



Government-Made (BSE-Buku Sekolah Elektronik) vs Commercial Textbooks. Which One Is Better?

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Abstract

The Indonesian Ministry of Education provides a free electronic and printed textbook called BSE (Buku Sekolah Elektronik) that they recommend using. However, schools have their authority to choose their compulsory textbooks. Based on the preliminary observation of BSE, it has some limitations regarding physical appearance, content, design, organisation, methodology and cultural sensitivity. Many studies analyse a comparison between government-made and commercial textbooks. However, none of the studies analyses English language textbooks that cover analysis in the above limitation aspects. This research purpose to give a comparative analysis of government-made and commercial textbooks. The subject of this study was chosen using a purposive sampling technique. Namely, one 7th grade English language textbook made by the Indonesian government and the most commonly used of Indonesian commercial English language textbooks published by Erlangga, Yudhistira and Tiga Serangkai. This research employs qualitative methodology with descriptive analysis method using the modified framework developed by McDonough (2012). The analysis will examine external aspects (visual materials gender and cultural sensitivity) and a closer and detailed evaluation from internal aspects (reading skills, listening skills, speaking skills, and writing skills). This study will have several implications. Namely, 1) Look at how impactful a selection of government and private textbooks for teaching ESL, 2) Have a positive impact on English language education by providing essential information for schools to choose textbooks, and 3) Identify how far the textbooks engage with the theory of good textbooks production.

Key words: English Language Textbooks, McDonough's Framework, textbook evaluation.

Introduction

This study analyzed the quality of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) textbooks published by government and private publishers in Indonesia. This chapter includes the background, objectives, research questions, significance and implications of evaluating EFL textbooks produced by government and private publishers in Indonesia.

Rationale

The English language has a predominant role in the educational context of Indonesia. As one of the international languages, English has a broad advantage. By learning English, students can have broader exposure of knowledge, as

there is more literature in English than in Bahasa Indonesia. In addition, students can get access to education worldwide by learning English. High-quality international educational institutions often use English as their instructional language. To enter these universities, Indonesian students are required to fulfil English proficiency requirements through tests such as the International English Language Testing System (IELTS), Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL), or Test of English for International Communication (TOEIC). More importantly, nowadays, a lot of professional works requires working in the English language. These factors highlight the importance of learning English in Indonesia.

As the only foreign language compulsory to be learnt in Indonesia, English is an essential subject in Indonesia, and it is examined in the National examinations. However, the average English score for secondary level in Indonesia was 54.25, which was below the national standard, 55 [1]. This indicates that MoNEC needs to put concern on the English language teaching quality in Indonesia. Many research aims to find out what contributes to enhancing the teaching and learning of English. English Language textbook is one of the main aspects due to its function as the primary resource for teaching and learning English. Some experts considered the language as 'the visible heart of the English Learning and Teaching (ELT)' [2],[3].

Although the role of textbooks is essential, textbooks in Indonesia are not taken very seriously. Two parties create them: MoNEC, and private publishers, using a design aligned with the existing National Curriculum. Electronic schoolbooks or government-made textbooks (BSE – Buku Sekolah Elektronik) are one of MoNEC's government initiatives to provide high-quality textbooks that meet the national standards set by BNSP (Badan Nasional Standard Pendidikan) in two areas, which are quality and affordability.

At first, MoNEC instructed schools and teachers to use BSE as their required textbook, even though no official, written regulations or policies stated that using BSE was mandatory. The utilization of textbooks in Indonesia has not been maximized. The government-made textbooks (BSE – Buku Sekolah Elektronik) has several issues. Namely, the distribution issue, the government tried to provide textbooks to all over Indonesia. However, since the vast area of Indonesia and 54% in a rural area, the textbooks were not distributed fully. Based on this issue, MoNEC tried to provide textbooks online. The lack of internet connection in rural area cause schools in rural areas to not access educational resource online. These results private publishers publish educational textbooks (Non-BSE) to be distributed to areas in Indonesia. The quality of BSE and non-BSE is still questioned. Before being published, the textbooks were examined by the National Education Standards Agency (BNSP) to ensure the textbooks met the feasibility standards for teaching. However, many studies related to textbooks analysis suggest that the quality of BSE and still need to be increased in terms of cultural sensitivity, content, physical appearance, and cognitive levels [4], [5], [6], [7]. To maximize teaching and learning resources, related stakeholders (educational institutions, teachers, parents, and students) need to choose textbooks carefully.

As both BSE and non-BSE have some shortcomings in terms of content, visual, language, pedagogy, language, cultural sensitivity, gender, and cognitive level, evaluation of textbooks need to be done meticulously using a practical framework. This study is a preliminary work analyzing the quality of BSE and non-BSE textbooks for Junior High School (grade 7) students in Indonesia, and it is a small-scale case study of three textbooks that the researcher used when teaching in Indonesia.

Aims and Objectives

This study analyzing the quality of Indonesian textbooks through a case study of BSE and non-BSE EFL textbooks.

Research Question

In order to fulfil the research objective described above, this study aimed to answer this following research question:

How do BSE and non-BSE English textbooks compare in terms of three aspects:

- a External, including visual aspect, and gender and cultural sensitivity
- b Internal, including reading, speaking, writing, and listening skills

Implications

The study has some implications as follows:

- a Recommendations to MoNEC and private publishers regarding future revisions to textbooks, and
- b Seasonal (in) formal greetings

Theoretical Reviews

Advantages and Disadvantages of Textbook

English Language textbooks play an important role in the classroom because they are typical "the visual heart of any EFL curriculum." Textbooks can help teachers overcome their weaknesses, assist them in making judgments in class, and standardize instruction, and they can be more efficient than teacher-created resources [8]. However, they do not always have a good impact on teaching and learning. Textbooks can also be educational failures since they are created to meet market demands rather than the students' needs. They offer both advantages and disadvantages as educational teaching and learning resources. The following is an explanation of the benefits and drawbacks of textbooks.

A textbook can be used as "a teacher's assistant" in the classroom [9]. They are specifically created for learners and fitted to the curriculum, with a methodically planned, developed syllabus and exercises based on the needs of students [9], [10], [11]. It allows teachers to integrate their lessons across the curriculum. Teachers can utilize textbooks not only as an anchor but also as a map and an assistant: a map for deciding what to assign as homework and an assistant for when they are swamped with paperwork and responsibilities. Furthermore, textbooks can be used to provide standardized instruction [11] This is to ensure that all students in all classrooms are taught the same materials, curriculum, and standards established by the Ministry of Education or other subject experts.

Even though textbooks can be beneficial for teaching and learning in the classroom, they still need to be used judiciously [12]. Textbooks cannot fit perfectly into every classroom circumstance. While some studies highlight the benefits of using textbooks, other studies illustrate the opposite. First of all, textbooks are seen as problematic by many theorists. Although textbooks can help teachers overcome their deficiencies [9], they can be problematic if they are utilized by inexperienced teachers who see them as a 'bible of teaching' (in other words, if textbooks are the only resource they use while they are teaching). Inexperienced teachers can become too reliant on textbooks. This can make the benefits of textbooks produce an unintended effect [12], [13].

Secondly, commercially-published textbooks are not only based on educational ideology but also on market demand. Commercial textbooks are an example of an educational failure [8]. This is because, to fulfil market demand, the content and quality of the textbooks become unimportant in the process of textbook production. This has an impact on the quality of textbooks' contents and their pedagogical aspects.

Furthermore, the rising cost of textbooks might be a challenge for schools that are already struggling financially. Schools that cannot afford to provide their students with the most up-to-date textbooks will reuse the same textbooks for several years [14] with the risk that the content may become outdated. This can pose educational difficulties. 20 middle-school science teachers built open-educational resources during a two-year period to circumvent the issue of pricey textbooks [14]. Open-educational resources are "Digital materials supplied freely and openly for educators, students, and self-learners to use and reuse for teaching, learning, and research" [15]. Open-educational materials can reduce textbook prices by 50% when compared to traditional textbooks [14]. Additionally, there are no significant differences in standardized exam outcomes between students who are taught using open-educational resources and those who are taught using traditional textbooks. Some parties' efforts to develop and employ open-educational resources rather than commercially created textbooks demonstrate that some commercial textbooks put market demands first.

As English language textbooks have both advantages and disadvantages, there is a need for textbook evaluation..

Criteria for Evaluation

Textbooks must be carefully chosen for teaching and learning purposes, as numerous researches have revealed that textbooks have flaws. As a result, educational textbooks must be updated and revised on a regular basis through textbook evaluation. Textbooks evaluation can be subjective, and it is important to develop systematic criteria for textbook evaluation [8], [10]. Since the purpose of this study was to give a comparison of the quality of BSE and non-BSEs, an evaluation will be conducted of many practical aspects of both.

According to several textbook evaluation experts, textbooks should be succinct and comprehensive. The number of criteria and questions in a textbook should be kept to 'a manageable proportion' so that the criteria do not assess too many minor elements [2]. To avoid subjectivity in the evaluation process, it was also necessary to incorporate the relevant stakeholders (teachers and learners) as well as the program (materials and pedagogy) [11]. Textbook evaluation should cover three board categories: psychological, pedagogical, and content validity procedure [16]. The goal is to show how important learning is, as well as student involvement and cognitive and affective variables. There are also some textbook reviews that focus on the textbook's external qualities, such as visual and cultural sensitivity.

The framework that will be used for textbook evaluation for this study is the textbook evaluation framework by McDonough and Shaw [17]. McDonough and Shaw's framework are not complicated and easy to be conducted. The framework considers the roles of teachers, students and is up to date with current developments. Furthermore, many current ELT evaluations use this framework. McDonough and Shaw examine textbooks based on two criteria: an external evaluation that gives an overview of the textbook from the outside (i.e., its cover, introduction, and table of contents); and a closer and more detailed evaluation conducted of the internal aspects of the textbooks [17]. This

framework was developed by combining the majority of frameworks and models of ELT on a worldwide basis [17]. However, in this study, the framework is modified. The analysis of cover, introduction, and table of content was not be done to make it relevant with the educational textbooks in Indonesia. The mentioned criteria are not considered as major concerns for textbooks evaluation.

Methodology

Data Collection And Analysis

To analyze the textbooks, this study utilized qualitative content analysis and a modified version of McDonough and Shaw's framework. By combining content analysis with the modified McDonough and Shaw framework, this small-scale study compares the quality of English language textbooks made by the Indonesian government and private publishers.

A schema containing a set of evaluation criteria was used as a tool to gather data from the textbooks. After gathering the data, the data was simplified by constructing coding. Next, the results were reported in the discussion part, and lastly, the study was concluded. The schema for evaluation in this study can be represented through a diagram as follows (Figure 1):

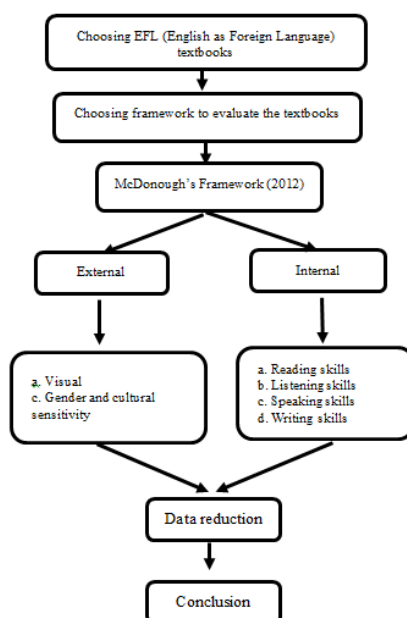


Figure 1. Schema of Evaluation

Research Variable

This study used the purposive sampling method. This study used a comparative analysis between BSE and non-BSE. The BSE chosen for this study was an English language textbook for grade 7 students in Junior High School in Indonesia. The non-BSE sample was from the publishers Tiga Serangkai and Erlangga. These are the three English language textbooks most commonly used in Indonesia [18], [19], [20], [21]. The table presents the details of the three textbooks:

Limitation of The Study

Firstly, this study only analyzed three textbooks due to the time limit. Secondly, bias could occur from the subjectivity of the researcher. Since this is a small-scale case study of EFL textbooks in Indonesia, the discussion is not done in an in-depth analysis.

Table 1. Details of the Textbooks

No	Title	Author	Published by	Number of Pages
1	<i>When English rings a bell</i>	Siti Wachidah, Asep Gunawan, Diyantari, Yuni Rulani Khotimah	Government (The Ministry of Education and Culture of Indonesia)	183
2	<i>Passport to the world</i>	Djarmika, Agus Dwi Priyanto, Ida Kusuma Dewi	Private (Tiga Serangkai)	225
3	<i>Bright (An English Course to Junior High School Students)</i>	Nur Zaida	Private (Erlangga)	181

Findings and Discussion

External Aspects

Visual

Unlike BSE, the non-BSEs do not optimally utilize visual illustration as a tool to build up students' motivation and interest. The images are mostly visual photographs with poor quality, and the cartoons are not interesting; they create visual nuisance rather than visual enhancement. The cartoons are images downloaded from the Internet. They are therefore unable to convey the messages that the textbooks want to deliver because they do not adjust the pictures with the text. In addition, the quality of the pictures is blurry, printed in dark colours, and appears shadowed. The illustration in textbooks is critical to support the content of the textbooks and have many benefits, but the non-BSEs are unable to achieve them because of the poor quality of the illustration.

Regarding the relevance of the pictures, the pictures of BSE and non-BSEs are unsuccessful to convey clear messages. In non-BSEs, the pictures are not relevant to the text that may cause misunderstanding when reading the books.

Gender and Cultural Issue

English textbooks are frequently regarded as a tool that reflects both language and culture. Furthermore, textbooks have the potential to be a tool for promoting gender equality in schools, such as by presenting an equal number of males and females. The findings confirm that both BSE and non-BSE almost have an equal presentation of both males and females, while not precisely 50:50, is close to this. Gender equality can be promoted through the balanced representation of males and females in the textbooks [22]. In addition, in the three textbooks, gender stereotyping is not an issue: men are frequently depicted as doing some household tasks, while women actively participate in social activities work, and both genders play crucial responsibilities at home and at school. These data show that male dominance is uncommon in both BSE and non-BSE.

Although BSE fails to promote English culture, it does it well for Indonesian cultures. As a lingua franca, English has become one of the most used languages globally; therefore, not only the source culture (cultures of Western people), but also the target culture (the culture of learners), and the international target cultures must appear in English textbooks. The investigation of this study suggests that many activities in BSE illustrate the local cultures. For example, the representation of the ethnic group of Indonesia in the pictures and content of the textbooks. The focus of the topic and theme in BSE is on local cultures, which will help students learn English from a local perspective. This is in line with one of the purposes of the National Curriculum of Indonesia, which is to shape students' characteristics with national values and identities. As a result, the instructional materials produced by MoNEC takes into account the cultural values of Indonesia, even in subjects involving other languages, such as English. This may limit students' experience in learning English.

According to the findings of the cultural sensitivity inquiry, non-BSEs supports source culture (the cultures of English-speaking countries), target culture (the culture of the learners) and the international target culture (the culture of other non-English speaking countries) through their pictures and content. However, there is an unequal representation of these three cultures. In non-BSEs, approximately half of the content exhibits the source culture, a third presents Indonesian culture, and the remainder is about the worldwide target culture.

The findings on cultural sensitivity show that non-BSEs encourage readers to be more sensitive to source culture (the cultures of English-speaking countries), target culture (the culture of the learners) and the international target culture (the culture of other non-English speaking countries).

Both BSE and non-BSEs promote the international target culture; however, the target culture's representation is clearly imbalanced. This is due to the dominance of the source culture's and Indonesian culture's representations. The cultural context in textbooks depends on the social context in which the target language is being learnt and used [23]. In general, if English is used to communicate between Asian regions, the cultural content offered in Asian textbooks may not always be focused on English culture

Internal Aspects

Reading Skill

According to the findings of this research, both BSE and non-BSEs have a small number of reading materials. The percentage of reading materials included are 0.47 (When English rings a bell), 3.26 (Bright), and 10.85 (Passport to the world). This could be due to MoNEC's ambiguous instructions regarding the inclusion of the same number of exercises for each skill, as MoNEC only recommends that textbook publishers include the topics and themes listed in the National Curriculum, regardless of whether the topics and themes represent an ideal representation of each English skill. Textbooks should provide a balanced representation of English skills, which means that each skill (reading, listening, writing, and speaking) should be the focus of a quarter of the learning activities in the book [24].

The same types of reading materials are found in both BSE and non-BSEs. Instead of paragraphs or passages, these mainly consist of student dialogues. The dialogues usually include two students speaking about common themes. Dialogues are low-level reading materials that are too easy for Junior High School students to comprehend [25]. Junior High School learners are expected to interpret English articles (such as newspapers or manuals) in order to learn new knowledge. As a result, both BSEs and non-BSEs fail to meet MoNEC's reading skills.

Speaking Skill

English speaking abilities are essential for effective communication, especially for students who do not speak English as a first language. Both BSE and non-BSEs include different percentages of speaking activities. BSE has the largest percentage of cases. Speaking activities account for more than half of the textbook's content (55.19 percent), while the percentage of Bright and Passport to the world dedicated to speaking activities is approximately a fifth of the total number of activities in the textbooks. BSE overvalues speaking ability in this scenario. Other abilities (listening, reading, and writing) may not be addressed evenly in textbooks as a result of this.

The speaking material offered in BSEs and non-BSEs is nearly identical. They consist of artificial dialogues (whole-sentence dialogues). The artificial dialogues are spoken by the teachers, and the students are instructed to repeat after them. The conversations frequently do not depict scenarios that pupils are familiar with. Instead, they show unreal relationships between characters that appear artificial. Furthermore, EFL students are hesitant to acquire English through artificial dialogues [26]. Thus, the artificial dialogues presented in both BSE and non-BSEs may hinder the development of students' speaking abilities.

Writing Skill

Writing is a vital but challenging skill to master, particularly for students who do not have English as a first language. Non-BSEs are dominated by writing activities, whereas BSEs include appropriate writing activities. Non-BSE authors may have realized the importance of writing because writing activities are linked to academic skills, and practically all topics require students to write in order to assess their understanding. Analysis of writing activities in non-BSEs, on the other hand, reveals that they always follow a similar pattern. For example, practically every chapter of the textbook contains assignments for writing a description of a classmate. Writing tasks that are repeated multiple times might reduce students' motivation/interest in learning because they get bored [17].

BSE presents the writing activities in a logical order. Students can plan and structure their writing by working through the activities in stages, from the easiest to the most difficult. For example, there is an exercise that requires students to write down things in the classroom. Following that, students must construct sentences utilizing the terminology they listed. After that, they must compose a paragraph based on the sentences they have written. The sequence of writing activities in this exercise helps students to articulate their thinking. To generate a piece of writing, the student is expected to follow these steps. This is very useful to students because writing is a thinking process, and teaching students the writing process is similar to teaching them logical thinking [27]. Writing activities that are in logical order can teach students to think logically. Consequently, the writing activities in BSE can teach students the process of thinking logically.

Listening Skill

This section examines listening tasks in both BSE and non-BSE textbooks. Listening tasks are included in all three textbooks. Listening activities make up a quarter of all activities in the textbook in BSE (25.47 percent). Around a quarter of listening activities are performed by non-BSEs. All three textbooks provide more than the recommended quantity of listening activities (a quarter). This means that all three textbooks have sufficient resources to help students improve their listening abilities.

Listening exercises may have been added as a marketing technique by non-BSE publishers; with many audio recordings, teachers and students will have many learning tools and may assume they are purchasing good textbooks. Furthermore, none of the three textbooks is devoid of listening activities. As a result, kids may have sufficient learning resources for listening skills. Listening activities in textbooks are vital for EFL students because they may have minimal experience listening to native speakers. Through listening activities in their textbooks, students have the chance to listen to native speakers.

Unlike the non-BSEs, which provide recordings, BSE does not provide recordings for listening tasks. The listening materials in BSE consist of dialogues to be spoken by teachers, and students listen to these. This is because the BSE is still under revision; there have been some limitations found, and the textbook is not fully ready. However, since schools and teachers in Indonesia need learning resources, BSE was published even though it is not yet in perfect condition. Therefore, teachers need to read the listening materials to their students.

This affects students in many ways. Students' listening capacity, for example, will be influenced by the teachers' speaking abilities. Furthermore, because they can only listen in classroom conditions, students will not become accustomed to listening to English in a variety of scenarios and contexts, such as an announcement or schedule in a train station or airport, or an interaction between a waiter and a restaurant customer.

Conclusion

Despite the fact that Indonesia does not speak English as a first language, English has become an important subject in the country. This is because, in order to succeed in a globalized world, Indonesia's future generations will need to be able to communicate in English, which is one of the most widely spoken languages on the planet. Indonesia's future generations must be able to communicate in English. There are several factors that contribute to the success of teaching and learning English in Indonesia. One of them is the EFL textbooks. To maximize the role of the EFL textbooks in the teaching and learning in the classroom, teachers need to choose appropriate textbooks. Since there are two sources of textbooks in Indonesia, government and private publishers, this study investigated the comparative quality of textbooks made by the MoNEC and private publishers.

As a teacher, the selection of textbooks is important to me. In order to fulfil learning goals in the classroom, appropriate textbooks are required. Many textbooks, including those issued by the Indonesian government and those published by private publishers, can be utilized. The quality of textbooks produced by private publishers and the government for teaching English was compared in this study. It uses McDonough and Shaw's modified framework and content analysis approach. However, because this was a preliminary study, the findings only include three aspects: external (visual aspect and cultural sensitivity), internal (reading, writing, speaking, and listening skill). Because of the small-scale nature of the study, the textbooks that were compared were limited to only three (one from the government and two from private publishers).

The findings of this study show that variability in textbooks' quality. The cultural content of BSE supports the National Curriculum and shapes students' character in Indonesia. Non-BSEs present the National identity and also Western and Asian Culture. Both BSE and non-BSEs promote gender equity.

In terms of visual aspects, BSE uses colourful cartoons that gain students' attention, whereas non-BSEs rely on images from the Internet, which are frequently of poor quality. Furthermore, both BSE and non-BSE textbooks often include unrelated pictures to support the information of the textbooks. Regarding the internal aspect, both BSEs and non-BSEs covered English skills. Non-BSEs focused on writing and listening abilities, whereas BSEs focused on speaking. Both BSEs and non-BSEs include limited reading materials. The disparity in skill coverage between BSE and non-BSE students may have an impact on their ability to master specific skills. BSE can be used as a teaching source in the classroom if teachers want to realize MoNEC goals and shape students' values based on their national identity. However, if teachers want to teach language and culture, non-BSEs can be used, as they reflect the source, local, and international target cultures. Furthermore, teachers still need to adjust the materials in both BSE and non-BSE..

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