Abstract: The case provided by the ready-made textbooks left a backwash effect for the world of teaching. Therefore, any teacher using any textbook will have to adapt the textbooks since there is almost no textbook that is definitely suitable for all teachers and students. This case study examined the teacher’s perspectives towards the role of textbooks and their strategy in using the textbook in the practice. Two EYL teachers of state elementary school and the non-formal school were involved in the study. Observations, questionnaire and interview were used as the instrument. The study reveals that both of the teachers have the same perspectives toward the roles of textbooks. The teachers agree that the textbook has fundamental role in teaching, especially in providing the material for the students. In practice, the study shows that both of the teachers adapt and adjust textbooks in different level. This difference however is determined by the teachers’ background, knowledge, and their attitude in learning. It is expected that more in depth studies will follow to give the better understanding about the teachers’ strategies in using textbooks.

Keywords: The Use of Textbooks, Textbooks

Introduction

Textbook use has become one of the fundamental aspects for English language teaching (Moulton, 1994; Cunningsworth, 1995; Kitao, 1997; Hinchman, 2002; Cheng, 2011). Many teachers in ESL/EFL classrooms and programs use textbook as the instruction materials. As Hutchinson and Torres (1994) suggest “...no teaching-learning situation, it seems, is complete until it has its relevant textbook” (p.315).

In practice, the use of textbooks is known to give benefit for both teachers and students (Hutchinson and Torres, 1994). For the teachers, textbook facilitates them in giving direction to lessons, guides them for discussion, and facilitates them in giving homework. On the students’ side, textbook is a guide in helping them organizing their learning both inside and outside the classroom, studying on their own, doing homework, and preparing for the test.

However, the overuse of textbooks also gives some disadvantages (Tomlinson, 1998). When teachers have exposed the textbooks as their sole guide for preparing lessons, teachers and students have little control in the teaching and learning process (McGrath, 2002; Little john in Malia 2008). As stated by Hutchinson and Torres (1994), the more explicit instructions in a textbook, the more it is likely to be a script, and the less appears for the teacher to decide and work out.

Most schools or language programs in Indonesia rely on textbook for teaching English to their students (Malia, 2008). As supported by Puspandari (2008), in making the lesson plan, the materials used by the teachers are totally adapted from the textbook.

However, there is almost no textbook that is definitely suitable for all teachers and students (Tomlinson, 1998; Richards, 2001). At the end, the only person who really knows how the students will learn a particular skill or knowledge best is their own teacher (Lewis and Hiils, 1995). Therefore, any teacher uses any textbook will have to adapt it for the success of teaching and learning process.

Numerous previous studies have been conducted on teacher’s use of textbook in the classroom (Multon, 1994; Skowronski, 2000; Hinchman, 2002; Cheng, 2011). However, only limited literature on the use of textbook involving teachers from different background and experience is available.

Based on the explanations above, this study is conducted to answer two research questions: (1) What are the roles of textbooks based on the teacher’s perspective? (2) How do the teachers use textbooks in the classroom instruction? The results of the study are expected to give significant contribution in giving useful information about the roles of textbooks for the teachers and how they use textbooks in the practice.

Theoretical Framework

1. The Role of Textbook

Textbook is one of the important components in most language programs (Skowronski, 2000 and Hinchman, 2002). Textbooks in the teaching and learning process might function as the main language input that is received by the students or as the media for the students to have language practice (Tomlinson, 1998). Tomlinson (1998) and Cunningsworth (1995) summarize the role of the textbook in language teaching as
resources for presentation material (spoken and written); resources of activities for learners practice and communicative interactions; references source for learners in grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation, etc; resources of simulation and ideas for classroom activities, and as a syllabus.

2. The Use of Textbook

In practice, there is no single textbook which can suit the learning needs of all students (Hutchinson & Torres, 1994). Tomlinson (1998) explains in choosing a textbook, teachers need to take into account the abilities, needs and interests of their students, as well as the quality of the book. Based on him, teachers should note the extent to which textbooks need to be adapted and combined with the additional material.

Many commercial textbooks available at the market might contain excellent ideas; however it still needs adaptation from the teachers, since teacher’s influences to the success of learning are identified more than that of the textbook itself (Jacobs and Jessica, 1996; O’Neil in Hsin, 2000; Maila, 2008). The variety in adapting the materials in the textbook as cited in Tomlinson (1998); McGrath (2002); and Harmer (2007) include omission (leaving out things that considered inappropriate), addition (in the form of texts or exercise material), reduction (shortening an activity to give it less weight), extension (lengthening the activity in order to give additional dimension), rewriting/modification (rewriting material, especially exercise material), replacement (replacing text or exercise material which is considered inadequate), re-ordering (arranging different course), and branching (adding some options to the existing activity).

Research Methodology

This research is a case study involving two EFL teachers with different background and teaching experience. This study was conducted in two different research sites which are the state elementary school and an English course located in Bandung to compare and contrast how the teachers who teach at the formal school and non-formal view the roles of textbook and investigate their strategy in using the book in practice.

To obtain the data, the researcher utilized three techniques of data collections including observation, questionnaire, and interview.

Data Presentation and Discussion

1. The roles of textbooks based on the teacher’s perspective

From questionnaire of the two teachers, it is revealed that the teachers have the same perspective towards the roles of textbooks in teaching as proposed by Cunningsworth (1995) and Tomlinson (1998). Both of the teachers agree that textbook provides a variety of learning resources both for written and spoken material, provides activities for learners to practice the language, provides the source for learners in grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation, and provides idea in arranging the lesson plan, provides guidance in giving homework to their students and helps them to standardize the instruction. However, both teacher A and teacher B do not see textbooks as a syllabus since teacher A prefers to use national syllabus and teacher B prefers to use institutional syllabus provided by the institution.

Teachers’ perspectives towards the textbook can lead us to the teachers’ possible tendency in using textbook as stated by Maxwell in Kurniati (2008) that teacher’s understanding influence their behavior and their teaching performance.

From the observation and the interview, it is revealed that both of the teachers use more than one textbook as their references in presenting the materials to the students. The consideration of choosing the textbooks and other additional materials is the availability of the sources for learners in learning grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation, etc. In this case, it is coherent to Richard’s statement (2001) saying that textbooks can provide support for teachers whose first language is not English and who may not be able to generate accurate language input on their own.

Unlike teacher A, teacher B in this study also use additional materials from the internet or authentic materials since some of the textbooks do not facilitate students with natural language. As proposed by Richard (2001) that Textbooks sometimes present inauthentic language since texts, dialogs and other aspects of content tend to be specially written to incorporate teaching points and are often not representative of real language use. However, although both of the teachers agree that authentic material is beneficial for the students, they both think that it is not easy to find the appropriate authentic materials for the students.

2. Teachers’ use of textbooks in the classroom instruction.

The findings of the research also show that the two teachers in this study performed different types of adaptation and modification in using the textbook. Based on the observation, it is revealed that teacher A was more reliance in using the textbooks than teacher B. She rarely skipped the materials in the textbooks and tended to move from one section to another orderly and asked the students to answer questions in the book in turn.
On the other side, teacher B used the textbooks to give her idea in developing the learning sequence for the students and to give her overview about the materials that will be covered in a whole program. However, in the interview, teacher B admitted that she still needs to do some adaptation by re-ordering the materials or the topic to make it more systematic for the students.

The findings of the study show that teacher B made the most adaptation to the use of textbook in the form of re-constructing the contents, adding, deleting or omitting some materials, re-organizing the sequence provided in the textbooks, and modifying the task. Meanwhile teacher A made adaptation only in the level of rewriting content of the language focus and modifying the task. According to Moulton (1994), dependency among teachers on the textbook may caused by lack of experience of teaching, in line with that Kitao (1997) states that the more experienced the teachers, the less they bounded to the use of textbooks.

On the contrary, the findings of research show that lack and length of experiences do not always define the teacher’s reliance on the textbooks. The findings of the study indicate that teacher A who has been teaching for more than 10 years showed her strong reliance to the textbooks. Meanwhile teacher B who is considered as a less experienced teacher based on the length of teaching is more independent in creating and developing the lesson. From this fact we can conclude that the adaptation of how to use the textbook by the teacher is not only determined by the teacher’s experience, but also by their background and knowledge.

The attitude shown by teacher B in using the textbook may also affected by her flexibility in teaching. From the observation, teacher B seems to be very flexible in teaching. She willingly initiated some changes if the students reported difficulty they faced during the lesson. Based on the findings, there are some reasons chosen by the teachers in doing adaptation of textbooks. The adaptation is usually done by the teachers when they have different priorities from the textbook writer, do not have enough time to get through the activity in the way the writer has design the task, want to focus on different skill, or when the materials or the language level is too little or too much for the students.

Conclusion

The findings of the study indicate that both of the respondents agree that textbook gives many benefits both for the students and the teachers. However, the respondents do not see the textbooks functioned as a syllabus in teaching and learning process.

The findings of the study also reveal that both of the teachers use different approach in doing adaptation to the textbooks. However, from the analysis the research shows that the lack and length of experiences do not always define the teacher’s reliance on the textbook, since it is also determined by their background, their knowledge, and their attitude in learning.

The analysis also shows that teachers’ consideration in adapting the book is underlined by some factors. Some of the reasons underlying the teachers to do adaptation are: the teacher in this study have different priorities from the textbook writer, they do not have enough time to get through the activity in the textbook, they want to focus on different skill, the materials feature is too little or too much variety, and the level of English required by the book for some skill is too high for the students.

The results of the study are expected to give significant contribution in giving useful information especially for the teachers and books authors to use and develop textbooks. In addition to that, it is hoped that more in depth studies will follow which may contribute to a better understanding of this concept.

Bibliography


