points such as the methodology, physical and utilitarian attributes, layout of the book, general elements (move of the tasks, tasks’ objectives, etc.), academic writing (from paragraph writing to various essays writing), vocabulary, grammar, and exercises in the area.

KEYWORDS: Academic writing, textbook evaluation, instructional materials, teachers’ perspectives, students’ perspectives


INTRODUCTION
There are two forms of instructional materials: printed forms, such as textbook, workbook, teacher’s guide, etc., and non-printed forms, such as videotapes, audiotapes, and computer-based materials. Instructional materials are considered as main component in TEFL programs, which is very essential for both teachers and learners. Especially, textbooks are the mostly used teaching and learning materials for both teachers and the learners. They do not only provide a framework for teachers in achieving the aims and objectives of the course, but also serve as a guide to the teacher when conducting lessons. On behalf of the learners, a textbook truly affects their attitudes and performance to the lesson throughout the course. It is a fact that when learners like their textbooks, they like the course as well and become active participants to the lesson. The textbook is an important source of input and a great opportunity for EFL learners to communicate in the target language, which is realized only
in classroom settings in most public schools (Tok, 2010).

Commonly, English teachers teach their students by using available textbooks. However, such learning materials which are really suitable with the needs of the students are not always available. This condition should not discourage the teachers as far as they have the objective(s) of the teaching or are familiar with the need(s) of the students. By having the objectives of the teaching/learning or being familiar with the needs of the learners, the teachers can develop their own materials for the learners to achieve the objectives or to fulfill the needs of the learners.

Since English teachers use ‘textbooks’ in their classrooms, they have the right to be involved in the process of evaluation in order to be provided with the relevant textbook for their specific learner group. Their views on the usefulness and effectiveness of the textbooks are also worth scrutinizing their textbooks, so as to identify the weak and strong points in relation to their own teaching situation. This is required because selecting textbooks involves matching the material to the context where it is going to be used, and a wide range of specialists share the view that no textbook that is designed for a general market will be absolutely appropriate and ideal for one’s particular group of learners. As Grant (1987: 8) claims (the) ‘Perfect book does not exist’, yet the aim is to be to find out the best possible one that will fit and be appropriate to a particular learner group.

Sheldon (1988) suggests that textbooks do not only represent the visible heart of any ELT program, but also offer considerable advantages for both students and the teachers when they are being used in ESL/EFL classrooms. Cunningsworth (1995) suggests that potential, which textbooks have, in serving several additional roles in ELT curriculum, is an advantage. He argues that textbooks are an effective resource for self-directed learning, an effective source for presentational material, a source of ideas and activities, a reference source for students, a syllabus where they reflect pre-determined learning objectives, and support for less experienced teachers who are yet to gain confidence. In addition to that, Hycroft (1998) states that one of the primary advantages of using textbooks is that they are psychologically essential for students since their progress and achievement can be measured concretely when we use them.

Textbooks play a prominent role in the teaching/learning process and they are the primary agents of conveying the knowledge to the learners. Besides, one of the basic functions of textbooks is to make the existence knowledge available and apparent to the learner in a selected, easy and organized way. Hutchinson and Torres (1994) argue that the textbook has a very important and a positive part to play in teaching and learning of English. They state that textbooks provide the necessary input into classroom lessons through different activities, readings and explanations. Thus, they will always survive on the grounds that they meet certain needs.

Regarding the multiple roles of textbooks in ELT, Cunningsworth (1995) identifies a textbook as a resource in presenting the material, a source for learners to practice and do the activities. They also provide the learners with a reference source on grammar, vocabulary and pronunciation. What is more, textbooks serve as a syllabus and a self-study source for learners. They also serve as a support for the beginning teachers who have
yet to gain in confidence. Thus, it can be said that the fundamental role of textbooks is to be at the service of teachers and learners but not their boss.

Richards (2001) states that without textbooks, a program may have no impact, therefore, they provide structure and a syllabus. Besides, the use of a textbook in a program can guarantee that students in different classes will receive a similar content and therefore, can be evaluated in the same way. In other words, textbooks provide the standards in instruction. Moreover, they include a variety of learning resources such as workbooks, CDs and cassettes, videos, etc., which makes the learning environment interesting and enjoyable for the learners.

While there are many theorists, as mentioned before, that point out the extensive benefits of using ESL/EFL textbooks, there are many other researchers and practitioners who do not necessarily accept this view and retain some well founded reservations on the subject. Allwright (1982) suggests that textbooks are too inflexible and generally reflect the pedagogic, psychological, and linguistic preferences and biases of their authors.

Some proponents of authentic classroom language models have argued that the problems with many textbooks are not necessarily the fact that they are culturally or socially biased, but that they are actually too contrived and artificial in their presentation of the target language. They argue that it is crucial to introduce learners to the fundamental characteristics of authentic real-life examples of both spoken and written discourse. They have demonstrated that many scripted textbook language models and dialogues are unnatural and inappropriate for communicative or cooperative language teaching because they do not adequately prepare students for the different types of pronunciation (Brazil et al., 1980; Levis, 1999; Litz, 2005), language structures, grammar, idioms, vocabulary and conversational rules, routines and strategies that they will have to use in the real-world (Cathcart, 1989; 1991; Yule et al., 1992, Litz, 2005). They further contend that the scripted unauthentic language found in many textbooks does not lend itself to communicative practice, but instead can lead to an oversimplification of language and unrealistic views of real-life situations. It can also provide additional inaccurate advice about the target language society that can be particularly dangerous for students entering the target language community or those who are expecting to engage in significant amounts of real-life interactions with native speakers. Whether one believes that textbooks are too inflexible and biased to be used directly as instructional material or that they actually help teaching and learning, one cannot deny the fact that textbooks still maintain enormous popularity and are most definitely essential.

Rea-Dickins and Germaine (1994: 4) state that “evaluation is an intrinsic part of teaching and learning”. Evaluation plays a key role in education and it is important for the teacher since it can provide valuable information for the future going of classroom practice, the planning of courses and management of learning tasks by students. Finally, evaluation is essential for the use of instructional materials such as textbooks.

Cunningsworth (1995: 7) suggests that we should ensure that “careful selection is made, and that the materials selected closely reflect [the needs of the learners and] the aims, methods and values of the teaching program”.

Ghufron, M. Ali & Mursid Saleh. 2016. Students’ Differences and Students’ Outcomes in English Learning.
One other reason for textbook evaluation is that it can be very useful in teachers’ development and professional growth. Ellis (1997) suggests that textbook evaluation helps teachers go beyond impressionistic assessments and it helps them to acquire useful, accurate, systematic and contextual insights into the overall nature of textbook material.

If one accepts the value of textbooks in ELT, then it must surely be with the qualification that they are of an acceptable level of quality, usefulness, and appropriateness for the context and people with whom they are being used. In the literature, the subject of textbook evaluation is not particularly extensive. Pre-eminent theorists in the field of ELT textbook design and analysis such as Williams (1983), Sheldon (1988), Brown (1995), Cunningsworth (1995) and all agree, for instance, that evaluation checklists should have some criteria pertaining to the physical characteristics of textbooks such as layout, organizational, and logistical characteristics. Other important criteria that should be incorporated are those that assess a textbook’s methodology, aims, and approaches and the degree to which a set of materials is not only teachable, but also fits the needs of the individual teacher's approach as well as the organization's overall curriculum. Which a set of materials is not only teachable, but also fits the needs of the individual teacher's approach as well as the organization’s overall curriculum.

Finally, textbook evaluations should include criteria that pertain to representation of cultural and gender components in addition to the extent to which the linguistic items, subjects, content, and topics match up to students' personalities, backgrounds, needs, and interests as well as those of the teacher and/or institution.

Ellis (1997) distinguishes two types of materials evaluation, namely, predictive evaluation and retrospective evaluation. A predictive evaluation is designed to make a decision regarding what materials to use. Teachers who are required to carry out a predictive evaluation determine which materials are best suited to their purposes. Once the materials have been used, further evaluation may be conducted to find out whether the materials have worked out for them, and this type of evaluation is called retrospective evaluation. As it can be understood from the aforementioned definitions, both predictive and retrospective evaluations aim at making the teaching/learning environment more effectively. They both help teachers to make appropriate judgment concerning the effectiveness of their teaching including the materials they used.

The reasons for materials evaluation activities are also many and varied. One of the major reasons is the need to adopt new coursebooks. Another reason as Cunningsworth (1995) emphasized is to identify particular strengths and weaknesses in coursebooks already in use. Such activities also permit teachers to make optimum use of their strong points and strengthen the weaker areas by adapting and substituting materials from other books. Coursebook analyses and evaluation do not only help teachers to develop themselves, but also helps them to gain good and useful insights into the nature of the material. Moreover, as Hutchinson (1987) points out, materials evaluation do not only serves the immediate practical aim of selecting teaching materials, but also plays a critical role in developing teacher’s awareness in a number of ways, which are teachers being able to analyze their own presuppositions about the nature of language and learning,
forcing teachers to set their prerequisites and helping them to see materials as an essential part of the whole teaching/learning situation.

Sheldon (1988) points out that textbook evaluation is done for two reasons. First, the evaluation will help the teacher or program developer in making decisions on selecting the appropriate textbook. Furthermore, evaluation of the merits and demerits of a textbook will familiarize the teacher with its probable weaknesses and strengths. This will enable teachers to make appropriate adaptations to the material in their future instruction. In this line, Cunningsworth (1995) and Ellis (1997) propose that textbook evaluation can be of three types, namely “pre-use”, “in-use”, and “post-use” evaluations. Evaluation of textbooks for pre-use, or predictive, purposes helps teachers in selecting the most appropriate textbook for a given language classroom by considering its prospective performance. The second type of evaluation aids the teacher to explore the weaknesses or strengths of the textbook while it is being used. Finally, post-use, or retrospective evaluation helps the teacher reflect on the quality of the textbook after it has been used in a particular learning-teaching situation.

The textbook entitled “Writing Academic English” written by Oshima and Hogue was used as main resources in teaching academic writing course in English Education Study Program of Language and Art Education Faculty of IKIP PGRI Bojonegoro since 5 years ago. This particular research reported on a survey that was conducted on academic writing teachers working in English Education Study Program of Language and Art Education Faculty of IKIP PGRI Bojonegoro. It is hoped that this study will be a preliminary evaluation of the mentioned textbook and it is also expected that the results of this evaluation study will reveal the areas that need to be revised and improved in that particular EFL textbook. Furthermore, it is hoped that this study will raise the awareness of textbook writers in considering various criteria for the development of ESL/EFL textbooks; and of English teachers in developing textbooks which accommodate students’ needs and learning outcomes in curriculum.

**METHODOLOGY**

This research was designed by using descriptive research model. The data about the assessment of the academic writing textbook used in English Education Study Program of the subject group, which consists of the Academic Writing teachers working in English Education Study Program of Language and Art Education Faculty of IKIP PGRI Bojonegoro is based on the results of the data collection instrument (Teacher Textbook Evaluation Form).

**Participants**

The study was done with 3 academic writing teachers (2 males, 1 female) at English Education Study Program of Language and Art Education Faculty of IKIP PGRI Bojonegoro. All of participants have 2-5 years experience in teaching. Besides, this study also involved 10 students of the fifth semester students of English Education Study Program of Language and Art Education Faculty of IKIP PGRI Bojonegoro. The ten students were chosen purposively. The students chosen to be involved in this study were those who have the highest score in their academic writing (Writing IV).

**Instrument**

The data collection instrument consists of two parts. The first part is about the subjects’ personal information; the second part is the
Textbook Evaluation Checklist, which elicits the criteria of a textbook for English course. “Textbook Evaluation Checklist” was adapted from textbook evaluation checklist developed by Mukundan, Nimehchisalem, and Hajimohammadi (2011). This textbook evaluation checklist covers two major points, namely general attributes and learning-content. From the two major points, there were 31 questions dealing the textbook which is going to be evaluated. For the statements in the “Textbook Evaluation Checklist” a Likert-type of equal-range was used. The statements in the inventory have been labelled as; “Completely Agree (5)”, “Agree (4)”, “Partly Agree (3)”, “Disagree (2)”, “Completely Disagree (1)”. In order to guarantee the reliability of the data, Focus Group Discussion (FGD) was also done among the respondents and the researcher.

Limitations

This study is limited to Academic Writing teachers in English Education Study Program of Language and Art Education Faculty of IKIP PGRI Bojonegoro. Therefore, conclusions need to be verified by conducting similar studies across different universities. It is assumed that teachers and students answered the questions honestly and with seriousness. Another limitation of this study is that the present study is a micro level evaluation study, however, it can be complemented with a macro evaluation study, which is on the task level.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

The data of this study were gotten from questionnaires distribution to 3 academic writing teachers and 10 fifth semester students of English Education Study Program of Language and Art Education Faculty of IKIP PGRI Bojonegoro, East Java, Indonesia. The results are presented as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Criteria</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>General Attributes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>The book in relation to syllabus and curriculum</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Methodology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Suitability to learners</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>General</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Learning-teaching content</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1. The Results of Textbook Evaluation Checklist (adapted from checklist which was developed by Mukundan, Nimehchisalem, and Hajimohammadi (2011))
From the table above, it is known that questions in the textbook evaluation checklist were divided into two major points: general attributes and learning-teaching content. The general attributes cover the book in relation to syllabus and curriculum, methodology, suitability to learners, physical and utilitarian attributes, and supplementary materials. The learning-teaching content covers general aspects (such as move of the task, etc.), academic writing aspects, vocabulary, grammar, and exercise.

**General Attributes**
The first major point that was evaluated from the textbook entitled “Writing Academic English” written by Oshima and Hogue is general attributes. In this part, there are 5 aspects that were evaluated. The first aspect is the book in relation to syllabus and curriculum. From the table 1 above, it is clearly seen that 31% of respondents disagree with the statement that says about the suitability of the textbook with the syllabus and curriculum, while 69% of respondents completely disagree. Therefore, it is concluded that the textbook entitled “Writing Academic English” written by Oshima and Hogue does not match with the syllabus and curriculum of academic writing course in English Education Study Program of IKIP PGRI Bojonegoro. The curriculum there mandates the materials that should be taught in Writing IV must deal with the ELT research paper writing.

The second aspect is methodology. There are two statements dealing with this aspect. The statements deal with the activities in the textbook whether or not can be exploited fully and can embrace the various methodologies in ELT; and activities can work well with methodologies in ELT. In both of the first and the second statements, 100% of respondents completely agree with the statements. It means that in this point (methodology), the textbook is excellent.

The third aspect is the textbook suitability to learners. This aspect covers four statements, i.e. the compatibility of the textbook with the students’ background knowledge and students’ level, the textbook accessibility of the culture to the learners, the textbook compatibility to the needs of learners, and the textbook compatibility to the interests of learners. The results show that 77% of respondents agree with the first
statement, and 33% of them partly agree. Then, for the second statement, 62% of respondents partly agree with the statement and 38% of them do not. For the third and the fourth statements, 100% of respondents disagree with the statement. Therefore, the conclusion is the aspect of textbook suitability to learners still does not have good suitability to learners, since there are still some parts that do not fulfill the students’ needs.

The fourth aspect is the physical and utilitarian attributes. This aspect involves two statements. The first statement is whether or not its layout is attractive and the second one is whether or not it indicates efficient use of texts and visuals. The results reveal that 69% of respondents completely agree and 31% of them agree with the first statement. While for the second statement, it is seen that 46% of respondents agree and 54% of them partly agree with the second statement. In conclusion, it can be said that the textbook has good enough physical and utilitarian attributes especially its layout.

The last or the fifth aspect of the general attributes is supplementary materials. There is only one statement proposed to the respondents dealing with this aspect. The statement is whether or not the textbook provides teacher’s guide to help the teacher in using the textbook. 100% of respondents answered that there is no teacher’s guide provided.

**Learning-Teaching Content**

The second major point that was evaluated from the textbook entitled “Writing Academic English” written by Oshima and Hogue was learning-teaching content. In this part, there are also 5 aspects that were evaluated. They are general aspects (such as move of the task, etc.), academic writing aspects, vocabulary, grammar, and exercise.

The first aspect that was evaluated from this part is general aspects. They deal with whether or not (1) most of the tasks in the book are interesting; (2) tasks move from simple to complex; (3) task objectives are achievable; (4) cultural sensitivities have been considered; (5) the language in the book is natural and real; (6) the material is up-to-date; (7) it covers a variety of topics in ELT; (8) the book contain materials taken from ELT research findings; and (9) the book covers materials of writing research paper. The results show that 54% of respondents agree and 46% of them partly agree with the first statement. For the second statement, it seen that 100% of respondents completely agree. The third statement was answer by respondents with the results that 38% of respondents completely agree and 62% of them agree with the statement. The next is the fourth statement which was answered by respondents with the results that 69% of respondents completely agree and 31% of them agree with the statement. Then, the fifth statement was answered and results the same percentage with the fourth statement, it is 69% of respondents completely agree and 31% of them agree with the statement. The next is the sixth statement which deals with the novelty of the materials. The results show that 31% of respondents agree and 69% of them partly agree with the statement. The seventh statement deals with textbook’s topics variety in ELT. 62% of respondents disagree and 38% of them completely disagree with the statement. The eighth statement deals with the materials which are taken from ELT research findings. The respondents answered that 100% of them disagree with the statement. The last is the statement dealing with the materials of writing research paper. The answer from respondents is the same as the eighth statement. It is 100% of them disagree with the statement. Finally, it can be concluded that the textbook is good enough in terms of general attributes. However, if it is used for teaching and learning of academic writing course (Writing IV) in English Education Study Program of IKIP PGRI.
Bojonegoro is still not relevant with the students’ needs and curriculum. This is caused by the inexistence of the materials in the textbook which cover ELT research findings and research paper writing in which the two of them are in line with the students’ needs and curriculum for Writing IV course. If it is analyzed further, this textbook is relevant with the curriculum if it is used to teach academic writing course in the terms of sentences, paragraph and essay writing (Writing I, Writing II, and Writing III courses). According to Richards (2005: 1) effective instructional materials in language teaching are shaped by consideration of a number of factors including teacher, learner, and contextual variables. Teacher factors include the teacher language proficiency, training and experience, cultural background, and preferred teaching style. Learner factors include learner’s learning style preferences, their language learning needs, interests, and motivations. Contextual factors include the school culture, classroom condition, class size, and availability of teaching resources in situation where the materials will be used. Therefore, in order to fulfill the students’ needs and adjust the curriculum, there should be new instructional materials which cover ELT research findings and research paper writing.

The second aspect that was evaluated from the textbook is academic writing. This aspect covers two statements. The first statement deals with achievable goals of the tasks and whether or not it has been taken into consideration of learners. The results show that 77% of respondents agree and 33% of them partly agree with the statement. The second statement deals with models of different genres provided by the textbook. The results reveal that 100% of respondents completely agree with the statement. Therefore, it can be concluded that the textbook is very good in terms of academic writing aspects.

The third is vocabulary aspect. There are 3 statements dealing with this aspect. The first statement is whether or not the load (number of new words in each lesson) is appropriate to the level. 69% of respondents completely agree and 31% of them agree with this statement. The second statement is whether or not there is a good distribution (simple to complex) of vocabulary load across chapters and the whole book. The answers show that 62% of respondents agree and 38% of them partly agree with the statement. The last statement is whether or not words are efficiently repeated and recycled across the book. The answers show that 62% of respondents agree and 38% of them partly agree with the statement. Then, it is concluded that the textbook is very good in vocabulary aspects.

The fourth is grammatical aspect. There are 4 statements dealing with this aspect. The first statement is whether or not the spread of grammar is achievable. The answers of respondents show that 38% of them completely agree and 62% of them agree with the statement. The second statement is whether or not the grammar is contextualized. The results reveal that 54% of respondents partly agree and 46% of them disagree with the statement. The third statement is whether or not examples are interesting. The answers show that 69% of respondents partly agree and 31% of them disagree with the statement. The fourth statement is whether or not grammars are introduced explicitly. The answers show the same results as the third statement. The 69% of respondents partly agree and 31% of them disagree with the statement. Then, from the results above, it is concluded that the respondents are not satisfied enough with grammatical aspects in the textbook.

The last aspect that was evaluated from the point of teaching-learning content is exercises. It covers 3 statements. They are whether or not (1) the exercises help students
who are under/over-achievers; (2) they are adequate; and (3) they have clear instructions. For the first and the second statements, 100% of respondents completely agree with those two statements. Then, for the last statement, 69% of respondents agree and 31% of them partly agree with the statement. The conclusion is the textbook provides very good exercise for every single topic discussed there. However, some of them do not have a very clear instruction.

CONCLUSION

After analyzing the textbook entitled “Writing Academic English” written by Oshima and Hogue by using textbook evaluation checklist developed by Mukundan, Nimyehchisalem, and Hajimohammadi (2011), it is concluded that the lecturers and students were not really satisfied with the book since it does not represent the students’ needs and curriculum (the curriculum of English Education Study Program of IKIP PGRI Bojonegoro mandated to teach research paper writing for Writing IV course). The materials provided there are not specified to research paper writing. However, the textbook is very good in some points such as the methodology, physical and utilitarian attributes, outlay of the book, general elements (move of the tasks, tasks’ objectives, etc.), academic writing (from paragraph writing to various essays writing), vocabulary, grammar, and exercises in the area. Besides, if it is used for teaching and learning of academic writing course (Writing IV) in English Education Study Program of IKIP PGRI Bojonegoro is still not relevant with the students’ needs and curriculum. This is caused by the inexistence of the materials in the textbook which cover ELT research findings and research paper writing in which the two of them are in line with the students’ needs and curriculum for Writing IV course.

If it is analyzed further, this textbook is relevant with the curriculum if it is used to teach academic writing course in the terms of sentences, paragraph and essay writing (Writing I, Writing II, and Writing III courses). Therefore, in order to fulfill the students’ needs and adjust the curriculum, there should be new instructional materials which cover ELT research findings and research paper writing.

REFERENCES


