

EVALUATING TEACHER-MADE ENGLISH COURSEBOOK FOR EIGHTH GRADE STUDENTS OF A PRIVATE SCHOOL

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Abstrak

Penelitian ini mengevaluasi buku pelajaran Bahasa Inggris yang dikembangkan oleh seorang guru Bahasa Inggris untuk siswa kelas 8 di sebuah sekolah bilingual swasta di Sidoarjo, Indonesia. Untuk memenuhi tujuan kurikulum terpadu yang diterapkan oleh sekolah, guru bertanggung jawab untuk memfasilitasi siswa dengan menyediakan buku pelajaran yang sesuai untuk kegiatan belajar mengajar. Penelitian ini menggunakan kerangka kerja analisis konten kualitatif untuk menilai keselarasan buku pelajaran dengan kurikulum, kesesuaiannya dengan kebutuhan siswa dan guru, dan kualitasnya secara keseluruhan berdasarkan kriteria evaluasi Byrd & Schuermann (2014). Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa buku teks tersebut secara efektif selaras dengan kurikulum dan terstruktur dengan baik. Namun, buku teks tersebut kurang menekankan pada pengajaran bahasa komunikatif dan peluang untuk penggunaan bahasa yang autentik serta pengembangan kompetensi komunikatif. Meskipun konten dan penyajian buku teks secara umum cukup memadai bagi guru dan siswa, perbaikan tetaplah diperlukan, termasuk menyediakan latihan yang lebih bervariasi, materi tambahan, dan panduan mengajar yang jelas. Hasil penelitian menyoroti perlunya pengembangan lebih lanjut untuk meningkatkan efektivitas buku teks dalam meningkatkan kemampuan bahasa Inggris untuk siswa.

Kata kunci: *Coursebook; Learning material; ELT, Kurikulum Merdeka*

Abstract

This study evaluates an English coursebook developed by an English teacher for 8th-grade students at a private bilingual school in Sidoarjo, Indonesia. To meet the objectives of the integrated curriculum applied by the school, teachers are responsible for facilitating students by providing appropriate coursebooks for teaching and learning activities. This study uses a qualitative content analysis framework to assess the coursebook's alignment with the curriculum, its suitability for students' and teachers' needs, and its overall quality based on Byrd & Schuermann's (2014) evaluation criteria. The findings indicate that the textbook effectively aligns with the curriculum

and is well-structured. However, it lacks a strong emphasis on communicative language teaching and opportunities for authentic language use and the development of communicative competence. While the textbook's content and presentation are generally sufficient for the teacher and students, improvements are necessary, including more varied exercises, supplementary materials, and explicit teacher guidance. The findings highlight the need for further development to enhance the textbook's effectiveness in fostering English language proficiency among students.

Keyword: *Coursebook; Learning material; ELT, Kurikulum Merdeka*



INTRODUCTION

The 21st century has witnessed the rise of English as a global lingua franca, significantly impacting the landscape of language learning worldwide (Ismaeva, 2020). This global phenomenon has created a significant demand for English language proficiency, making it a crucial skill in various domains, from academia and business to international communication and cultural exchange. Recognizing its importance, many countries have integrated English into their national curricula, aiming to equip their citizens with the linguistic skills necessary to thrive in an increasingly interconnected world.

Effective English Language Teaching (ELT) necessitates a nuanced understanding of the specific needs and goals of learners, which can vary significantly across different contexts (Brown & Lee, 2015). Factors such as learners' age, learning styles, cultural backgrounds, and educational objectives all play a crucial role in shaping the most effective teaching and learning approaches. A one-size-fits-all approach to ELT is therefore inadequate. Instead, successful language instruction requires a focus on context-specific approaches that are tailored to the unique needs and circumstances of the learners and the learning environment.

Existing research on coursebook evaluation has explored various criteria, such as those outlined by Demir & Ertas (2014) (subjects, skills, layout, and practical considerations), and investigated different evaluation strategies, including theoretical and empirical approaches (Ngunyen, 2015). However, many studies primarily focus on descriptive analyses, often limited to identifying the strengths and weaknesses of coursebooks (Apriyani & Robiasih, 2019; Jusuf, 2018). These studies often lack a comprehensive framework for assessing the effectiveness of coursebooks in achieving specific learning outcomes and addressing the unique needs of learners within particular contexts.

This study draws upon McGrath's (2002) three-stage evaluation framework (pre-use, in-use, post-use) to comprehensively assess the effectiveness of coursebooks developed by MT's B, a pioneering institution in developing teaching and learning materials for Islamic schools in Sidoarjo, Indonesia. This framework provides a structured approach to evaluating coursebooks by

considering their suitability within a specific context and their impact on student learning. This approach aligns with the post-method perspective, which emphasizes the importance of context-specific and learner-centered approaches to ELT, recognizing that "there is no single best method" applicable to all situations (Kumaravadivelu, 2001; Brown & Lee, 2015).

By evaluating these coursebooks, this study seeks to contribute to a deeper understanding of effective material development and implementation within the specific context of bilingual education in Indonesia. The findings of this research can provide valuable insights for educators, materials developers, and curriculum designers in improving the quality of ELT materials and enhancing the learning experiences of Indonesian students. Furthermore, the research findings can contribute to the ongoing discourse on the post-method perspective and its implications for language teaching and learning in diverse contexts.

METHOD

This study utilizes a content analysis approach. As defined by Wallen and Fraenkel (2001), content analysis involves the systematic examination of written and visual content within documents. Marshall and Rossman (2006) further emphasize that content analysis can be applied to various forms of communication, including written materials (e.g., coursebooks, novels, newspapers), as well as other forms such as music, pictures, and political speeches. Following Chelimsky's (1989) framework, the content analysis process in this study involved several key steps. Firstly, the researcher decided to employ content analysis as the primary research method. Secondly, the English coursebook for 8th-grade students at MTs B was selected as the primary source of data for the analysis. Subsequently, the researcher analyzed the coursebook data utilizing Byrd and Schuemann's (2014) framework for textbook evaluation. Finally, conclusions were drawn based on the comprehensive analysis of the coursebook data.

This study focuses on the evaluation of an English coursebook utilized by 8th-grade students at MTs Bilingual Muslimat NU Pucang (MTs B), located in Sidoarjo, Indonesia. MTs B is a bilingual school authorized to implement the Cambridge International Curriculum since 2015. The selection of MTs B as the research setting was based on its status as an exemplary private school that successfully integrates a bilingual curriculum.

The subjects of this study include the teachers who teach English to 8th-grade students at MTs B. These teachers serve as both the developers and users of the English coursebook. Additionally, the study also includes the curriculum team and the principal of MTs B. The primary source of data for this study is the 8th-grade English Coursebook developed specifically for use at MTs B. This coursebook, comprising three chapters covering "Memorable Story," "Imaginative

Story," and "Love Our World," was chosen as the primary focus of this study due to its availability and its significance as a key resource for English language instruction at this level.

Data collection in this study primarily involved text analysis, a method that involves gathering and analyzing documents, such as videos, audio recordings, and written materials. Sugiyono (2013) emphasizes the complementary role of documents in qualitative research alongside observation and interviews. In this study, documentation was utilized to analyze and evaluate the English coursebook, assessing its alignment with the principles of good materials outlined by Tomlinson (2011) and Byrd & Schuemann (2014). To further enrich the data, interviews were conducted with relevant stakeholders.

The data analysis process involved a series of steps. Firstly, the researcher began by carefully reading the entire content of the English coursebook to gain a comprehensive understanding of its structure and content. Secondly, the researcher systematically compared each aspect of the coursebook with the established criteria for a good coursebook, identifying its strengths and weaknesses. Subsequently, the researcher conducted an in-depth analysis of the coursebook utilizing Byrd and Schuemann's (2014) framework for textbook evaluation. Finally, after a comprehensive analysis of the data using the theoretical framework, the researcher drew conclusions based on the findings, addressing the research questions and providing insights into the effectiveness of the coursebook in supporting student learning. This structured approach ensured a systematic and rigorous evaluation of the 8th-grade English Coursebook at MTs B.

RESULTS

A. How the Coursebook Fit with the School's Curriculum

MTs B's curriculum reflects a unique blend of educational philosophies, seamlessly integrating the national Kurikulum Merdeka, as outlined by the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology (Kemendikbudristek), with the internationally renowned Cambridge International Curriculum. This synergistic approach, enabled by the school's authorization to implement the Cambridge curriculum since 2015, fosters a comprehensive educational experience that transcends national boundaries. Furthermore, as an Islamic institution under the supervision of the Ministry of Religious Affairs (Kemenag), MTs B diligently adheres to the Implementation Guideline of Kurikulum Merdeka, ensuring that Islamic values are seamlessly interwoven with the broader curriculum. This multi-faceted approach equips students with a robust foundation in both national and international standards while simultaneously cultivating a strong sense of Islamic identity.

Table 3.1 The score of how fit the coursebook with the curriculum

<i>How Fit with the Curriculum</i>	0	1	2	3	4
<i>The coursebook content is appropriate with respect to ...</i>					
1. <i>overall program curriculum/goals</i>				✓	
2. <i>language learning material for level/course</i>					✓
3. <i>thematic/topical content & course objectives</i>				✓	
4. <i>pedagogical/SLA philosophy</i>			✓		
5. <i>length & unit size versus program time frame</i>					✓
Total Fit Score (Curriculum) 16 / 20 of 5 items					

This commitment to a balanced and globally-oriented education has permeated all aspects of the school's academic pursuits. Since gaining the authority to implement the Cambridge curriculum in 2015, MT's B has actively sought to cultivate a learning environment that prepares students to excel on an international stage. This dedication is further evidenced by the school's implementation of rigorous semester-end Cambridge Assessment Tests, which provide a comprehensive evaluation of students' English proficiency across various skill domains, including vocabulary, listening, speaking, writing, and reading. These assessments serve not only to gauge student understanding but also to ensure that students can effectively apply their language skills in practical contexts. Moreover, the regular administration of these tests allows the school to meticulously monitor the progress of each student's English language development, enabling the faculty to make informed adjustments to teaching methodologies as needed.

While the coursebook demonstrates a commendable alignment with the curriculum, aligning its pedagogical approach more closely with the tenets of Second Language Acquisition (SLA) would undoubtedly enhance its effectiveness. While the coursebook undoubtedly provides a solid foundation in English language learning through traditional English Language Teaching (ELT) methods, which often emphasize structured grammar and vocabulary instruction, it may not fully capitalize on the dynamic and interactive nature of language acquisition. SLA, with its emphasis on authentic communication, meaningful interaction, and real-world language use, offers a compelling alternative or, more accurately, a valuable complement to traditional ELT methods. By incorporating more communicative activities, such as role-plays, simulations, and project-based learning, the coursebook could more effectively foster natural and fluent language use among students.

Despite these minor considerations, the coursebook demonstrates a commendable fit in terms of its overall structure and pacing. The careful consideration given to the length and size of each unit, in conjunction with the allocated lesson hours, ensures that the material can be effectively covered without feeling rushed or overwhelming. This thoughtful pacing allows for a gradual and systematic progression through the course content, enabling students to absorb and consolidate their learning effectively. This deliberate approach not only enhances the learning experience but also contributes to a more effective and rewarding educational journey for all students.

B. How the Coursebook Fit with the Students

This section scrutinizes the coursebook through the lens of student engagement and its alignment with the principles of Second Language Acquisition (SLA). Building upon the framework established by Byrd & Schuemann (2014), the analysis meticulously examines the coursebook's suitability for student learning, drawing insights not only from the checklist evaluation but also from complementary data gathered through teacher interviews. Table 3.2 presents the findings of this comprehensive assessment, providing a nuanced understanding of the coursebook's strengths and weaknesses in meeting the diverse learning needs of students.

Table 3.2 The score of how fit the coursebook with the students

<i>How Fit with the Students</i>	0	1	2	3	4
<i>The coursebook content is appropriate with respect to ...</i>					
1. <i>Logically sequenced unit-by-unit presentation</i>					✓
2. <i>design & visual elements</i>			✓		
3. <i>cultural & age-group sensitivities</i>				✓	
4. <i>explanations & instructions</i>					✓
5. <i>activities/exercises/tasks for in-class and homework (varied and copious)</i>				✓	
6. <i>examples in explanations & sample items in exercises</i>					✓
7. <i>periodic tests/learning checks</i>				✓	
8. <i>multi-media support</i>		✓			
9. <i>thematic/topical content & student interests</i>				✓	

10. cost

✓

Total Fit Score (Students) 30 /40 of 10 items

A key finding of this analysis is that the coursebook demonstrates a commendable understanding of student interests and learning preferences. Recognizing the importance of making learning engaging and relevant, the developers have thoughtfully curated content that resonates with students' experiences, incorporating topics such as technology, environmental issues, and popular culture into the learning materials. This deliberate effort to connect with students' lives ensures that the coursebook remains both interesting and meaningful, thereby fostering greater student engagement and motivation. Moreover, the coursebook transcends mere information dissemination by encouraging critical thinking and reflection, prompting students to analyze information, apply concepts, and develop valuable higher-order thinking skills.

Furthermore, the coursebook excels in its presentation of information, employing a variety of strategies to enhance student comprehension. Clear and concise explanations, coupled with the judicious use of illustrations, diagrams, and real-world examples, facilitate a deeper understanding of key concepts. By grounding abstract ideas in concrete experiences, the coursebook effectively bridges the gap between theoretical knowledge and practical application, enabling students to connect their learning to their own lives and the world around them.

The coursebook also demonstrates a commendable effort to cater to diverse learning styles through a variety of engaging exercises and activities. This includes a rich assortment of learning tasks, ranging from traditional multiple-choice questions to more interactive activities such as group discussions, projects, and hands-on experiments. This multifaceted approach ensures that all students, regardless of their preferred learning style, have opportunities to actively engage with the material and develop a deeper understanding of the subject matter.

While the coursebook exhibits numerous strengths, a notable limitation lies in the lack of supplementary exercises and online resources. This deficiency may present challenges for students who require additional practice or seek to delve deeper into specific topics. The absence of readily available online resources also limits students' access to interactive learning experiences and independent exploration beyond the confines of the textbook.

Finally, the coursebook's visual presentation is generally effective, contributing to a positive and engaging learning experience. The use of attractive design elements, including high-quality illustrations and a well-structured layout, enhances the overall aesthetic appeal and

readability of the text. However, the absence of an index and appendices may hinder student navigation and limit their ability to access supplementary information quickly and efficiently.

C. How the Coursebook Fit with the Teacher

This section delves into the critical perspective of the teacher, examining the extent to which the 8th-grade English Coursebook effectively supports their instructional needs. The analysis focuses on assessing the coursebook's usability and its alignment with the teacher's teaching style, experience, and preferences. Table 4.7 presents the findings of this evaluation, highlighting the key areas where the coursebook effectively supports the teaching and learning process.

Table 3.3 How Fit the Coursebook with the Teacher

<i>How fit with the Teacher</i>	0	1	2	3	4
<i>The coursebook content is appropriate with respect to ...</i>					
1. <i>teaching style & preferences</i>					✓
2. <i>teaching experience levels</i>					✓
3. <i>level of English (for NNS teachers)</i>					✓
4. <i>designing a syllabus</i>				✓	
5. <i>teaching from provided explanations</i>				✓	
6. <i>ease of using & expanding example or activities</i>				✓	
7. <i>accessing & using ancillaries including guides with advice, tests, and answer keys, and/or multi-media supplements</i>		✓			
Total Fit Score (Students) 22 /28 of 7 items					

The coursebook demonstrates a strong emphasis on teacher-friendliness, evident in its well-organized structure and clear presentation of information. The systematic organization, coupled with the use of headings, subheadings, and visual cues, facilitates easy navigation and understanding of the content. Furthermore, the inclusion of teacher's guides provides valuable support, offering insights into effective teaching strategies, tips for facilitating class discussions, and guidance on assessing student understanding.

The coursebook effectively leverages supplementary materials, such as audio and video resources, to enrich the learning experience. These materials provide valuable opportunities for

interactive learning and enhance student engagement. While a dedicated companion book is absent, the coursebook itself comprehensively integrates all necessary information for both teachers and students, minimizing the need for external resources. Moreover, the provided guidelines ensure that teachers can effectively integrate these supplementary materials into their lessons, enhancing their instructional effectiveness.

The examples presented within the coursebook are not only relevant and engaging for students but also highly valuable for teachers. The clear and concise presentation of these examples makes it easier for teachers to explain complex concepts and facilitate student understanding. Furthermore, the flexibility of these examples allows teachers to adapt them to suit the specific needs and learning styles of their students, fostering a more dynamic and personalized learning experience.

The coursebook effectively caters to diverse learning styles by offering a variety of engaging activities for students. These activities, ranging from individual tasks to group projects, provide opportunities for active learning and cater to different learning preferences. By incorporating a diverse range of activities, the coursebook ensures that all students have the opportunity to engage with the material in a way that best suits their learning style, fostering a more inclusive and effective learning environment.

The design and layout of the coursebook are visually appealing and highly supportive of the teaching process. The effective use of white space, clear fonts, and strategic use of color enhances readability and makes the text visually engaging for both teachers and students. The inclusion of high-quality illustrations and diagrams effectively complements the textual content, enhancing student understanding and providing visual cues for teachers to utilize during instruction.

While the coursebook exhibits numerous strengths in supporting teacher effectiveness, the absence of a dedicated instructor's manual with detailed implementation guides, extension exercises, and answer keys may present some challenges. This requires teachers to invest additional time and effort in lesson planning and assessment preparation. However, despite this limitation, the coursebook provides a strong foundation for effective teaching and learning, enabling teachers to adapt and implement the materials to best suit the needs of their students.

DISCUSSION

This study meticulously evaluated the 8th-grade English Coursebook, examining its suitability and effectiveness across multiple dimensions. Building upon the framework established by Byrd & Schuemann (2014), the analysis scrutinized the coursebook's alignment with three critical elements: the curriculum, student needs, and teacher requirements. Each element was

meticulously examined through a series of specific questions designed to uncover the coursebook's strengths and weaknesses across a spectrum of key dimensions.

The development of this coursebook reflects the unique educational landscape at MTs B, where the curriculum seamlessly integrates elements from both Kurikulum Merdeka and the Cambridge International Curriculum. This innovative approach necessitates a nuanced and flexible approach to materials development, demanding coursebooks that are not only curriculum-aligned but also engaging and responsive to the diverse learning needs of 21st-century students. Kurikulum Merdeka, with its emphasis on student-centered learning, empowers teachers and students to explore learning pathways that align with their interests and needs, fostering independent inquiry and collaborative learning. Conversely, the Cambridge International Curriculum emphasizes international standards and critical thinking skills, preparing students for the global challenges of the 21st century.

Integrating these distinct curricular frameworks presented a significant challenge. The coursebook developer, the 8th-grade English teacher, addressed this challenge by meticulously identifying points of convergence and divergence between the two curricula. This involved a careful analysis of core competencies, ensuring that the coursebook comprehensively develops students' English language skills across all four domains: speaking, listening, reading, and writing. Furthermore, the developer incorporated elements from the Cambridge International Curriculum, such as activities that encourage critical thinking, analytical skills, and independent learning, aligning with the principles of Kurikulum Merdeka.

A prime example of this integrated approach can be observed in the "Environmental Issues" chapter. While the Cambridge International Curriculum emphasizes in-depth textual analysis, the developer incorporated elements from Kurikulum Merdeka by including collaborative projects where students can independently investigate specific environmental issues of interest. These projects, culminating in multimedia presentations, not only enhance students' English language skills but also cultivate crucial 21st-century skills such as research, collaboration, and technological literacy.

By seamlessly integrating these diverse curricular elements, the developer has created a learning experience that is both engaging and academically rigorous. The focus on student interests and the provision of opportunities for independent exploration and collaborative learning fosters intrinsic motivation and enhances student engagement. Furthermore, the emphasis on real-world applications, such as the environmental issues project, makes learning more meaningful and relevant to students' lives, fostering a deeper understanding of the subject matter and its connection to the wider world.

However, while the coursebook demonstrates a commendable effort to cater to student interests and learning styles, it presents some limitations. Notably, the lack of supplementary exercises and online resources may hinder students' ability to consolidate their learning and deepen their understanding. Providing additional practice opportunities, such as online activities, interactive games, and supplementary worksheets, would significantly enhance student engagement and allow for more personalized learning experiences. Moreover, the absence of an index within the coursebook may impede student navigation and independent learning, potentially limiting their ability to effectively utilize the material and access information efficiently. An index would serve as a valuable resource for students to quickly locate specific information, facilitating independent research and study.

From the teacher's perspective, the coursebook offers a user-friendly interface with clear instructions and a well-organized structure, facilitating effective lesson planning and delivery. However, the absence of a comprehensive implementation guide and a dedicated companion book may present challenges for teachers in effectively planning and delivering lessons. These resources are crucial for providing detailed lesson plans, teaching tips, and assessment strategies, enabling teachers to effectively differentiate instruction and address the diverse learning needs of their students. While the coursebook includes some supplementary materials, such as audio and video resources, the lack of a more comprehensive support system may increase the workload for teachers in preparing and delivering engaging and effective instruction.

Furthermore, the coursebook's pedagogical approach, while incorporating some communicative elements, may not fully align with the principles of Second Language Acquisition (SLA). SLA emphasizes the importance of authentic communication, interactive language use, and contextualized learning experiences, fostering the natural development of language skills. In contrast, the coursebook, while incorporating some communicative elements, may still heavily rely on traditional grammar-translation methods, potentially limiting students' opportunities for authentic language use and interaction.

In conclusion, this comprehensive analysis provides valuable insights into the strengths and weaknesses of the 8th-grade English Coursebook. While the coursebook demonstrates a strong foundation in terms of curriculum alignment and student engagement, several key areas require further development. Incorporating more SLA-based principles, providing more extensive practice opportunities, and developing a comprehensive teacher's guide with detailed implementation support are crucial steps towards enhancing the effectiveness of the coursebook and ensuring a more enriching and rewarding learning experience for both students and teachers.

CONCLUSION

Based on the analysis of the coursebook through the lens of Byrd and Schuemann's (2014) checklist, several key findings emerged. While the coursebook demonstrates a commendable effort to align with both the Indonesian Kurikulum Merdeka and the Cambridge International Curriculum, reflecting a commitment to broad learning objectives, the primary teaching approach leans heavily on traditional, structured English Language Teaching (ELT) methods. This emphasis on grammar and vocabulary, while valuable, may not fully align with the principles of Second Language Acquisition (SLA). SLA emphasizes the importance of authentic communication, meaningful interaction, and real-world language use in fostering language acquisition. Integrating more communicative activities, such as role-plays, simulations, and project-based learning, could significantly enrich the learning experience and enhance students' ability to use English naturally and effectively.

From the student perspective, the current coursebook presents some limitations. The lack of sufficient practice opportunities, including supplementary exercises and online resources, may hinder students' ability to consolidate their learning and develop fluency. The absence of an index within the coursebook poses a significant obstacle to student navigation and independent learning, potentially impacting their ability to effectively utilize the material. Furthermore, incorporating more interactive elements, such as online games, quizzes, and multimedia resources, could enhance student engagement and motivation.

Regarding teacher support, while the coursebook itself provides a basic framework for instruction, the lack of a comprehensive teacher's guide represents a significant challenge. A well-developed guide would provide teachers with valuable resources, including detailed lesson plans, teaching tips, and assessment strategies. This would not only enhance the effectiveness of instruction but also alleviate the burden on teachers in preparing and delivering lessons. Additionally, the inclusion of a companion book with supplementary materials, such as worksheets, activities, and assessments, would further support teachers in diversifying their instructional approaches and providing students with a more comprehensive learning experience.

Based on these findings, several key recommendations can be made. Firstly, the developers should strive to integrate more principles of Second Language Acquisition into the coursebook, emphasizing communicative activities and authentic language use. Secondly, the coursebook should be enhanced with a wealth of supplementary materials, including additional exercises, online resources, and a comprehensive index, to provide students with ample opportunities for practice and independent learning. Finally, the development of a comprehensive teacher's guide and a companion book is crucial to provide teachers with the necessary support for effective lesson

planning and implementation. By addressing these recommendations, the developers can significantly enhance the quality and effectiveness of the coursebook, ensuring that it better serves the needs of both students and teachers in the pursuit of high-quality English language education.

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