



## EVALUATING WRITING MATERIALS: STUDENTS' PERCEPTION TOWARDS THE CONTENT OF LECTURER-MADE-COURSE BOOK

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### ABSTRACT

*In this study, a course book created by a lecturer to teach writing was evaluated. This study was qualitative in nature. The methods for gathering research data included observation and document analysis. Twenty students were asked for their opinions on how the course book should be used in relation to its material. The study of the students' responses revealed that the course book's content was strong in various areas, including its comprehensiveness, the variety of text kinds offered, the variety of topics covered, and the simplicity of the explanations. However, they had an unfavorable perception of themes that were representative of their social and cultural background. According to the findings of the analysis, the course book's material was not based on the sociocultural background of the students. The themes of the materials can influence the students' interest and need since they may be more motivated to learn if they are relevant to their daily lives. In addition, because they previously have foundation knowledge on their own issues, the students can write fluently while employing those topics.*

**Keywords :** Writing Skill, Materials Evaluation, Students' Perception

### I. INTRODUCTION

The use of teaching resources is crucial in language instruction (Garton & Graves, 2014). They are seen as essential to the educational and learning process. According to Minister of Study Technology and Higher Education Regulation (Permenristekdikti) Number 44 of 2015, in addition to the RPS (Semester Learning Plan or Syllabus), learning media, and evaluation tools, instructional materials are considered learning devices. Supporting learning achievement is directly tied to the teaching materials and syllabus

(RPS). Most people agree that the chosen and utilized resources significantly raise the caliber of the teaching and learning process. They can assist teachers in their job and guide learners toward a deeper understanding. According to Ocak, Ozcalisan, and Kuru (2010), the resources make learning more pleasurable and understandable. Additionally, the resources make sure that the learning time is used efficiently and raise the standard of instruction. Materials should unquestionably come first in the provision of educational and learning processes due to their significant function. because they provide the



foundation of the process of teaching and learning (Garton & Graves, 2014). Course books, workbooks, CDs, flashcards, and CD-ROMs are typical examples (Tomlinson, 1998).

The materials that teachers are most accustomed to are course books. Course books play an important role in the teaching and learning process. According to Nunan, "Course books are bundled, published publications used by students and teachers" (2003, p. 226). as the starting point of a language program. The primary means of imparting knowledge to students in English Language Teaching (ELT) is through course books (Naseem et al., 2015). Furthermore, a course book offers a learning approach, a clear learning framework, a library of reference materials, and concepts, according to Acklam (1994). Course books therefore act as a guide for instructors during a lesson. As a result, what is taught to students and teachers via course books may differ.

By providing ideas and information based on students' experience and expertise and promoting fun and creativity in completing tasks, teachers can use course books to interest and inspire students. Course books may also inspire and motivate students if the inputs and knowledge incorporate both well-known and novel concepts and facts. Similar to this, if the learning objectives and the use of the language in real-life situations are in line, course materials can energize and excite students. For course books to be effective, they must explicitly state the purpose of the material and how it relates to the world of the

students. Students consult the course books for self-study reasons. To be effective, course books must be comprehensive, beautifully designed, and simple to understand.

Local and international coursebooks are available. According to Tomlinson (1998), an international or global course book is one that was produced with the intention of being used by any class of students in the designated level and age group anywhere in the world, rather than being written for students from a certain culture or country. The production of international EFL course books, according to Gray (2002), typically takes place in nations that speak English. The global course book may be referred to as commercial since it is utilized by all teachers and students worldwide and is offered for sale in the market. They are designed for a variety of teachers and students because they are international course books. A local course book, on the other hand, is one that was made especially for that location. The regional course book that Dat (2008) proposes is distinct from the other classifications suggested by the majority of authors. Writings by non-native speakers in one nation that are exported to and approved in a number of other countries fall into this special category. In order to use their own course books in their classes, teachers decide to write their own. Teachers invest time in creating their own course materials that satisfy both the requirements and interests of their students and the course's objectives.

Teacher-written course books have several benefits over



commercial course books, notwithstanding some of their drawbacks. The use of teacher-written course books has a number of advantages, according to Richard (2012), including the fact that they can reflect local content, difficulties, and concerns and are suited to the needs of students and institutions. The development of staff members' knowledge and their comprehension of the qualities of quality course books are further aided by participation in the course book development process. Additionally, instructor-made course materials show the institution's dedication to providing resources that meet the particular needs of students, perhaps increasing the institution's image. Last but not least, course materials written by teachers can be modified and adjusted, giving educators more chances to meet the demands of their pupils.

In relation to the regional text, the researcher had written a textbook for a writing course. The English Education Study Program students in the fifth semester of the Faculty of Teacher Training and Education at Asahan University was the intended audience for the course book. The book focuses on how to teach pupils different types of text writing. However, the researcher wasn't entirely happy with the book he had written. He continued to ask if the book is grounded in the cultural context of the readers and applicable to their everyday lives because these factors affect the pupils' enthusiasm in learning it. This is consistent with Sheldon's (1987) assertion that engaging subject matter would encourage pupils to

comprehend and discover information.

According to what he noticed while instructing writing, the students lacked enthusiasm for the subject. They seemed uninterested in using it, to be honest. When they were asked to complete the duties and activities, it was evident. The materials were occasionally difficult for them to understand. The materials felt so foreign to them. As a result, he intended to improve it. However, he first carried out a small study titled "Evaluating Writing Material: Students' Perception of the Use of a Lecturer-Made Course Book" before he did it. This study sought to provide an answer to the question, "How do students feel about the writing course book's content?"

## II. LITERATURE REVIEW

### A. Writing Skill

Many EFL students believe that among all the abilities, writing is the one that is hardest to learn. When given a writing assignment by their teachers, many pupils struggle and become disinterested. It can be a result of the difficulty of writing in English, which necessitates that students have a solid command of vocabulary, grammar, and spelling in order to produce quality writing. The "rhetorical conventions" of English texts, which include their structure, style, and organization and frequently differ from those of other languages, could also be seen as contributing to the problem. The kids must make an effort to understand and handle these variances (Leki, 1991). Writing, according to Harmer



(2004), requires conscious acquisition, whereas spoken language is picked up through exposure. Similar to this, Richards and Renandya (2002) contend that the challenge is brought on by the necessity of employing the proper terminology, sentence structure, and paragraph organization while developing and arranging ideas in order to produce a document that is readable. In addition, the complexity of learning to write is brought on by the need to understand not only the linguistic norms but also the customs associated with different genres and textual dimensions (Leki, 1996). Learning English writing for ESL students is a hard skill because it calls for not just language proficiency but also familiarity with English thought processes.

### **B. Materials Evaluation**

Evaluation, according to Hutchinson and Waters (1987), is "a question of judging the wellness of something for a given goal." According to Tomlinson (2001), course book evaluation is a movement that involves teachers, fabric engineers, directors, and bosses to assess the effectiveness of the materials for the people using them in a particular setting. The movement can also involve teachers and students looking into their observations and findings regarding the textbooks used in the classroom. In this context, assessment is defined by Richards (2014) as "the process through which a course book is surveyed and rated in accordance with a set of criteria." This inquiry focuses on examining students' observations, judgments, and

understandings on the use of a teacher-made tool.

Four steps of materials evaluation are provided by Hutchinson and Waters (1987): 1) Describe the criteria that will be used to do the assessment and choose those that are most important among them, 2) examine the nature and fundamental standards of the program where the materials were used, 3) examine the nature and fundamental standards of the materials and test the examination in the classroom, and 4) compare the findings of the subjective and objective examinations. A few standards that are used to evaluate items must form the basis of the evaluation. Making a decision about the evaluation criteria in this way is crucial. Some requirements could be more important than others. The evaluation should select the more important criteria to be used in evaluating the contents.

### **III. METHODOLOGY**

As a method for gathering research data, this researcher conducted a qualitative study that involved observation and document analysis. The course book's two chapters that exclusively cover recount text and narrative comprised the two documents. Students were tasked with responding to evaluation questions for the course book in order to ascertain their perception. The evaluation checklist for course books created by Cunningsworth (1995) and Grants served as the inspiration for the questions (1991). There were three possible replies to the questions: yes, partially, and no.



Each "yes" response received two points, while "partially no" responses received one point (Grant, 1991.) To determine the frequency, percentage, and score for student perception data, analysis was done.

#### **A. Participants**

Twenty students from Asahan University's English Education Study Program took part in the investigation. They were the ones who had signed up for the writing course.

#### **B. Research Procedures**

The two chapters of the new course book that explore recount and story were employed in the research and were subjected to student evaluation. Students were then asked to provide their opinions about the course book that was being used. The researcher employed a materials assessment questionnaire that was derived from Grant (1991) and Cunningsworth (1995), which included questions about course book appraisal and three possible responses: yes, partly, and no. To meet the context of students as the users, the questions were modified. To determine how students feel about the course book, data on their perception were assessed in terms of frequency, proportion, and score, and then qualitative interpretations were made.

### **IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS**

Positive and negative attitudes toward the course book among students can be divided into two categories. The following

explanation explains how the student felt about the course book's content:

Eight questions pertaining to the course book's content have to be answered. They related to the course book's comprehensiveness, the variety of text types and topics, the relevance of the topics to the needs and interests of the students, the reflection of the topics on the sociocultural backgrounds of the students, the clarity of the explanation, the allure of the activities, and the capacity of the activities to assist students in writing different text types. According to the table, 15 students (or 75% of the class) felt that the course book addressed every aspect of writing, whereas 5 students felt that it was virtually complete but lacked punctuation. 15 students indicated that there was a diversity of text types. The four of them couldn't come to an agreement, and one of the students complained that the themes weren't diversified because he or she had only read the first two chapters of the course book. Only 9 students (45%) indicated that the course book's subjects were pertinent to their needs and interests, although 11 students indicated that some of them were. The themes did not reflect their socio-cultural background, according to all but 5 pupils. However, 14 students (70%) claimed that the textbook did not accurately reflect their sociocultural background because it was not directly tied to it, unlike the narrative texts course material. It ought to include the events that took place where they grew up.

The majority of students (80%) went on to remark that the



explanations in the course book were straightforward to understand for a language's ease of use, the essay structure's step-by-step explanation, and the sufficient use of examples and exercises. Four of them (20%) claimed that they were difficult to understand because they may not be as skilled at structuring sentences. Regarding the assignments and activities, just 6 students (30%)

variety of reasons, including the thought they were interesting. Twelve students (or 60%) claimed that only some of the assignments and activities were engaging, while just one student disagreed. Following that, 8 students (40%) thought the assignments and activities were beneficial since they allowed them to share their knowledge, experiences.

**Table 1. Sudents' Perception towards the Content of Lecturer-Made Course Book**

Aspects to Evaluate	Statement	Yes (2)		Sc	Partly (1)		No (0)			Total	
		Fr	%		Fr	%	Sc	Fr	%		Sc
Content	1. For me, course book is complete because it covers the components of writing (sentence structure, grammar, vocabulary, and punctuation)	15	75	30	5	25	5	0	0	0	35
	2. Course book presents a variety of text types.	15	75	30	3	15	3	1	0,5	0	33
	3. Topics discuss a variety of subjects.	15	75	30	4	20	4	1	0,5	0	34
	4. Choices of topics are relevant to my needs and interest	9	45	18	11	55	11	1	0,5	0	39
	5. The topics reflect socio-cultural background	5	25	10	1	5	1	14	70	0	11
	6. The explanations are easy to be understood.	16	80	32	4	20	4	0	0	0	36
	7. The tasks and activities are interesting.	6	30	12	12	60	12	3	7,5	0	24
	8. Tasks and activities help me express my knowledge, experiences, and interests in writing using a variety of text types.	8	40	16	11	55	11	1	0,5	0	27



## V. CONCLUSIONS

Students' impressions of a course book created by a lecturer were assessed using a checklist, and both good and negative perceptions were found. The study of the students' responses revealed that the course book's content was strong in various areas, including its comprehensiveness, the variety of text kinds offered, the variety of topics covered, and the simplicity of the explanations. However, they had an unfavorable perception of themes that were representative of their social and cultural background. According to the findings of the analysis, the course book's material was not based on the sociocultural background of the students.

The themes of the materials can influence the students' interest and need since they may be more motivated to learn if they are relevant to their daily lives. In addition, because they previously have foundation knowledge on their own issues, the students can write fluently while employing those topics. The future creation of educational resources for EFL students may be significantly impacted by this discovery. Materials development must first approach students as course book consumers. Different learners have different needs for a course book, which are determined by their socio-cultural background as well as their language skills. Second, contextualizing a course book can be accomplished by covering topics related to students' sociocultural backgrounds.

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