

A LANGUAGE ANALYSIS OF INSTRUCTIONS IN THE REVISED TENTH GRADE ENGLISH TEXTBOOK

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ABSTRACT

Instructions in the revised Tenth Grade English Textbook are studied on the language. The questions are how diction, sentence structure, and language style of instructions are, and how the students' perceptions of the instructions' language are. This was a qualitative study by observation checklist for language-related phenomenon and an open-ended interview for students' opinions. The data were analysed descriptively. The diction uses many words and has misspellings. The structure is varied, consisting of imperative, declarative and interrogative sentences, but some are long and ungrammatical. The language style is varied, using negative, positive politeness, solidarity, and deference, using and no pre-sequences, and saying nothing, something off record, and something on record, but is Indonesian-like rather than the effective English. The students said that the instructions are too long, very formal, and confusing. In conclusion, the language of the instructions is not effective. The suggestion is to relate the instructions to students' level of English proficiency.

Keywords: *Instructions, Diction, Structure, Style, Students' perceptions*

INTRODUCTION

A textbook is an opportunity of tasks, where teachers who write the materials interact with the students by the context of the lessons. A component which plays an important role in a task is the instructions. Rosenshine (2012) noted that instructions are a set of directions with many kinds of functions in order to help students follow the lesson. Nowadays, Indonesia designs a textbook for high school students,

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including tenth grade students. The interesting thing is that the instructions in the textbook are many, following each step in a task, sometimes containing a paragraph long instructions, while there are many tasks in a lesson. The textbook is based on Curriculum of 2013 which stimulate the students' active participation, such as in the tasks, to impulsively go through the steps of scientific approach (Kasim, 2014), which are observing, questioning, exploring or experimenting, associating, and communicating. To deliver an instruction to the students does not have to be in a long and varied sentences of explanation, so that material writers can choose to use the learners' language concepts for an easier way to deliver the message (Masuhara & Tomlinson, 2008). The recent studies about textbook development and the cultural context in the content have been conducted by Li (2012) and Yassine (2012). The first study is to find out whether the textbook uses Chinese cultural values while it was being developed. The result reveals that the textbook does include the Chinese as local cultural values in the English lessons. The second was undertaken to find out what cultural values are dominant in three foreign language (EFL) textbooks and discovered that the textbooks use the British and American cultures, which also made the textbooks become the most legitimate materials for teaching the English language in Algeria. Few studies have been done on EFL textbooks in Indonesia, let alone on language use in the instructions in an EFL textbook. Instructions are components where the material writers could also bring their cultural values in the textbook.

The research questions are (1) how is the diction of the instructions in the "Revised Tenth Grade English" textbook? (2) how are the sentence structure of the instructions in the textbook? (3) how is the language style of the instructions in the textbook? And (4) how are the students' perceptions of the language use of the instructions in the textbook?. Since instructions are to help the students to know their tasks, it is worthy to study the effectiveness of language use of the instructions. Diction is choice of words especially with regard to correctness, clearness, or effectiveness (Merriam-Webster Dictionary, 2018). Sentence structure is a syntax of a sentence, a matter of how words, phrases, and clauses are structured in the sentence (Meyer, 2009). Language style is the notion in human communication, a matter of how to use the linguistic structures in specific communicative contexts (Hymes, 1971). Meanwhile, the students' perceptions are their varied ways of responses toward the works given during the lesson (Harmer, 2007).

LITERATURE REVIEW

The revised tenth grade English textbook has the Curriculum of 2013 as its base. The contents are appropriate with the linguistic component mastery list by the Ministry of Education (Effendi, 2016; Widiati, Rohmah & Furaidah, 2016). There are fifteen lessons in the textbook, which are 'talking about self', 'congratulating and complimenting others', 'expressing intention', 'which one is your best getaway', 'let's visit Niagara Falls', 'giving announcement', 'the wright brothers', 'my idol', 'the battle of Surabaya', 'B.J. Habibie', 'Cut Nyak Dien', 'Issumboshi', 'Malin Kundang', and 'Strong Wind'. The lessons cover the genre based texts, such as announcement text, narrative text, recount text, biographical recount text, and song lyrics text. The making of the textbook is based on Curriculum of 2013, so it supports the steps to discover knowledge, by observing, questioning, exploring, associating, and communicating (Kasim, 2014).

The textbook and Curriculum work are in synergy to insist on a new definition of 'creativity' of the students'. The students' answers during the class are rewarded for their process, in that it is not an exactly true answer to be assessed, but the students' creating process for the new knowledge. It is in accordance with the English language education way, such as noticing the adding of 's' sound in the third singular person in the present tense needs a practice (Harmer, 2007). Moreover, simplicity, 'truth' to differ some rules which are more true than others, 'clarity' to present the rules helpful to everyone, and 'relevance' to relate the reasons with relevant matters to the theme of the knowledge are crucial in learning (Swan, 1994).

Furthermore, Nunan (1997) suggests that learners have degrees of autonomy. Developing some degree of autonomy is essential if learners are to become effective language learners, and it can be developed through pedagogical intervention. The textbook is a place where students can do self-access learning (Tomlinson & Masuhara, 2008). There are concerns about language use of the textbook; it should be flexible 'from text to language', by initiating the effectiveness of each use of language, engaging, using natural language, and varied. However, the most important concern relates to a matter of deciding to place great importance on students working things out for themselves by the analytic approach (Tomlinson, 2011). By the principle of analytic approach, it can be learnt that the material writers do not have to explain much in the

task. The learners are the ‘actors’ in their learning, so that it is fundamental to allow them to be active in the tasks.

Good instructions provide students with models and work out examples which can help them learn to solve problems faster (Rosenshine, 2012). Nevertheless, to analyze the instructions from the language in use, it can be based on diction, sentence structure, and language use. It is certain that the instructions should be good ones. The criteria of good instructions can also be achieved by the effectiveness of its language use. When the language use is effective, the instructions are clear to the students. There are two kinds of learners, as Davies (2007) noted, namely so-called exceptional learners who start learning a second language in later life, and learners who do somehow attain native-like mastery so that their language cannot be distinguished from that of native speakers. Teachers could support learners by using effective sentences in the instructions in the textbook. The criteria of good diction are (1) encouraging students’ creativity, (2) not including Indonesian interference, for the English language authenticity, (3) not underestimating the students’ knowledge by saying things more than once to insist on something, (4) communicative to support the students’ communicative competence achievements, (5) focusing on learners to help them concentrate and feel secure to learn with the materials, and (6) motivating to gain learners’ confidence by pushing them slightly beyond their existing proficiency, and engaging them in tasks which are stimulating and problematic but achievable (Brown, 2001; Tomlinson & Masuhara, 2008; Tomlinson, 2011). The sentence structure of the instructions can be varied, including (1) imperative sentences with illocutionary act potential (IAP) of requesting, demanding, commanding, and directing (Yule, 1996; Abbott, 2004), (2) declarative, and (3) interrogative (Yule, 1996). The language style of the instructions can be varied, such as (1) the strategies to communicate with the students by negative politeness, positive politeness, solidarity, and deference strategies, (2) the ways to engage the students by using pre-sequences after telling the task in the instructions, and (3) the ways to address the students to tell about the task by saying nothing, something off the record, and something on record (Yule, 1996). The students’ perceptions are also important to evaluate the instructions’ language use. Tomlinson (2011) noted that materials should provide opportunities for feedback. Brown (2001) mentioned that students may be in acquiescence to a particular material, yet they may sometimes be willing to respond the

materials voluntarily without coercion and to receive satisfaction from that response.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study employs qualitative research design with basic interpretative study. The basic interpretative studies are targeted to understanding a phenomenon (Ary, Jacobs, Sorensen & Razavieh, 2010). The phenomenon studied is the language use of the instructions, including diction, sentence structure, language style, and the students' perceptions of the language use of the instructions. The subjects of the study are fifteen students chosen from three tenth grade classes of a public senior high school in Surabaya. They consisted of eleven male students and four female students. The students were randomly selected based on their willingness to respond on the language use of the instructions by the interview after their class. The objects of the research were the instructions in the textbook. They were the whole instructions written as the companions of the tasks in the textbook. The data of the study were in two major groups, the language analysis data and the students' perceptions of the language use in the instructions data. The data of the diction, sentence structure, and language style of the instructions were gathered from the observation checklist. The data of the students' perceptions of the language use of the instructions were collected from the interview. The observation checklists (Ary, et. al., 2010) combined the instruction list and the criteria of good diction, the instructions and the types of sentence structure, and the instructions and the combination of types of language style and their purposes. The open-ended interview (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2007) gathered the students' perceptions of the language use of the instructions, where they were asked by using the questions related to the language in the instructions for their comments and suggestions. The interviews on the three classes were held on Thursday and Friday, July 20th – 21st, 2017. As a part of a qualitative study, the data were analyzed and presented by words in-depth (Ary, et al., 2010) to get understandings of the language use of the instructions. The analysis of diction, sentence structure, and language style of the instructions, since the criteria or classifications as well as the instructions sentences are many, were analyzed with a triangulation. It aims to ensure a broader and potentially more balanced perspective (Denzin, 2012) on the analysis. The data were analyzed with the help of a senior high school teacher, Pridarmansa Anita Hapsari. The

data analysis consisted of organizing step to get the necessary ones for the results, coding and reducing steps to sort out the data related to the research questions, and interpreting and representing steps (Ary, et al., 2010) to understand the language use of the instructions results, present the results by explanations, and to discuss the findings.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

The instructions were written everywhere in the textbook, as the tasks were varied and entitled “warmer”, “further activities”, and “reflection”. The dictions used in the instructions of all tasks were “Match the words with their Indonesian equivalents”, “Listen to your teacher reading aloud these words”, “Repeat after him/her”, which referred to teacher. The instructions for the main tasks included “Imagine that you’re Alia”, “Write an email or a letter responding to the email or letter you’ve read and discussed”, and “Try to rewrite an outline of the story by answering the questions below!”. There was also a diction which made long sentences of instructions, such as “Pretend as if you were a guide describing the special peculiarities of the tourism object”, “Identify the noun phrases by circling the adjectives and underlining the noun”, “Individually, complete the following chart to find out the structure of the email or the letter on page 4 and 5, depending on which text you have read”, and “For example, you can read from the books in the library or read legends from other countries from the Internet.”

The sentence structure of the instructions were varied, including an imperative, declarative, and interrogative sentence (Yule, 1996). The imperative was divided into the illocutionary act potential (IAP) of requesting, demanding, commanding, and directing (Yule, 1996; Abbott, 2004). Requesting imperative instructions in the textbook were, “Listen to the explanation and do the activity” and “Find some in Youtube”. Furthermore, demanding imperative instructions in the textbook were, “Play in groups”, or “Match the words with the equivalents”. Moreover, examples of commanding imperative instructions in the textbook are, “You may use more than one word for one sentence” and “Use the information in the text”. Additionally, examples of directing imperative instructions in the textbook included, “It is important you learn to create noun phrases” and “Each character is one character in story”. Besides, declarative instruction examples were “Teacher will ask you make groups” and “Noun phrase is an important element in giving a lot of

information”. Finally, the interrogative instructions examples were “What do you think about the place described below?” and “What should they do with the wastes”, which are used as the questions to be answered, but written as the instructions.

The language styles of the instructions were varied by strategies of negative politeness, positive politeness, solidarity, and deference, engaging students by using or not using pre-sequences, and addressing students to tell the task by saying nothing, saying something off the record, and saying something on record (Yule, 1996). For example, the instruction which said, “Teacher will ask you to make groups” used deference strategy, engaging students by using pre-sequences, and addressing the students by saying something on record. The other example was an instruction which said, “Match the words with the equivalents”, which uses positive politeness strategy, engaging students by not using pre-sequences, and addressing the students by saying something on record. The instructions’ language style shifted from one sentence to another, showing the style of the material writers to present the tasks by the instructions.

The students’ perceptions of the language use of the instructions were varied. Some of them said that the instructions were good, and clear enough to them, while others acknowledged that the instructions had long words, were extravagant, and sometimes confusing. A student said, “The instruction helps me a lot and gives me the clues which are exposed clearly and firmly”. On the other hand, the other student noted, “The instruction is so long, that at first, it looks to be easy to understand, but in times is confusing. It needs to be simpler and not using long words”. The other student stated, “The instruction sometimes need to be read twice, to get what the meaning is”. The other comment was on the language use of the instructions, which said, “The instruction is too long to read”. However, the whole students who gave these comments did appreciate that the instructions helped them to know about the tasks.

The results show the language use of the instructions from four research questions, which are the diction, the sentence structure, and the language style of the instructions and the students’ perceptions of the language use of the instructions. The analysis is on the discussion in the following subsection.

Discussion

Diction

The instructions' diction has two mistakes that the instructions contain so many words and that there are some incorrect words to express the intended instructions based on what are required for the students. The learners are varied in their motivations (Nunan, 1997), and thus when the instructions have long words or lexical mistakes, some students may not understand tasks and be demotivated to do them. The process of learning is not a matter of how many words or explanation can be given to the students, because the students' learning needs process (Harmer, 2007). The instructions' diction had mistakes in choosing the effective words of the task. The word 'compare', for example, might have been taken from the Bloom's taxonomy (1956) which is included in the higher order thinking to evaluate something after some learning practice. However, the word is not appropriate to the feedback giving task. It is not in accordance to what is important in the learning materials that the language is flexible (Tomlinson, 2011).

Sentence Structure

The sentence structure found in the task instructions comprised imperative sentences with illocutionary act potentials of requesting, demanding, commanding, and directing, declarative sentences and interrogative sentences (Yule, 1996; Abbott, 2004). The sentence structures had two mistakes that the instructions had more than a task to do at the same time or in a sentence and that there were ungrammatical sentences. The ungrammatical sentences were caused by redundancies of words, and the interference from Indonesian or Javanese language. For example, the instruction asked the students to introduce themselves to each other and know the given identity of the other. These are two different tasks, yet were told in a sentence. The instruction sentences are the instruments of a teacher to direct the students to easily do the activities in the class. Rosenshine (2012) noted that the instruction is to ensure that the students have efficiently acquired, rehearsed, and connected the knowledge during the learning.

Language Style

The language styles of the instructions are diverse, ranging from negative politeness, positive politeness, solidarity, and deference strategies to using and not using pre-sequences to engage the students in the task, saying nothing, saying something off the record, and saying

something on record to address the students to tell the task. There is no correct or incorrect style to use, but the instruction' styles tend to make the students as passive doer in the task, being instructed and has to obey what the instructions are written about, and tends to extend the sentence, which bothers the meaning of the information. The instructions also play the role as the active 'owner' of the task, while the students are ones to obey the task's way of doing, rather than insisting that the students learn something of language in the task.

The students' perceptions of language use of the instructions showed that some students stated that the instructions were easy to understand, simple, and brief, whereas some others noted that the instructions were too long, too extravagant, too formal, and sometimes difficult to understand, making the students look directly at the task to know what to do instead of reading the instructions. Moreover, the instructions were sometimes used for more than a task. These are the honest responses from the students in that they were not reluctant to suggest that the instructions should be briefer and clearer.

The learners' characteristics varied such as converge learners, conformists, concrete learners, and communicative learners (Brown, 2001). The students had different characteristics, so that there was no guarantee that all of the students who read the instructions understood the writers' messages. The materials should help learners to feel at ease (Tomlinson, 2011). This can be reflected from the aim of the textbook development which is to support the students to do the scientific approach to discover knowledge, which consists of observing, questioning, exploring, associating, and communicating (Kasim, 2014). To allow them focus on fulfilling these steps, the language in the textbook instructions should use correct and effective dictions, sentence structures, and language styles based on the tasks. When the language of the instructions is not effectively selected, the students cannot focus on their learning, and they can even feel demotivated in doing the tasks.

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

The language use analysis of the textbook instructions brought some evaluations related to the instruction language. Such evaluations pertain to the diction of the instructions, the sentence structure of the instructions, the language style of the instructions, and the students' perceptions of language use in the instructions.

Diction is the choice of words especially with regard to correctness, clearness, or effectiveness. Some mistakes on the instruction dictions were found. Firstly, there were misuses of words for expressing a meaning. Secondly, there were indefinite reference uses. Thirdly, sometimes the instructions used more than a keyword at the same time. Moreover, there were misspellings in the words of instructions, such as “Youtube” instead of “YouTube”. These mistakes are against the diction for correctness, clearness, and effectiveness in the instructions. These incorrect, unclear, and ineffective dictions potentially confused the students.

Moreover, sentence structure is a matter of how words, phrases, and clauses are structured in the sentence. It includes imperative sentences with the illocutionary act potentials of requesting, demanding, commanding, and directing, declarative, and interrogative sentences. There were some mistakes found related to sentence structures; some sentences were too long, while others were ungrammatical. These long and ungrammatical sentences made the instructions have the potentials to confuse or demotivate the students.

Furthermore, language style is a matter of how to use linguistic structures in specific communicative contexts. The language styles of the instructions were diverse, namely negative politeness, positive politeness, deference, solidarity, using or not using pre-sequences, saying nothing, saying something off the record, and saying something on the record. However, the instruction styles tended to make the students as passive doer in the task and to include unimportant sentences in explaining the task. The unimportant sentences include Indonesian or Javanese sentences, rather than effective English sentences. These sentences potentially demotivated the students.

Besides, the students’ perceptions of instruction language stated that some instructions were confusing, too long, and sometimes very formal. They also stated that the instructions did not directly say what it meant, which made them confused. These mistakes on the instructions writing potentially confused and demotivated the students.

From the conclusions above, it is clear that the instructions in the analysed textbook had some things to improve on its language use. The effective language in instructions is very helpful for the students to do the tasks as expected by teachers.

However, this study could not fulfill all gaps which happened in language instruction research. Thus, the suggestions for the further studies are to include the students’ level of English proficiency, as it can

influence the way the students respond to the instructions and give their perceptions of the language use of the instructions. When further studies include include this variable in analyzing the students' perception on the language instruction, the results can be more detail.

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