



Teachers' Perceptions towards the Use of Maritime English Textbooks in Vocational School

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Introduction

Textbooks are influential tools that help students to recognize and learn about society; and provide the means for achieving educational aims (Ebrahimi & Sahragard, 2017). Tok (2010) argues that since English teachers use textbooks in their class, they have the right to be involved in the process of evaluation in order to provide the relevant textbook to their specific student group. Therefore, the textbook is among the most important resources utilized to achieve the aims of a course which are based on the learners' needs (Litz, 2005). In order to achieve the principal objectives of learning a second/foreign language, teachers should select the most appropriate textbooks that meet the criteria, teachers' and learners' specific situations, and also their purposes and needs.

One essential consideration in making the most effective use of textbooks is the teachers' perceptions towards the use of textbooks. Teachers' perceptions have the same meaning as teachers' beliefs, which are personally-held convictions about the subject matter teachers teach, their responsibilities, their students, the curriculum, and their classrooms (Pajares, 1992). They guide teachers in their practice and are derived from sources such as experience and personality (Donaghue, 2003). Barcelos (2003) also notes that language teachers' perceptions influence what the teachers do in the classroom. Thus, teachers must be aware of what they perceive and believe when conducting their classroom practices and in their professional growth. This means that teachers' perceptions are the basis for teachers to form judgments or make decisions. In contrast with this, teachers are passive and have no opinion as educators in Indonesian education toward the use of maritime English textbooks in the learning process.

As a result, this brief report intended to explore the teachers' perception towards the use of maritime English textbooks in the teaching and learning process for maritime vocational students in Indonesian vocational schools. Maritime English is a form of English for Specific Purposes (ESP), an approach to English language teaching (ELT) which aims to meet the needs of particular learners. It is supported that English for Vocational Purposes (EVP) is defined as a program situated in both the vocational school and tertiary education sectors, which equips students with English competence that supports their vocational

expertise (Widodo, 2016). Therefore, maritime English textbooks have to meet the students' English needs in their maritime workplace. Based on this, teachers' perception in regard to the students and students' maritime English textbook usage is needed. The findings of the study are selected, analyzed, organized, interpreted, and integrated using an Interactive model as proposed by Miles, Huberman, and Saldana (2014).

Literature Review

Many textbooks used in the classroom embody the curriculum themselves (Littlejohn & Windeatt, 1989; Richards, 1998). They reflect the objectives of the language program, the kind of syllabus used, the skills being taught, and the methodologies espoused, and might be seen to function as a 'mediating object' between the teacher and learner (Littlejohn & Windeatt, 1989, p. 155). For teachers, they offer a framework of guidance and orientation (Hutchinson & Torres, 1994). For learners, they are perhaps the most important source of language input apart from contact with the teacher. They can help to scaffold teaching and learning by providing 'guidance and negotiating points' (Crawford, 1995, p. 31) and so exert considerable influence on the interaction between teacher and learner.

The study of teachers' beliefs can be situated within a broader research area of teacher cognition. Research within teacher cognition has generally been concerned with "what teachers think, know, and believe and the relationships of these mental constructs to what teachers do in the language teaching classroom" (Borg, 2003, p. 81). Thus, it might go without saying that any investigation within teacher cognition entails an analysis of the teachers' mental lives: a construct not readily accessible to researchers (Borg, 2009). According to Borg (2009), any such research necessitates an investigation of teachers' thoughts, knowledge, and beliefs and the way these constructs may influence their classroom practice. It is hence extremely important to consider teachers as active agents making "instructional choices by drawing on complex, practically-oriented, personalized, and context-sensitive networks of knowledge, thoughts, and beliefs" (Borg, 2003, p. 81), and this, in turn, necessitates an investigation of what teachers believe, what they know, their attitudes, and their feelings (Borg, 2012). The accumulated effects of all these variables, possibly among others, may explain how teachers make decisions with regard to the difference of their teaching profession as well as why they may feature contradictions in their beliefs and practices.

In an English as a Second Language (ESL) context in Hong Kong, Richards and Mahoney (1996) explored teachers' beliefs and practices in the use of textbooks with a survey of ESL teachers in secondary schools. Although their findings show that there was a high rate of textbook use as teachers believed that textbooks could help them to teach English efficiently, Richards and Mahoney (1996) found that none of the observed teachers taught exclusively from the textbook, and none devoted the entire lesson to material from one textbook. More importantly, Richards and Mahoney (1996) thought that teachers were looking at textbooks critically and maintaining a reasonable independence from them, and they claim that the decisions teachers made before and during classroom teaching involved a high level of cognitive skills.

Litz (2005) analyzed Korean textbooks and reached different results, such as the suitability of books for universities' aims and raising students' interests. At the end, he stated that textbooks could be effective "in the hands of a good teacher and instructor". Ebrahimi and Sahragard (2017) also analyzed new textbooks from the teachers' point of view including general information, theoretical considerations, organizational features and practical considerations, content, skills, vocabulary, structure, and activities. They said that teachers believe that if the problems concerning time are solved, then they can manage to implement the new textbook. Most participants of this study held negative views on the new textbooks; and since there was a lack of destination culture, and materials load, no improvement was gained by implementing these new textbooks.

Moreover, it can be inferred that there is a relationship between teachers' opinion toward students and their use of textbooks. Students of Indonesian vocational schools need maritime English competence to prepare them for future work in International maritime workplaces. Therefore, the teachers' belief could decide the materials or textbooks which suits the needs of the students. In addition, no studies have been identified that have specifically investigated the teacher perception toward the use of maritime English textbooks in Indonesian vocational schools. Thus, it was felt that a single case study of these teachers' perception would complement previous studies and add to the academic and professional understanding about teachers' perceptions regarding the use of maritime English textbooks in Indonesian vocational schools.

Method

Employing a qualitative single case research design, nine English teachers who teach English at the tenth, eleventh, and twelfth grades in three Indonesian vocational schools, participated in this study. The sample consisted of six females and three males. All the subjects were certified English teachers in vocational schools, had an average of nine years' experience teaching English, and had experience in evaluating, selecting, and using English textbooks. It was felt that the teachers who had taught more than five years had more comprehensive teaching experience. It was hoped that the more experience the teachers had in teaching, the more their perception about the use of textbook as well as creating syllabi from their own materials would be present.

TABLE 1

Participants' General Information

Participants	Age	Educational background	Gender	Years of teaching maritime English
Teacher 1	32	Bachelor of English language education	Female	7
Teacher 2	33	Bachelor of English language education	Female	8
Teacher 3	37	Bachelor of English language education	Male	12
Teacher 4	40	Bachelor of English language education	Male	15
Teacher 5	31	Bachelor of English language education	Female	6
Teacher 6	32	Bachelor of English language education	Female	7
Teacher 7	35	Bachelor of English language education	Male	10
Teacher 8	34	Bachelor of English language education	Female	9
Teacher 9	36	Bachelor of English language education	Female	11

For the purpose of this study, the data collection instruments were questionnaires and interviews, however this study only focuses on the interview data. The participants were invited to participate in semi-structured interviews. These interviews lasted for 20-30 minutes. Interviews were done in the participant's first language (L1), and excerpts used in the results were translated into English by the researcher. The interview data were transcribed then analyzed qualitatively. The interview data were analysed by using the Interactive Model proposed by Miles, Huberman, and Saldana (2014). This type of interview data analysis is divided into four parts, namely data collection, data reduction, data displays, and drawing conclusion and verification. The phases of data analysis are presented in Figure 1.

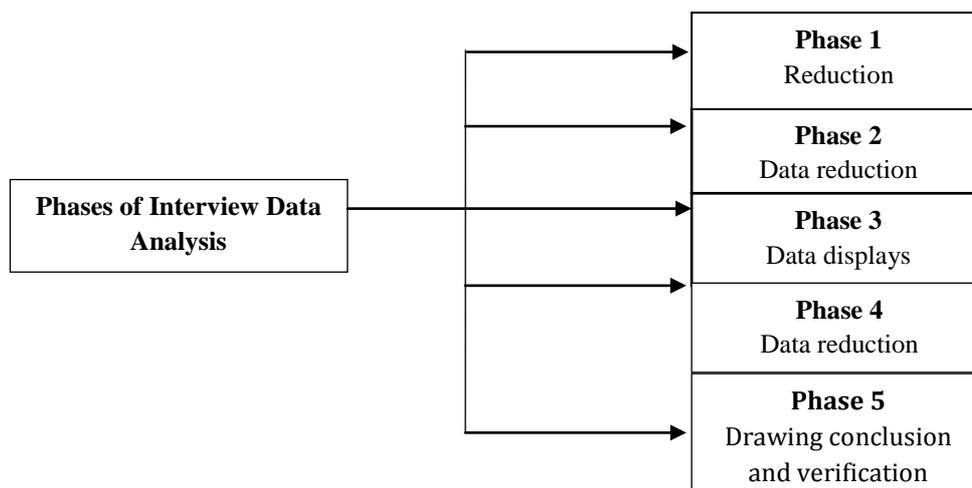


Figure 1. Phases of data analysis.

Results and Discussion

The first aspect of teachers' perception towards the use of textbook is teachers' understanding about textbook evaluation and selection. The interview guidelines to evaluate maritime English textbooks include the aims and methods used in the textbook; layout and design; activities and tasks; skills; language type and content (Litz, 2005; Rubdy, 2014). Findings from the interviews are presented in the next section.

The Aims and Methodology of the Textbook

It is shown in the findings that Teacher 1, Teacher 5, and Teacher 6 all described the teachers' beliefs that textbook evaluation and selection was a process in which the teachers identified the textbook and chose the best textbook that fit their students' needs in the maritime workplace. They believed that textbook evaluation and selection were important in order to find the best textbook to be used by the students. Teacher 3 suggested that:

Teachers should ensure that careful selection is made and that material is selected closely so that it reflects the needs of the students and the curriculum. It is because in order to teach Maritime English the textbook must be appropriate with the students' needs' to prepare their work in the maritime workplace.

Teacher 2 also shared her opinion that communicative language teaching (CLT) was the method applied in the textbook in vocational schools. She said:

Maritime English textbooks must focus on both accurate and fluent communication, the promotion of integrated language-skills practice, and the inclusion of topical themes, grammatical structures and functions, as well as lexical development. The textbook must also be appropriate to the goal of establishing communicative competence in production and comprehension.

Layout and Design

In terms of layout and design, the criteria mentioned by the teachers was physical appearance (layout, design, colours, and pictures), language aspect, topics, variety of activities and exercises, arrangement, availability, materials equipment (CD), and price. Teacher 4 noted that:

In my opinion, in evaluating a textbook, one should pay attention to the physical characteristics of textbooks such as the layout, organization, skills, topics, exercises and activities.

Activities and Tasks

The results show that the teachers did not completely follow the sequence of materials and activities in the textbook. Teachers 2, 7, and 9 added that they organized the use of materials in the textbook based on the lesson plan they had made, its objectives and students' needs. Teacher 8 pointed out that the teachers considered the instructions in the textbook too simple. She said:

They try to organize the instructions in order to reach the objective of each lesson. Therefore, the instructions in the textbook are too simple.

Besides, she added that both the length of the text and teaching approach must be considered by the teachers. Materials and instructions should stimulate and build up students' critical thinking. In addition, there were three aspects covered that concerned the teachers' interpretations of the textbook including the textbook's appropriateness to students' and teachers' needs, the textbook's relevance to the syllabus and examinations, and the difficulty in using the textbook. The teachers believed that the textbook they used was attractive and interesting for students and culturally acceptable.

Teacher 3 explained that:

I added or deleted materials from other sources when the textbook's coverage was inadequate. Textbook may contain too much or too little for language activity. Whole units may have to be dropped, or perhaps sections of units throughout the textbook were omitted. When I found a task or activity that was not suitable for the students' needs, I made an adaption by modifying exercises or activity.

Language Type and Content

The interview results regarding language type and content of the textbook/materials evaluation were gained by asking the teachers to consider whether the language utilized in the materials was realistic and authentic. Teacher 9 said:

The purpose of Maritime English subject has always been to provide the students with communication skills that they could use later on in the maritime workplace.

Teachers 1, 2, 3, and Teacher 4 also commented that the textbook had been recommended or approved by the authorities. They suggested that the textbook had good quality exercises for examination preparation. However, what the textbook provided was not enough to prepare the students to pass the exam. The teachers acknowledged that they used supplementary worksheets to give a greater variety of exercises to their students.

Although this study shows that teachers' perceptions towards maritime English textbook is positive, none of the observed teachers taught exclusively from the textbook and none devoted the entire lesson to materials from one textbook. It is because the teachers do not use the textbook as the only source of

teaching material. The teachers freely look for materials from other reliable sources that can increase students' knowledge. Teacher 6 expressed her opinion as follows:

The teachers must focus on a number of aspects such as the actual role of students in the classroom activities, whether the language focus is on the meaning or form, forms of activities and classroom participation, and the contents of the tasks. Then, they examine the implications derived by evaluating the overall aims of the materials, content, task selection and sequencing, teachers' and students' roles, needs of students' knowledge, effects, skills and abilities, the character values contained in the textbook, and the role of materials as a whole.

Teacher 5 added that:

The teachers require little or not too heavy preparation before using the textbook. It is because the textbook they use is accompanied by good audio CDs, supplementary materials, and a teachers' guide.

In teaching language, the teachers should have the ability to make the supplementary materials and to adapt or change the materials in the textbook even though they are relatively satisfied with their textbook choices. The teachers in this study felt that supplementary materials made the learning process easier to achieve the aims and increase students' knowledge and motivation. Teachers' perceptions cannot be separated from the factors that influence the perception itself. There are seven factors that influence teachers' perception towards the use of English textbook derived from the interview. They come from personal experience, needs, students' interest, students' ability, situation, workshop/training, and references. This finding is supported by Richardson (1996) who highlights major sources of teachers' perceptions and beliefs including: teacher's different educational background, how long they have been teaching, who is being taught, where they teach, what they teach, etc.

The interviews highlighted how textbook evaluation must be appropriate to the educational aims, that are closely linked to students' needs. Brown (1995) and Cunningsworth (1995) suggest that it is essential in evaluating any textbook to determine whether or not its inherent methodology will reinforce the institutional aims as well as conform to the classroom context. The new maritime English textbooks were written based on the Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) approach. CLT emphasizes the development and growth of students' communicative competence in the target language (Ebrahimi & Sahragard, 2017).

The interviews also emphasized that in evaluating a textbook one should pay attention to the physical characteristics of textbooks such as the layout, organization, skills, topics, exercises and activities. Rubdy (2014) adds that textbook evaluation includes methodology, content, format, layout, and design features of the textbook.

In their interviews teachers also emphasised that they do not follow all the sequence of materials and activities in the textbook and organize the use of materials in line with the lesson plan. In the actual teaching process, the teachers adapt the materials and activities in the textbook when the textbook's coverage is inadequate. According to Richards (2001), adaptations can include modifying content, adding or deleting content, reorganizing content, addressing omissions, modifying tasks, and extending tasks. In this Indonesian context, whole units might have been dropped, or perhaps sections of units throughout the textbook were omitted.

The interviews also revealed that teachers affirm that the maritime English textbooks must contain integrated language skills and types of language to prepare the students in their maritime workplace. Therefore, a multi-skills syllabus was chosen. It is because the syllabus in question covers and integrates both productive (speaking and writing) and receptive skills (listening and reading) (Harmer, 2010; McDonough & Shaw, 1997; Swan, 1985). Regarding the linguistic aspects, the teachers consider the language applied in the book to be realistic and authentic. Language must be at the right level or of the

right type for the students. The teachers should also check whether the progression of new language was both logical and appropriate for students.

In general, the teachers are relatively satisfied with their textbook choice. The given response is grounded in the fact that the textbook has been recommended and approved by the authorities. The subject and content of the textbook are relevant to the current curriculum and appropriate to the students' needs. The textbook use also requires little and no time-consuming preparation. Moreover, the textbook is accompanied by an appropriate file, glossary, and teachers' guide.

However, teachers mentioned that there should be cooperation among teachers to contribute and be responsible for all steps of the textbook evaluation and selection process. Through being cooperative with one another, a more careful review of the textbook was still possible. While using the textbook, the teachers should have the ability to adapt to the appropriate material with what was available and to deliver the instruction as creatively as possible to make the students interested and motivated in language learning. The teachers must also participate in textbook evaluation in ESP materials including a focus on such things as authenticity, topics/themes, texts and contexts, knowledge and language, tasks or activities, representations of participants and social practices, and pedagogical prompts (Widodo, 2016). This observation was particularly needed in order to ensure that the maritime English textbook was appropriate to the students' needs in the maritime workplace. The results of the study will provide an area for further research in the area of the vocational school English curriculum so that the use of textbooks, classroom teaching and, in particular, assessment can be revised further to accommodate the needs of the vocational school students.

Conclusion

In conclusion, this study aimed to explore the teachers' perceptions towards the use of English textbooks in the maritime English class, to investigate teachers' experience in selecting, analysing, organising, interpreting, and integrating maritime English textbooks to maritime English class, and to find out the problems that arise while selecting, analysing, organising, interpreting, and integrating English textbooks into the lesson. It can be concluded that (1) the teachers believe that textbook evaluation is important to make sure that a suitable textbook is chosen; (2) teachers' perceptions towards the use of textbooks are influenced by several factors namely personal experience, need, situation, students' ability, students' interest, workshop/training, and references; (3) the teachers take part in each step of the textbook selection process and (4) there are two major problems faced by the teacher when conducting textbook selection and analysis: a lack of time and different views among teachers. Management of time and the cooperation among the teachers in textbook selection were cited as strategies to solve these issues.

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