EFL STUDENTS' PERCEPTIONON THE TEXTBOOK SELECTED BY THEIR COURSE INSTRUCTOR

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Abstract

Students perception on selectedtextbook they use can be a meaningful information in helping them achieve their learning goal and generally in helping the teacher in designing the course. This paper was aimed at describing EFL students' perception on a selected textbook entitled *Second Language Acquisition: An Introduction* written by Muriel Saville-Troike published in 2012. The participants of this descriptive study were 40 EFL students enrolled in Second Language Acquisition course in academic year 2019/2020 in a public university in Jambi, Indonesia. The data were gathered through questionnaire response and WhatsApp discussion. It was revealed that majority of the students perceive that the book is informative, useful, and needed but difficult to understand. The students suggested to develop additional simple material to the book which consist of brief explanation and example, easy to understand words, and have interesting and eye-catching design. This information could be used to design and develop additional course material.

Keywords: *coursebook, course material development, students' perception*

INTRODUCTION

Course materials have important role in language learning and teaching situation. It facilitates the learning and teaching process. The material also guides the students step-by-step to practice the target language. It provides an appropriate source for students to learn, encourage students to practice more of target language, and it also helps the students to learn and discover more about language through its materials. According to Tomlinson (2013) materials are anything that can be used to facilitate the language learning. Textbook, dictionaries, electronic translators, flashcards, and link to online course are some of the examples of course materials.

One of the course materials that commonly used in language teaching and learning is textbook. Textbook plays an essential role in this modern education for different school subject (Cimer & Coskun, 2018). In most language program textbook become the key component. According to Richards (n.d) textbook provide the basis of lesson content. It may also provide ideas for teacher instruction. He asserted that language teaching throughout the world could not take place without the use of commercial textbook.

Commonly, educators used the textbook as the curriculum guidance and the source to prepare the lesson. The quality of the textbook that selected by teacher is impactful on the teacher's instructor quality (Ogan-Bekiroglu, 2007; Robinson et al, 2014; Cimer & Coskum, 2018). The quality of textbook that used by the language practitioners should be as the model of the right teaching and should facilitate the students' language learning (Dongxing, 2020). Therefore, the selection of textbook should be taken into consideration since it can influence

to the teaching and learning process. Nowadays there is a wealth of course materials available. Wider choice means more need for evaluationprior to selection.

The textbook that selected should enhance students' understanding toward the subject. It means that the selection of textbook should be taken into consideration since it used as the media to facilitate the learning. Cited from Nurhamsih (2017) according to Grant (1987) the textbooks should contain the following features: 1) The textbook should be identifying what is going to be taught and learned and the order of it also should be taught and learned. 2)The textbook should be indicating the method that should be used to it. 3)The textbook should be provided the material neatly, attractively, and economically, or provided most the material that needed. 4) The textbook should be saved the teachers' time. 5) The textbook should be acted as the very useful learning aid for the students.

In university, the textbook used is mostly academic textbook. The textbook is categorized as content-area reading. Content-area reading refers as the subject matter reading and disciplinary reading which called as reading to learn. Beck, McKeown, and Kucan (2013) classified the words into 3 tiers which are; a) Tier 1: the words that are frequently used and commonly used by children, b) Tier 2: the words that are high utility academic areas which found in across content areas, c) Tier 3: the words in this tier consist of content-specific vocabulary which often used in textbook or glossaries. The vocabularies that commonly used in academic textbook are in tier 3 which means it is low frequency domain specific words. Therefore, it can be said that the words used in academic textbook are quite difficult since it contains the jargon words that important to the particular subject.

Beside the advantages of using textbook, it also has some limitations. Textbook may consist of inauthentic language, or it does not reflect the students' need. If, for some reasons, teacher has to use certain textbook, the teacher has to adjust it with the target students. There may be some parts of the textbook which are not exactly suitable for the students.

Considering the advantage and limitation of textbook, the remedial action should be taken if the textbooks that are being used in a program are judged tohave some negative consequences (Richards, n.d). Adapting or supplementing it or providing appropriate guidance on how to use it appropriately can be the option to be taken. That is why students' perception on the textbook they use is considered important.

Regarding to students' opinion and perception on their course textbook, many studies were conducted.Uyulgan, Ozbayrak, Alpat, &Alpat (2010) studied about teacher and students' opinion on secondary education chemistry textbook which aimed to determine the opinion by teacher and students regarding to the textbook. Then, Cimer& Coskun (2018) studied the students' opinions on the ninth grader biology textbook that based on the perspective of constructivist learning approach. According to the study above, the students seems satisfied, however, some of the aspect of the textbook should be improved since it still insufficient, lack of activity, and did not support the learning approach.

In a public university in Jambi Indonesia, thecoursebook that commonly used in Second Language Acquisition (SLA) course is *Introducing Second Language Acquisition* by Muriel Saville-Troike (2012). Troike defines SLA as a language learning process other than the first language and also a study of that learning.In the university, it is a compulsory course that aims to foster students understanding of the concept of language acquisition and learning (2017 curriculum) so that they have knowledge base for teaching. Other textbook about Second language Acquisition such as those that written by Ellis (2000) and by Spada (2005) were also used as the course materialbeside various other sources in the form of journal

articles that can be accessed on the internet. However, the course book written by Troike was selected as main coursebook because it is the newestin publication and is regarded more relevant by the course instructor.

The book written by Troike contains the concepts of second language learning written in metalanguage terms, namely terms that require additional information to be understood. In addition, the examples given arein a foreign context, foreign culture. There is no Indonesian context, let alone Jambi, contained in it. It is categorized into content-area reading. Content-area reading refers as the subject matter reading and disciplinary reading. In the content-area reading, the vocabulary that used is in different way to employ the meaning or it contains the difficult words. Based on Beck, McKeown, and Kucan (2013) the vocabularies can be explained as the low frequency domain specific word or the jargon words that important to the particular subject, e.g. *critical period hypothesis*. It might be difficult for the students to understand the meaning since it contains uncommon vocabulary.

Usually, to understand the existing concepts, students are asked to read the recommended textbook independently, followed by teacher explanation and discussion. However, this method has not been very effective. Based on the experience ofteaching SLA courses in recent years, not all students read the recommended readings.This fact is in accordance with the results of research by Mardiah and Anastasia (2018) which states that students are less interested in reading if the topics and materials to be read are heavy topics or those are recommended by the course instructor.

Since there is a possibility of the SLA students faced challenge related to the course material that selected by the course instructor, the students' perception is regarded useful. This is in line with whatTomlinson (2013) asserted that research hasstressed the importance of the learner and their role in the language classroom.Therefore, this study aimed to describe the students' perception on the SLA main course book which is expected to contribute to the second language acquisition practitioners as the consideration while using and developing course materials.

METHODS

This descriptive quantitative research was conducted in English Education study program at a public university in Jambi. It was categorized as descriptive quantitative because of the purpose was describing the students' perception on the course book they have used. The participants were 40 students who enrolled in Second Language Acquisition course in the even semester of 2019/2020 academic year. They were selected based on their eagerness to fill in the questionnaire and in their involvement in WhatsApp group discussion.

The instrument used to obtain the data was questionnaire. The questionnaire that was distributed and collected contains questions regarding to the students' perspective toward academic text in the selected Second Language Acquisition textbook. The questionnaire was distributed at the time the students using the course book. It was at the beginning of the spread out of corona pandemic in Indonesia.The questionnaire was distributed through WhatsApp group to 2 SLA classes which consists of more than 40 students. However, there were only 40 students responded to the questionnaire. The students returned the questionnaire which had been filled through WhatsApp. After it has been returned, the responses were analyzed descriptively.The data were counted manually, andMicrosoft Word 2010 was used to create graphic that aimed to make it easier to analyze and to describe

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Result

The result was described based on students' perception on: 1) their ability in understanding the textbook, 2) the qualification of the textbook and course references, 3) the development of supplementary course materials, 4) which part of the book should be developed.

Students ability in understanding the textbook

The students' perception related to their reading ability and the academic text (the textbook) used in Second Language Acquisition course is positive. It can be seen in figure 1. As shown, from 40 respondents, 21chose*"above my reading ability"*, 19 respondents chose *"in my reading ability"*, and no respondent chose *"below my reading ability"*.
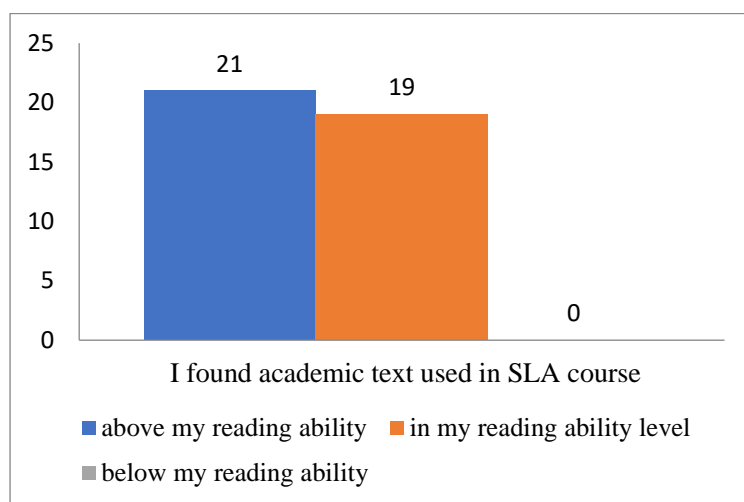

Figure 1: Students' perception about their reading ability on the course book

The description above is in accordance with their response to the statement *'the problem is not about the book and SLA concepts, but about my ability to read academic texts'*. This negative statement is a tool to check their previous response. The students perceive that they have problem regarding to their ability on reading academic text (figure 2)
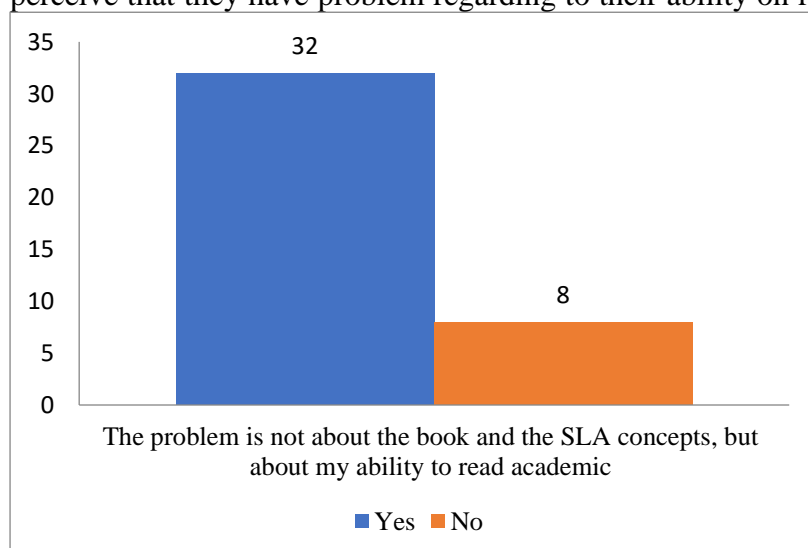
Figure 2: students' statement about their problem in reading academic text

It means that the textbook that was being used is suitable for them, and it was also suitable with their reading ability although it was a little bit challenging. Therefore, it can be concluded that the academic text available is still acceptable for some of the students. However, to make it acceptable for all it should be adapted since some of the students found that the text is above their reading ability. Besides, an activity which help them to understand the text better is needed such as reading more and varied source material with challenging activity.

The qualification of the SLA course book

In figure 3, the responds from the students regarding to the qualification of Second Language Acquisition course book that lecture used in this semester was varied. Students responded positively toward the course book. As shown, 34 students found that the course book *"Informative"*, 28 students found it *"Useful"*, and 28 students found out that the course bookis *"Needed"*. Then, 1 student also found out that the textbook is *"Easy"*and 11 students found out it is *"Comprehensive"*. However, there are several students have different perception towards the course book. They think that the book is not their type and has other opinion related to the qualification of the textbook.

According to 6 students, the book is not their type and 5 students stated that the textbook is needed but it is difficult to comprehend.Some metalanguage concept it containsmake them confuse. Although the textbook is needed for them, some of them still have the problem in comprehending the textbook and commonly related to the word that used in the book.
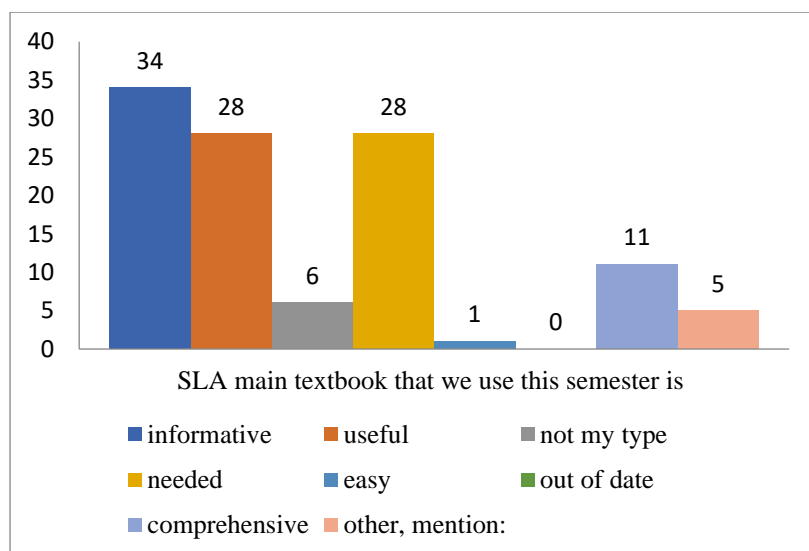

Figure 3 Students' opinion about the qualification of the used of SLA course book

The development of the additional course materials

The students' perception toward the development of the additional course material that will be used for Second Language Acquisition class is showed in figure 4. It can be seen that the students show the strong agreement toward the additional material. All respondents agree that the additional material should be developed. It means, all of the students who responded to

the questionnaire agree with the development of the additional course materials, which can help them to learn Second Language Acquisitionto help the students to enhance their learning.
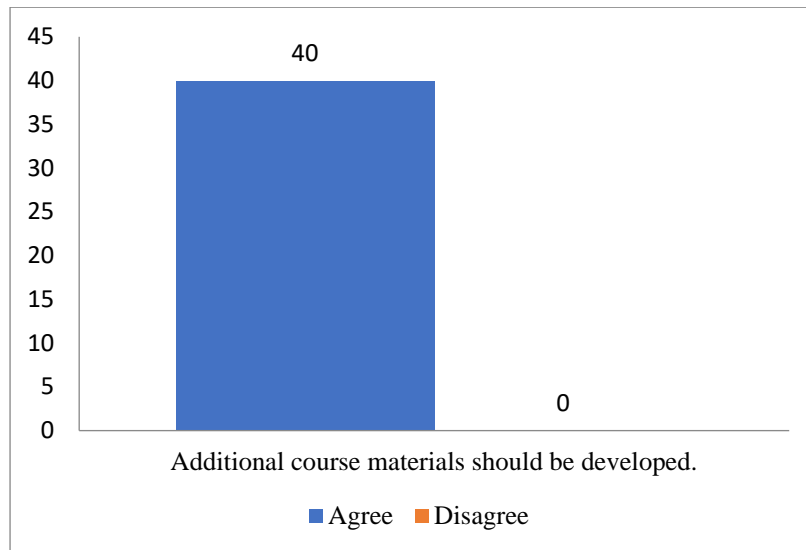

Figure 4 Students' opinion about the development of the additional course materials

The part of the book that should be developed

The students have various perception related to the part of the textbook that should be developed. From 40 respondents, 32 students perceived that the choice of words and the example given should be considered to be developed. Then, 16 students perceive it was the media, and 14 students chose the content that should be developed. Furthermore, 13 students chose "*the metalanguage terms used*" and 8 students chose *"the context"*. Two students perceived that it was the format that should be developed and 1 student responded other opinion which is the text should be to the point. Generally, the students expected the book that is easy to understand, for instance the choice of words should be taken into consideration and provide the example for each explanation to make it easier to comprehend. Then, the students also expected the material is developed by considering the media available, the content, the metalanguage term, the context, the format, and also the material should be to the point. Overall, the students have different point of view related to the part of book that should be developed. Therefore, several things that are mentioned above should be considered for the development.
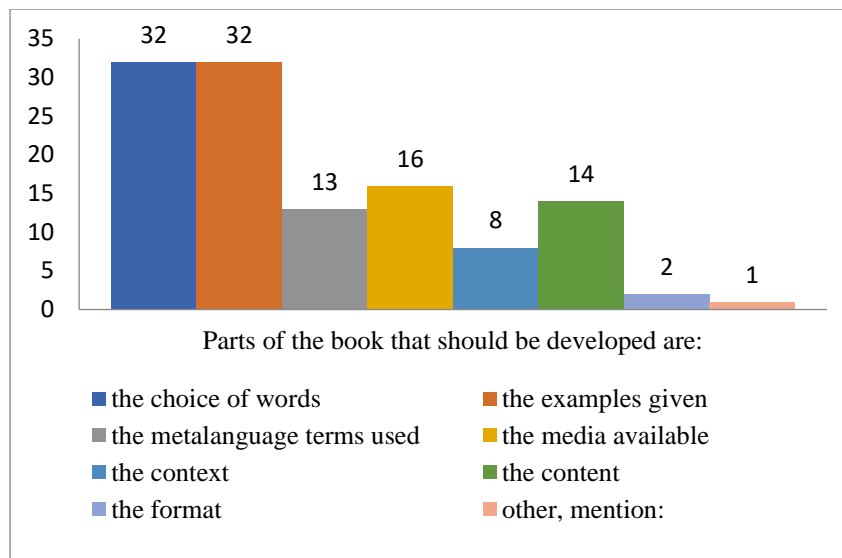
Figure 5Students' opinion about the part of the book that should be developed

The open-ended question in the questionnaire consist of a question about students' suggestion about the main materials to be used as reference in SLA course. From 40 students, there are 25 students who have the similar suggestion with these following statements: 1) The main references should have a brief explanation of the material, 2) The main references should consider the choice of word that is easy to understand, 3) The main references should contain the example that is in accordance with student's understanding and also exist in their closest environment, 4) The main references should consider the design or layout that is interesting and eye-catching.

Furthermore, the rest of them suggested that the material should have media like video or podcast, the material should be in printed one, that support teaching and learning. Overall, the students have different opinion on suggesting the main reference and the students' suggestion should be taken into account for the prospective course material.

Discussion

The students positively respond towards the course book. The textbook was acceptable and appropriate for the students since majority of the students found out that it is informative, useful, and needed. The textbook considered as adequate for the quality of the content in the book. Although, some of the students found out that the text is in their reading ability, many of the students still found out the text that used in book is above their reading ability. It means that the material acceptable for some of the students but for some of the students still unacceptable since the material is above their reading ability. Therefore, the material that will be used or developed should be easy to understand for the students in term of the choices of words. In general, the students satisfied with that textbook that used by the practitioner, but some of the students dissatisfied with the book since it is not their type and the textbook also quite difficult to comprehend by the students.

In-use andpost-use evaluations are important in establishing how successful learning materialsare (McDonough & Shaw, 2003: 71).

Then, all of the students agreed for the development for the additional material. Almost all of the students expected the material should consider the choice of words and the example for each of explanation. Furthermore, the students also believe that the problem is in their reading academic text ability not about the course book that used. For the future main reference for Second Language Acquisition course book, the students suggested several parts that should be taken into consideration. In this open-ended question-answer, the students suggested that it should have a brief explanation of the material, consider the choice of word that easy to understand, contain the example that is in accordance with student's understanding also exist in their closest environment, and consider the design or layout that is interesting and eye-catching.

CONCLUSION

The future SLA textbook should be considered the students' expectation and suggestion for the better understanding of the topic. In conclusion, it is essential for the textbook developer or designer to find out the students' opinion and suggestion as the general view while designing the new course book in order to assure the effectiveness of teaching and learning by using the book.In-use and post-use evaluations are important in establishing how successful learning materials are (McDonough & Shaw, 2003). Thus, determining the students' perception on the course book that selected by the course instructor is imperative since it can find out the students' lack and interest towards the book.

Concluded based on this phenomenon, it is deemed necessary to provide teaching materials in the form of additional readings that can make students interested in reading and understanding of the SLA metalanguage concepts by developing them from existing books.

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