

# English Teachers' Preferences in using Instructional Materials for Senior High School Students in Indonesia

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**Keywords:** English language teaching (ELT) materials; perception of the teachers; ELT in Indonesia.

**Abstract:** This study tried to investigate English instructional materials commonly used by English language teachers in senior high schools in Indonesia. The purpose of this research is to explore and describe the English teachers' preferences in using instructional material. It also aims to explore the perceptions of the teachers and the use of English instructional materials in the classroom. Besides, it also aims to see whether how teachers choose a specific teaching material. The researcher used questionnaire and interview to collect the data. Thirty English teachers participated in answering the questionnaire. In addition, three English teachers were interviewed. Then, the results from the data collection techniques will be analysed and discussed further. The result of the study is expected to be beneficial for English language teachers, pre service teachers and curriculum developers when they select appropriate English materials to teach English.

## 1 INTRODUCTION

The success of teaching and learning process in the classroom cannot be separated from the availability of the instructional materials. Tomlinson (2011, p.xiii) defined language-learning materials as anything which can be used by teachers or learners to facilitate the learning of a language such as cassettes, videos, CD-Rooms, dictionaries, workbooks or photocopied of exercises. Materials can be in the form of pages of texts, textbooks, workbooks, reference materials, pictures, realia (e.g. bust timetables, event flyers, posters, sales receipt), virtual artifacts (website and computer programs), teacher-prepared worksheets, exercises and activities, students-prepared texts (poems, diary) and other forms of materials (Epstein, 2010; Hall, 2010; Guerrettaz & Johnston, 2013). The selection of proper instructional materials during classroom instruction is definitely significant. Kitao & Kitao highlighted that materials are keys element in language teaching. Besides, the use of suitable learning materials will motivate students in learning English by bringing a slice of real life situation into more complete communication situation (Brinton & Snow, 2006). Indeed, selecting a suitable instructional materials is not an easy part as it needs

careful process of selection to choose materials which covers the learning objectives.

In Indonesia where English takes place as a foreign language, teachers should use various teaching resources to help the students in learning the language (Harsono, 2007, p.170). The use of instructional materials provides the teacher with interesting and compelling platform for conveying information since they motivate learners to learn more (Okobia, 2011). Using instructional in the classroom helps the teacher in overcoming physical difficulties that could have hindered his effective presentation of a given topic. By preparing good instructional materials will help teachers to achieve the learning objectives, deliver the lessons, communicate with students, to visualize abstracts course, and to facilitate learning for better results. Especially, in English learning, using suitable and a variety of instructional materials can help motivate learning and developing all the language skills of speaking, listening, reading, and writing the English language (Tafari, 2009). Knowing the importance of instructional materials during teaching and learning process, this study is conducted in order to analyze the teachers' preferences in using English instructional materials in teaching English for senior high school students in Indonesia especially in Banjarmasin, South Kalimantan, Indonesia..

## 2 OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY

The main purpose of this study is to find out and describe the teachers' preferences in choosing English instructional materials to teach senior high schools students in Banjarmasin and the teachers' considerations when selecting the materials during classroom instruction.

## 3 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The research questions in this study are as follow:

- a. What are the ELT materials preferred by English language teachers in the classroom?
- b. What are the teachers' considerations in selecting ELT materials to teach their students?

## 4 LITERATURE REVIEW

The success of teaching and learning English cannot be separated from the availability of the teaching materials. As it is stated by Allwright (1990) that materials help to control learning and teaching and it is a key component to most language programs (Richards, 2002). Many people have the same conception between the instructional materials and textbook. Most of them think that materials refers only to textbook while actually it is quite different. Instructional materials, as it is defined by Tomlinson (2001), refer to anything which can be used to facilitate language learning. They can be linguistic, visual, auditory, or kinaesthetic. Further, Richards (2001) explained that instructional materials not only a textbook but also other resources such as novel, plays, computer software, etc. ELT materials can be classified into two main categories, i.e. authentic and inauthentic materials. Nunan (2001; 68) defined authentic materials as that are not created deliberately for teaching purposes. Further, Peacock (1997) explains that authentic materials are produced to fulfil some social purposes in the language community. Examples of authentic materials are newspapers, magazines, posters, radio news which was brought in the class, etc. Meanwhile, inauthentic materials or usually called as artificial materials are materials which specially designed for learning purposes such as textbook or listening materials that recorded intentionally for teaching purposes.

In English language teaching, instructional materials play an important role as they facilitate language learning (Tomlinson, 2008), catch students'

attention, motivate students to learn foreign language, support valuable input (Krashen, 1985) and authentic language (Lee, 1995), make learning more concrete and more meaningful as long as guide the students in practicing the language. From a general perspective, instructional materials can be categorized in three groups: (1) traditional materials; (2) audio and visual materials; and (3) information communication technologies (ICT) based materials. It can be highlighted that teaching should be supported by textual materials (textbook) and other visual materials such as pictures, flashcards, posters, charts, etc. Visual materials have big contribution to help teachers to bring variety of classroom activities like drills, exercises, instructions and explanation (Abebe & Davidson, 2012). As English is a foreign language in Indonesia, the teachers should be able to combine various English materials to teach their students to support them in learning.

However, selecting good and appropriate instructional materials for the teachers is surely not an easy task. Teachers should be able to pick materials which match with curriculum, syllabus, and students' needs (Syatriana et.al, 2013). There are some characters of good materials according to the experts. Brown suggested that a good material should promote the integrated skills. Further, Richards (2001; 252) pointed out materials which are authentic, realistic, contextualized, and relevant to the learners' need are categorized into good materials. Tomlinson (2000) said that materials should reflect the reality of language use and should help to create readiness for the students to learn.

It is widely known that materials in language teaching is crucial as they are a key component in most language program as it is stated by Richards (2001); whether the teacher uses a textbook, institutionally-prepared materials, or his or her own materials, instructional materials generally serve as the basis for much of the language input. Even though materials in language teaching is very important, researches had focused more on teachers, teaching and learners rather than on materials (Richards, 2001). However, it cannot be inferred that materials had received very little attention in the professional literature. Some previous studies about instructional materials have been conducted by researchers with different focus and object. Cakir (2015) conducted a study which paid attention on the English primary teachers' choices in choosing English materials which showed that most teachers were reluctant to use various highly beneficial materials because of technical problems such as big classes, limited technological knowledge, limited time for preparation, etc.

Another study conducted Rohmah (2015) about EFL materials students really need in Islamic Junior High School showed that materials needed by students of Islamic junior high school should be appropriate for big classes and include pronunciation activities and be supported with recorded examples. Students need supplementary materials which include fun activities like games, pictures, and songs. This is in line with the result of Johannsson research (2006) which showed that textbook should not be the only teaching material used in the classroom because the use of textbook alone would be boring and not very stimulating for the students. Zacharias (2003), Hasan (2011), Lien (2010), and Firmansyah (2015) conducted similar studies which focused on instructional materials but with different subjects and objectives.

## 5 METHODOLOGY

The design used in this study is mixed method research design in which the researchers combine both quantitative and qualitative research designs to collect the data. Thirty English teachers participated in answering the questionnaire. For qualitative data, three English teachers were interviewed.

## 6 RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

After distributing the questionnaire to teachers, the researcher analysed the results of the questionnaire using SPSS. The results of SPSS output is used to answer the research question no 1.

RQ 1: What are the ELT materials preferred by English language teachers in the classroom?

Types of materials	Mean
Textbook	4.714
Exercise book	3.857
Newspaper	3.143
Magazine	2.429
Pictures	2.429
Flashcards	3.857
Charts	2.268
Poster	2.857
Real object	3.429
Computer	4.429
Projector	2.857
Audio	2.429

From the results of the questionnaire, it can be seen that most teachers prefer to have textbook as the teaching materials for their class with the mean score 4.714 while the second materials the teachers prefer to use is computer with the mean 4.429. It is quite surprising as not many schools in Banjarmasin provide computer for their students. The third materials commonly preferred by the teachers to be applied during classroom instruction is exercise book with the mean score 3.857. Charts materials seemed to be last options chosen by the teachers with the mean score 2.286. From the findings, it can be concluded that textbook and exercise book still be the most favourite ones used by the teachers to teach English for their students.

RQ 2: What are the teachers' considerations in selecting ELT materials to teach their students?

In order to know the teachers' reason in choosing the preferred materials, the researchers then conducted interview to three English teachers who also participated in the questionnaire part. The purpose of the second research question is to dig deeper the results from the preceding questionnaire. There were three teachers as respondents named with T1, T2, and T3. The researcher then asked the teachers about their preferences in using teaching materials and the reasons they chose those materials. Basically, the three teachers had the same view that textbook still be their favourite teaching materials. They said that using textbook is much more efficient and easy for both teachers and students. It is because everyone has textbook. Below is the answers of the teachers.

*T1: Well.... Hhmm it depends I think. Depend on what topic I teach in that day. Mostly I prefer to use textbook because I think every student have it and it is easy to use you know. But, If the content in the textbook is not adequate, I ask my students to browse article in the internet.*

*T2: Hmmm usually, before coming to the class, I require the students to read materials in the textbook and bring hmm articles about the specific topic or theme as additional materials. But actually, hhmm.. I prefer to use textbook because it needs less effort and.... and.....it can save my time to prepare the teaching materials. Besides that, to check the students understanding, I prefer to have LKS (exercise book) for the students.*

*T3: I prefer to use textbook you know....as every student already have it but I did not strictly used it because right now students can freely access*

*any information related to the materials in the internet. That's good to enrich the students understanding. But still, I put textbook as my most favourite teaching materials because it covers the curriculum and teaching objectives.*

T1 has seven years teaching experience. From the answer, it can be underlined that she put textbook at the first choice in teaching. However, she does not rely on the textbook only. She also suggests her students to look for the additional information in the internet if the materials in the textbook is not enough. T2 has five teaching experience and he mentioned that he prefers to use textbook because it needs less effort and does need much time to prepare the materials. Nonetheless, he also uses additional teaching materials namely exercise book and article from the internet. It is in line with the respond from T3 that even though she put authentic materials as helpful resources for her students to get additional knowledge, she still prefers to have textbook as the most favourite teaching materials. It is because textbook provides a good teaching framework. It was in the same line with what Ur (1998) said that textbook offers explicit framework which clues teachers and students in what they have done and what will be done.

From the answers of the three respondents, it can concluded that they cannot teach without a textbook. Textbook plays a very crucial part during their classroom instruction as it is stated by Tomlinson (1998). Besides, as it is stated by Pamungkas (2010), textbook is one type of learning materials which is well-written, tightly organized, and greatly condensed. A textbook also comprises the core materials for a language-learning course where various issues are covered considering the learning needs of the students within a course period (Tomlinson, 2011). To sum up, even though technology and internet has evolved rapidly, the use of textbook in the classroom is indeed undeniable.

Beside textbook materials, the three participants also use additional materials during classroom instruction. T1 uses articles from the internet as additional resources if the information in the textbook is not adequate for the students. Her preference on using articles in the internet is based on the reason that it is easy for the students to get and free. In contrast, T2 prefers to use LKS or exercises book to check the students' understanding on specific materials. He often asks his students to bring articles in the classroom as additional information so that the students do not only get

information from the textbook. T3 participant prefers to have authentic sources from the internet for her teaching materials. However, she said that textbook still be the most favourite when it comes to the English language teaching. From the participants' answers, it can be assumed that textbook only is not enough to be used in the classroom because sometimes the information found in the textbook does not support the topic being discussed. Therefore, teachers have to find other additional materials to motivate the students in learning English. And the participants' choice is authentic materials or articles from the internet as their additional teaching materials.

When the researcher asked the participants about their perceptions on the use of same teaching materials during teaching and learning, they said that it is not good for students as it may cause boredom for them in learning English. T1 participant suggests to prepare several additional materials because students usually easy to get bored when they have to read the textbook. Besides, she said that textbook has several disadvantages if teachers cannot combine it with other teaching materials. She further explained that relying too much on textbook can restrict the teacher's creativity. T2 has the same perception with T3 that rely heavily on textbook is not good for their teaching because most of the dialogue presented in the textbook is unnatural and sometimes contains cultural bias. That is why combining several types of instructional materials for teaching is better rather than heavily rely on textbook or one type of teaching material only.

The results from the participants' respond is in line with the findings of the previous study conducted by Johannsson (2006) which showed that textbook should not be the only teaching material used in the classroom because the use of textbook alone would be boring and not very stimulating for the students. However, the use of textbook with the combination of additional materials were considered to work well as teachers and students benefit from the advantages of both textbook and alternative materials. The results of the previous studies conducted by Firmansyah (2015) and Hasan (2011) also support the findings of this study.

## 7 CONCLUSION

The aim of the present study is to find out and describe the teachers' preferences in choosing English instructional materials to teach senior high schools students in Banjarmasin and the teachers'

considerations when selecting the materials during classroom instruction. From the findings, it can be concluded that Indonesian teachers, especially in Banjarmasin, tend to choose textbook as their first teaching materials. It can be seen from the mean score of textbook materials which shows the highest mean among the other materials, i.e. 4.714. It is also supported by the results of the interview with three teachers which showed that commonly they prefer to have textbook during classroom instruction. However, they do not rely only on textbook. Rather, they combine the textbook with alternative materials such as article from the internet, work book or exercise book, and other authentic materials.

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