

## **An Evaluation of EFL Textbooks Entitled “New Access English for Academic Purposes” for Undergraduate Students**

(A Case Study at Faculty of Economic and Business, University of Serang Raya)

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### **ABSTRACT**

The present study is a case specific attempt to explore the effectiveness of English as a foreign language textbooks entitled *New Access English for Academic Purposes Revised Edition* on the students active learning in EFL situation. The current research underpinned an indepth approach which led to descriptive analysis data collection through a textbook evaluation checklist. It was addressed to 40 undergraduate students in EFL classroom. Textbook evaluation checklist was built on both close and open-ended questions which were comprehensively analyzed separately. The findings revealed that the textbook contributes much advantages on the students active learning, be able to stimulate students in the EFL learning situations, and assist the EFL teachers or lecturers in designing sistematically their classroom learning activities based on the learning objectives and expectation written in the textbook. As explained in the findings of research that some students feel encouraged in terms of utilizing the designed textbook in the language classroom, they thought the EFL textbook is able to improve their English language skills especially in reading, listening, writing, speaking and grammar understanding. Although in the other side, the EFL learners responded that there would be better if the author of textbook tried to make some need analysis for improving and formulating much better language learning materials. Additionally, the EFL lecturers feel assisted after using the textbook for EFL students to construct effectively their course syllabus and language learning activities in the classroom.

**Keywords:** EFL textbook, textbook evaluation, undergraduate students' views.

### **INTRODUCTION**

Textbooks are considered an essential learning aids which take a part crucially in English language learning and teaching activities. They may encourage or discourage learners according to teaching materials. Textbooks are type of program for teachers which lead them manage their time and sequent activities to improve English language learning quality in the EFL classes. Being at the essence of language teaching and learning process, textbooks are defined through a variety of resources by several English language scholars. Tomlinson (1998) uses the term “coursebook” in the place of “textbook” and states that “a coursebook is a textbook that provides the basic materials for a course and it serves as the only book used by the learners during a course. It

usually covers work on grammar vocabulary, pronunciation, functions and the four skills”.

This is similarly described by Hutchinson and Torres (1994) that a textbook as “an important means of satisfying the range of needs that emerge from the classroom and its wider context”. In the process of EFL learning and teaching textbooks have a high position in this matter. Regarding the primary purpose of the ELT textbooks, Byrd (2001) states that ELT textbooks embody two kinds of information, which are thematic/topic content (family, school, etc) and linguistic content (grammar, vocabulary, skills). In terms of the EFL textbook advantages, Richards (2001) states that without textbooks a program may have no path, therefore they provide structure and a syllabus. Besides the use of a textbook in a program can guarantee that students in different classes will receive a similar content and therefore can be evaluated in the same way. In other words textbooks provide the standards in instruction. Moreover, they include a variety of learning resources such as workbooks, CDs and cassettes, videos, etc., which makes the learning environment interesting and enjoyable for the learners. As for inexperienced teachers, Richards (2001) states that textbooks can serve as a tool to train them. Finally, he concludes that textbooks are efficient in that they allow much time for the teacher to focus on teaching rather than material’s production.

After having very indepth interpretation about EFL textbook, the researchers highlighted that EFL textbooks are strongly important learning and teaching materials which can assist EFL learners to learn English in EFL contexts. Textbook will also encourage EFL students to have more exercises and learn thematic and linguistic contents which are structurally written in order to be able to build learners’ four skills namely speaking, reading, listening and writing in a foreign language. In other words the primary purpose of many EFL textbooks is to help learners to learn thoroughly the linguistic content through the use of the thematic content.

There have been controversial ideas about the role of English textbooks in EFL teaching and learning all over the world. In Indonesia many studies have been done on textbook evaluation. As the reseachers considered that the used textbook in EFL learning context should be comprehensively evaluated its strengths and weaknesses in order to meet what learners and teachers need and expect in terms of utilizing textbook

which consists of 8 units entitled New Access English for Academic Purposes revised edition. Textbook evaluation is an effective approach which enables the EFL teachers or researchers to conduct indepth evaluation on textbook so that it can let the EFL teachers and researchers know well what to decide to do with their learning and teaching English written materials. Textbook evaluation is very useful in that it allows the teachers or language instructors to choose the most suitable book for their language learners. EFL textbook is highly needed to encourage an active learning and teaching situation. EFL textbook will be able to facilitate teachers and learners to practice and organize learning activities more effectively.

It can be seen above, a textbook should aim to provide as much as possible in one book and should be adequate to meet all the needs of the students during the course so as to reach achievement in target language learning. As textbooks are important in learning process, their quality should be taken into account. Since no textbook can be qualified, therefore textbook evaluation is used to find out its suitability. As to the significance of textbook evaluation in the field of ELT, the researchers qualitatively analyzed the EFL textbook for undergraduate students in the first academic year and its evaluation which wholistically explains 5 (five) essential questions namely; layout and design, objectives of textbook, language skills, motivation, and evaluation was based on the checklist adapted from Litz (2001).

The purpose of this study is to evaluate and criticize comprehensively the EFL textbooks for undergarduate students in the first academic year on the basis of current theories of foreign language curriculum, and to determine how well this textbook enables teachers to effectively operate in their classrooms. A checklist was employed as the tool for gathering data in this study and 40 students of accounting major faculty of economic and business university of serang raya were involved with the objective of evaluating the EFL textbooks using the checklist. In the course of study, the researchers will set out to address the following research questions:

1. How does the undergraduate students percieve toward the English textbook for pre-intermediate level first academic year?
2. How can the English textbook be useful effectively for undergraduate students in the first academic year?

## TEXT BOOK EVALUATION

In all types of educational institution and colleges, textbook play a significant role in language classroom. Teachers, learners and language materials are one unity which can not be separated with each other. Learning objectives will be successfully achieved if the teachers and learners can work together on organizing language learning processes through selecting the most convenient language coursebook that fit to students language capability and their learning situation. EFL textbook is a media of language learning reference that necessarily enables the learners to get improved their integrated skills and teachers to optimize the language learning process in order to succeed their learning goals. However, the researchers can not justify that the textbook which is used for undergraduate students at first academic year is better, we were really eager to investigate the effectiveness of using an existing EFL textbook from the perspectives of learners by having look descriptively at layout design, objectives of textbook, language skills, motivation, and evaluation.

A suggested checklist for ELT coursebook evaluation was proposed by Demir and Ertas (2014) They argue that coursebook evaluation helps practitioners decide on the most appropriate coursebook to be exploited. Moreover, evaluation process enables to predict the potential strengths and weaknesses of a given coursebook. Checklist method is probably the most widely adopted way of judging coursebooks and there are plenty of ELT coursebook evaluation checklists available designed for making material selection and evaluation process easier and systematic.

According to Ellis (1997), there are two types of evaluation namely micro-evaluation and macro- evaluation. A macro evaluation is related to general assessment of whether materials are effective or not but in micro evaluation, the teacher chooses a special activity to be regarded to empirical evaluation. Sheldon (1988) highlighted that there are some considerable factors that reviewers, administrators, teachers, learners, and educational advisers most frequently use in deciding whether or not a textbook is chosen. It includes factual details of the textbook, such as title, author, publisher, etc. It also includes several factors, such as rationale, availability, layout, authenticity, etc., which are going to be assessed into four criteria, poor, fair, good, or excellent. Additionally, Wong (2009) summed up that an evaluation checklist will ensure the

examination of textbooks from several angles which focused on linguistic content, cultural and real world content, support for teachers, clear guidance for students, and practical concerns that play a role in textbook evaluation and selection. The evaluation takes into account these four perspectives—linguistic and other content, learner needs, teacher support, and practical considerations.

Numerous studies have been carried out to explore textbook evaluation. Reinildis (2013) points out that the research findings shows the overall fulfilment of the textbook entitled “English in Mind Starter (Student’s Book)” by utilizing descriptive qualitative, content analysis and evaluation rating scale toward the eight factors of consideration reached 79.86% meaning that the textbook was categorized as good. In line with the textbook evaluation, Rizky (2016) reveals that the textbook evaluation was conducted to investigate the appropriateness of the textbook contents by using descriptive qualitative method. A checklist adapted from BSNP (2014) framework for textbook evaluation was made, focused on the areas of relevance of materials with competency standards and basic competencies, materials accuracy, and supporting learning materials. The findings show that both textbooks were appropriate in terms of content based on BSNP framework for textbook evaluation.

Furthermore, Nuarrifa (2017) in her research showed that Interactive English for Junior High School had fulfilled the criteria of a good textbook by achieving the fulfillment score of 61 % with coverage 71 % for relevance of materials to the curriculum, 100 % for materials accuracy, 30 % for supporting materials, 56 % for language appropriateness, 50 % for presentation technique, 67 % for teaching and learning technique, and 56 % for presentation coverage. The textbook was relevant to the 2013 Curriculum due to the presentational activities and character building. It was then recommended that teachers should modify the tasks which did not meet the criteria of a good textbook especially in the area of content aspects.

After having insightful discussions about the textbook evaluation conducted by many language experts and researchers, then the researchers concluded that the textbook evaluation is a crucial instrument to evaluate one or more textbooks partially or wholistically using the certain evaluation standards of education so that the EFL teachers and learners find out its suitability, strengths and weaknesses in the EFL learning context. The primary problem of this textbook content evaluation was whether

the content of 'New Access English for Academic Purposes (Student's Book)' met the requirements of good EFL textbook criteria cover five factors of consideration namely layout design, objectives of textbook, language skills, motivation, and evaluation. Therefore, the researcher is strongly interested in discovering the effectiveness of the existing EFL textbook that currently is used by utilizing the modified textbook evaluation checklist and will be analyzed qualitatively.

## **METHODOLOGY**

### **A. Design of the Study**

This study employed qualitative research approach. The use of qualitative data collection methods is expected to be able to lead to deeper insight into the understanding of the phenomenon under investigation. Fourty EFL undergraduate students at non english education department involved in the research.

### **B. Materials**

The material used in this study included modified textbook evaluation checklist. As a matter of fact, it had 5-point scales in the Likert format and the learners were asked to mark their beliefs by ticking one of the five boxes in each elicitation question. The data emerging from ticking one of the 5-point scales were numerical. Hence, they were analyzed quantitatively. A sample of the items of the textbook evaluation checklist is provided in the Appendix.

### **C. Procedures**

After obtaining the necessary permissions from the dean of Faculty of Economic and Business, the textbook evaluation checklist was distributed among 40 undergraduate learners to capture their perspectives about the existing EFL textbook. To be more specific, the textbook evaluation checklist disseminated and collected simultaneously in the same day. For analyzing collected data by means of the evaluation checklist first the answers were quantified. Each option of the items was ranked (1- strongly disagree, 2- disagree, 3- agree and 4- strongly agree).

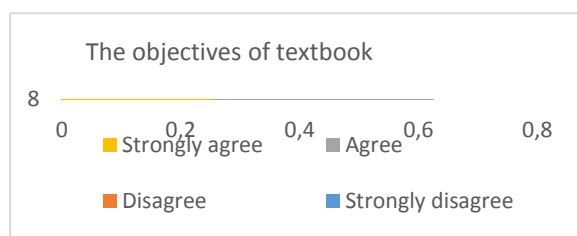
## FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

After the research data was analyzed, the researcher revealed the findings of research data and attempted to answer the formulated questions of this research;

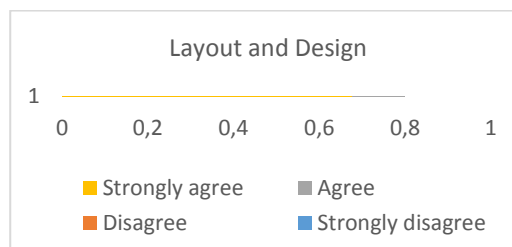
1. How do the undergraduate students perceive toward the English textbook for pre-intermediate level first academic year?

The data was gathered by using evaluation checklist for undergraduate students involved in the study. It consisted of 36 questions which are divided into 5 sections namely layout design, the objectives of textbook, language skills, motivation and evaluation as can be illustrated in the graphics below;

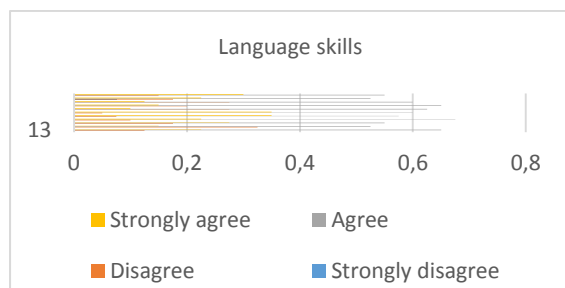
**Figure 1. Layout and design**



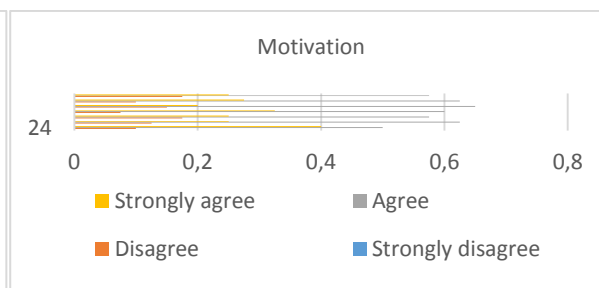
**Figure 2. The objectives of textbook**



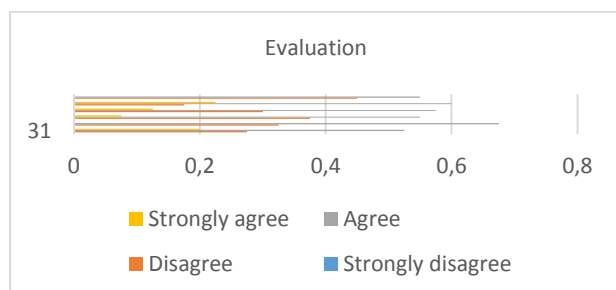
**Figure 3. Language skills**



**Figure 4. Motivation**



**Figure 5. Evaluation**



Based on the results of evaluation which was given to the EFL students that they mostly expressed what they have experienced in using the existing printed textbook entitled “New Access English for Academic Purposes” for undergraduate students in the

first academic year at one of private universities in Serang city. The evaluation was adapted and modified from David Litz (2001) which explains five (5) sections and consist of 36 questions. The graphics clearly showed as can be seen in the figure 1, learners gave their responses on the first section that is layout and design consisted of 7 questions, generally 91% of 40 learners responded that the books cover is an attractive and its information written in the back side cover indicating its contents, the pages at the beginning of textbook guides the learners on how take advantages of it, there is a detail list of content, each lesson has a title, but 20,8% learners presented that not all design, illustrations, pictures in the textbook are so attractive. Because they thought that the textbook would be much attractive and eyes catching when it shows colorful pictures and ilustration.

In the figure 2, it can be clearly described that the objectives of textbook which covered 5 questions on the second section are clear objectives, because 78% of 40 learners responded that the textbook clarifies its objectives written at the beginning was easy to read and to understand, it reflects the learners needs in the context of EFL learning activities, because the textbook covers integrated skills and varied interesting exercises that make the learners engaged actively to practice and learn the English language, meanwhile 23% of undergraduate students said that the objectives are not completely presented in each lesson therefore the learners feel confused what they are supposed to do with the printed language materials in the textbook. The textbook has not fulfilled what the learners expect to get because they do not find the clear objectives in each lesson.

The figure 3 descriptively presented the findings in the section of language skills which consisted of 11 questions, the learners reported that 81,5% the textbook is able to stimulate their listening skills because there are some listening sections in each unit for their practices, grammar corner can assist the learners to learn and practice a variety of grammar, many activities that enable the learners actively engaged in the learning process, the book contains excrises and activities increase the learners' ability to speak English, and the book leads the learners to have a critical thinking skill. In other side, 17,6% learners raised their responses that the textbook is too many exercises which make them hard to finish their worksheets, and some of the learners



feel hard to understand the grammar sections of textbook that is why they can not accomplish some of the language exercises easily, and the learners thought that the EFL textbook is supposed to present much easier language materials and exercises that can fit to what the learners need.

There were 7 questions in the section of motivation described 87% of 40 learners that the textbook can help them to improve their integrated skill such as reading, listening, writing and speaking. Additionally the learners are well motivated to learn a variety of grammar provided in the textbook in which they can sharpen their understanding about English grammar patterns. The textbook also provided them vocabulary enrichment in order to make them familiarized with regular and irregular verbs. Whereas 13% of 40 learners commented that they can not be effectively engaged the learning activities because some of them were still lack of grammar understanding and do not know many English vocabularies that make them feel difficult to construct the sentences based on grammatical patterns.

In the last section evaluation that consisted of 6 questions has already revealed the findings that about 73% of the learners said the textbook offered a variety of exercises and learning activities to improve their language skills, the given language exercises was suitable to the content of discussion, the EFL learners can practice anywhere and anytime what they learned in the classroom through the existing textbook because it provided some more grammar corners that would make them easily to comprehend the grammatical patterns. However some of the learners about 31% argued that the textbook presented some difficult grammar patterns to learn because they said they have never learned the given grammar patterns, they were requiring some guidances how to understand the language structure effectively. The researcher tries to make the group chat through whatsapp application in order to facilitate them to have more consultation, give them much more opportunities to raise questions about any single written learning material in the textbook, and motivate them to do much practices through the printed textbook.

2. How can the English textbook be useful effectively for undergraduate students in the first academic year?

The second research question can be interpreted that most of undergraduate students expressed the EFL textbook which have been using was very helpful for their language practices in the EFL classroom circumstance. "New Access English for Academic Purposes (Student's Book)" has fulfilled the characteristics of students-centred approach in learning method. The textbook focuses on students' need, ability, interest, style, and active participation. In the textbook, also, there are lots of realistic group and pair work activities that define the characteristics of students-centred approach. The findings has already proven that there were 91% of 40 learners responded the textbook that has been existingly used for undergraduate students is very good because the learners are getting more interested in learning the English as foreign language and the textbook is very helpful for them to activate their learning circumstances in the classroom. Additionally 87% of learners stated that the textbook can enacourage their integrated skills, because it provides the four fundamental language skills namely, listening, reading, writing and speaking also grammar corner and vocabulary enrichment are available. Most of them thought that by using the textbook effectively they could learn and practice the language and achieve their learning objectives. It can be sum up that the textbook realistically should be able to facilitate the learners in language learning activities and direct them on how to act out appropriately the learning materials. Because textbook is an essential guide for EFL learners to practice and learn so that they can be an independent learner.

## **CONCLUSION**

The English textbook entitled "New Access English for Academic Purposes" fulfilled 78% criteria of the good EFL textbook that can be seen from the constructive obejctives and guidances of utilizing the textbook. According to the percentage of fulfilment, it can be concluded that the textbook was categorized as good in fulfilling the requirements of good EFL textbook criteria covering the availability of materials based on layout and design, the obbjectives of textbook, language skills, motivation and evaluation. However, from the above-mentioned percentage of fulfilment, there are still 23% criteria that is unfulfilled by the textbook especially in term of content organization and thematic aspects. In sum, the researcher conclude that the existing textbook is suitable for undergraduate students in the first academic year in EFL

learning as either a supplementary or primary textbook. Based on the finding, discussion, and conclusion of this textbook evaluation study, researcher would like to present some suggestions for those who associate with textbook evaluation. The first suggestion is for teacher. Teachers' role is a facilitator, not instructor anymore. As facilitators, teachers should facilitate their students' learning needs by providing good and suitable learning materials. As materials, this textbook also has weaknesses especially in terms of content organization and thematic aspects. Considering the elaboration of weaknesses found in the textbook, teacher should bridge the gap by providing printed handouts that should be taught based on what students need and the contextual learning. Therefore, teachers need to be more critical and creative in overcoming the limitation of textbook used by making teacher-made hand-out contained additional materials and exercises. Besides fulfilling the materials needed by learners, teacher-made hand-out will develop teacher's competence also.

The second suggestion is for textbook publishers and evaluators. In publishing the textbook, textbook publishers are supposed to be able to comprehend the criteria of good criteria textbooks in English learning. Therefore, the publishers and evaluators should be more careful in assessing and reviewing the quality of textbook by considering the criteria from educational evaluation standards. Additionally, the publisher and textbook evaluator should consider more about the flexibility of the textbook so that the language materials are suitable for the book users' context. The third suggestion is for the future researchers. The future researchers of textbook evaluation are expected to do some improvement toward the previous study of textbook evaluation. Several criteria of good EFL textbook from many language professionals are provided and easily accessed. Therefore, the improvement might be on the careful adaptation from several criteria of good EFL textbook that should be filtered depending on the Indonesian context.

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**Modified - English Textbook Evaluation Checklist**

| No                                | Questions   | Responses |   |   |    |
|-----------------------------------|---|-----------|---|---|----|
|                                   |   | SD        | D | A | SA |
| <b>Layout and design</b>          |   |           |   |   |    |
| 1                                 | The cover of the textbook is an attractive and its information indicating its content                           |           |   |   |    |
| 2                                 | There is a page at the beginning of the textbook guides students on how to take advantage of it                 |           |   |   |    |
| 3                                 | The textbook contains a detailed list of contents   |           |   |   |    |
| 4                                 | Each lesson in the textbook has a title   |           |   |   |    |
| 5                                 | The textbook contains a variety of attractive designs   |           |   |   |    |
| 6                                 | Textbook illustrations are diverse and attractive   |           |   |   |    |
| 7                                 | Pictures inside the textbook are employed to facilitate the process of student learning                         |           |   |   |    |
| <b>The objectives of Textbook</b> |   |           |   |   |    |
| 8                                 | The textbook objectives are clear to me as a student  |           |   |   |    |
| 9                                 | The textbook objectives reflect the your needs at this stage as a student                                       |           |   |   |    |
| 10                                | The objectives of the textbook are written at the beginning   |           |   |   |    |
| 11                                | I find the objectives of the lessons written at the beginning of each lesson                                    |           |   |   |    |
| 12                                | The textbook meets your expectation in improving your English language skills                                   |           |   |   |    |
| <b>Language Skills</b>            |   |           |   |   |    |
| 13                                | Textbook content Improves listening skill of learners   |           |   |   |    |
| 14                                | The textbook contains exercises and activities increase the ability of the learner to pronounce words correctly |           |   |   |    |
| 15                                | The textbook contains exercises and activities increase the student's ability to speak English.                 |           |   |   |    |
| 16                                | The textbook helps learner to gain English grammar readily with full clarity,                                   |           |   |   |    |
| 17                                | The textbook contains a variety of reading topics   |           |   |   |    |
| 18                                | The textbook contains exercises and activities increase the ability of the learner to read English texts.       |           |   |   |    |
| 19                                | the content of the textbook raises thinking skills of students  |           |   |   |    |
| 20                                | The textbook includes activities encourage student participation in the learning process                        |           |   |   |    |

2 The textbook includes activities encourage  
1 students to use English in the positions of  
normal life.

2 This textbook better to use for secondary  
2 school students

2 This textbook better to use to improve  
3 students English language skills

### Motivation

2 This English textbook can help you to  
4 improve your speaking skill

2 This English textbook can help you to  
5 improve your writing skill

2 This English textbook can help you to  
6 improve your reading skill

2 This English textbook can help you to  
7 improve your listening skill

2 This English textbook can help you to  
8 improve your grammar skill

2 This English textbook is very useful for you  
9 to increase your understanding about  
English lessons

3 You are motivated to learn English by using  
0 this English textbook

### Evaluation

3 The textbook offers a variety of exercises  
1 and activities to use the vocabulary and  
practice their skills

3 The textbook provides exercises and  
2 activities that help students to  
communicate in English implementation  
tasks in real life

3 There are clear instructions for all  
3 activities and exercises contained in the  
textbook.

3 The number of exercises and activities  
4 appropriate to the content of the textbook

3 There are valid tests questions for the  
5 textbook

3 There are models for quarterly and final  
6 tests.