

CONTENT ANALYSIS OF THE *NEW CUTTING EDGE INTERMEDIATE*: ITS COMPATIBILITY WITH THE NEW SCHOOL BASED CURRICULUM SYSTEM

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ABSTRACT

It is not necessary to point out that no textbook is flawless. Each and every textbook has a number of potential strengths as well as limitations within its contents or its application in the teaching learning process. This research covers the analysis of several features of the *New Cutting Edge Intermediate* (NCEI) textbook and highlights a number of strong and weak points of this new textbook. In order to obtain the data for this study, the contents, layout and design, activities and tasks, grammar and skills presented in the textbook were scrutinized according to the School Based Curriculum (SBC) approach (Depdiknas, 2005), which is recently introduced into the Indonesian education system. More importantly, the distinctive approaches and principles underlying NCEI textbook design and also those of the SBC were analyzed to ascertain the extent of their compatibility.

Key Words: *New Cutting Edge Intermediate Textbook, School Based Curriculum, Content Analysis*

INTRODUCTION

In recent decades a number of theoretical and empirical studies have been conducted to challenge the effectiveness of textbooks in language teaching, (Allwright, 1981; Harmer, 2007; Hutchinson & Torres, 1994; O'Neil, 1982; Tice, 1991; Thornbury & Meddings, 2001). These studies have brought a range of reactions that are frequently controversial. On one hand, textbooks are considered

effective, useful, and labor-saving tools. They can assist the teacher to give instructions in the classroom and provide valuable material for classroom activities. Textbooks may also sharpen the skills of students through the tasks and exercises provided.

On the other hand, contrary to these views, some researchers argue that textbooks are straightjackets that severely limit the development of both teachers and students (see Tice, 1991) or even assert that they are a mass of skillfully marketed garbage (see Brumfit, 1980). If this is true then textbooks could be a drawback that might inhibit the development of teachers. This could be due to the fact that many teachers seem to rely heavily on the contents and activities in their textbooks instead of trying to introduce and apply innovative teaching techniques themselves.

In spite of any potential negative effects of using textbooks in the language teaching and learning processes, textbooks are recognized as a crucial factor for language development. Textbooks are probably the most convenient means of reinforcing the structure of the teaching – learning system. They provide the focus of the lessons, the coordination of the skills presented and the compilation of a variety of language exercises for the students to follow. In this case, Richards (2001) suggests that textbooks may serve as the source of the language input for the students as well as the regular performance of the language that happens in the classroom. In other words, textbooks predominantly function as assistants and language input resources for the teacher. Not only can textbooks introduce the students to the linguistic elements of the second language, but they may also familiarize students with cultural elements of the target language.

One of the critical issues for the teacher is textbook selection. Due to its immense impact in the language teaching process, selection of the textbooks they will use has become one of the most important tasks for second language (SL) teachers. Numerous teachers tend to refer to their textbooks (Cunningsworth, 1995; Harmer, 2007) or plan their whole syllabus based on the chosen textbook (Harmer, 2007; Garinger, 2002). Hence, it is undeniable that teachers should carefully select the textbook prior to class commencement.

The recent introduction of the School Based Curriculum (SBC) in Indonesia (Depdiknas, 2005) has become the center of attention in the field of education. Numerous studies have been done in order to challenge the success of this curriculum which was officially brought into effect in 2006. When SBC was officially implemented in

Indonesia, numerous publication companies also introduced a great number of new textbooks to cover the curriculum requirements at the same time. Typically these textbooks have been designed and organized based on some underlying principles, some follow a fixed sequence, and others apply a repetitive approach. Several textbooks have been produced merely by imitating others or are poorly developed without considering the winds of changes from research (Sheldon, 1988). As a result, such textbooks cannot become convenient tools that will assist the teachers and students in the classroom, and in the worst case, they may inhibit or ruin the teaching learning process. Whether or not textbooks are developed based on the new SBC system can be only identified after evaluation of the textbook.

Based on the explanation above, this study of content analysis attempts to examine the content, layout and organization, grammar and skills taught in the *New Cutting Edge Intermediate* (NCEI) English textbook as well as the principles underlying the textbook's design. More importantly, the compatibility of NCEI textbook with SBC is critically analyzed to provide clear and detailed information on the issue.

Research Problems

Following on from the orientation provided in the background above, the problems for this study have been formulated in the following research questions:

1. What are the strong features of the *New Cutting Edge Intermediate* (NCEI) English textbook as an English textbook for Grade 2 of Senior High School students?
2. What are the weak features of NCEI English textbook as an English textbook for Grade 2 of Senior High School students?
3. Is NCEI English textbook fully compatible with the new Indonesian School Based Curriculum (SBC) system?

Research Objectives

The objectives of this study can be formulated as follows:

- To discover the strong features of NCEI textbook as an English textbook for Grade 2 of Senior High School students.
- To unearth the weak features of NCEI textbook as an English textbook for Grade 2 of Senior High School students.
- To investigate whether or not NCEI textbook is compatible with the new Indonesian SBC system.

LITERATURE REVIEW

School Based Curriculum

School Based Curriculum (SBC) or *Kurikulum Tingkat Satuan Pelajaran* (KTSP) is a curriculum that has been developed in relation to the school/region potential and characteristics, the native social-cultural features and the learners' characteristics (Mulyasa, 2011). It was officially published in Indonesia as the revision and completion of the previous curriculum, Competency Based Curriculum (CBC) in 2006.

In SBC, the school and its committee have the opportunity to develop the curriculum and syllabus based on the curriculum basic framework and approved competency standards under the supervision of the responsible city council department within each particular education level.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This research was undertaken using a content analysis method. Content analysis is defined as a research methodology that employs a set of procedures to determine the quality of documents, discourses, or books (Moleong, 2011). Moreover, Krippendorff (1980) asserted that content analysis will identify the interpretation of texts, image, and other expressions.

The nature of this research is qualitative. This is due to the fact that the writer employed a detailed description of the research findings qualitatively. According to Moleong (2011), qualitative research is carried out to comprehend and examine a certain matter, occurrences or process in depth. This study concentrated on finding out the compatibility of an English textbook to SBC. The textbook analyzed in this study is the NCEI textbook, 2nd Edition, written by Sarah Cunningham and Peter Moor in 2010. Its compatibility and underlying principles were scrutinized and investigated according to the new Indonesian SBC system.

The procedure used in collecting the data for this research was a content analysis method. NCEI textbook contents were analyzed based on the Garinger Checklist for textbook evaluation (2002) and interview guide.

FINDINGS

The Textbook Package – Contents

It can be seen in the opening pages that NCEI textbook provides a syllabus for the classroom lessons. The content of the syllabus is a series of complex and purposeful tasks that the students need to perform with the language they are learning. NCEI textbook includes the systematic vocabulary building which focuses on high-frequency, useful words and phrases. One of the distinctive vocabulary buildings in NCE is collocation (common word combinations) or “*wordspot*” (the term used in the textbook) that introduces accurate word combinations. Therefore, it can be inferred that NCEI not only advocates contextualized vocabulary and its practice but this is also embedded in the communication activities. This should lead the students to discover and utilize the appropriate collocations. Another useful feature of NCEI is the pronunciation exercises. The pronunciation spot (the term used in the textbook) offers the accurate word pronunciation (on page 31), word or sentence stress (on page 7), and even some particular sounds (on page 15). NCEI may turn out to be a huge assistance in pronunciation practice and word stress if it is used properly.

Furthermore, the NCEI textbook provides a complete collection of supplementary teaching materials for example; class audio CDs, students’ workbook, students’ audio CD, teacher’s resource book, tests, videos and companion website (www.longman.com/cuttingedge). Due to the complete supplementary materials, the NCEI textbook received good reviews from the teachers interviewed.

Layout and Organization

Layout and organization of a textbook in this section refers to the arrangement and presentation of language items, activities and tasks. The organization of NCEI textbook can be seen from the table of contents. There are twelve modules provided in the textbook, with reviews (consolidation) after every 4 modules. It appeared that the textbook authors, Cunningham and Moor, approach the NCEI organization as a cycle in which a regular cycle of activities more or less follows a consistent sequence.

Looking at the textbook design, the researcher found that the textbook authors employed recycling principles when sequencing each module in NCEI. Thus, the previous material is offered to the students

repeatedly in new ways, in a new skill area, in a different type of activity, or with a new focus. For examples, in Module unit 1, the material encountered in the listening activity is recycled in a speaking exercise. Cunningham and Moor appeared to reinforce and accelerate the language input through language expressions, grammatical structures and vocabulary items.

Nonetheless, since NCEI is not published locally, it is hard for students to get the textbook in Aceh. This is due to the fact that it is published by Pearson Longman in England, therefore, the textbook needs to be imported. It is interesting to note that in this case, teachers from economically developed countries did not find NCEI too costly but almost all the local teachers found it to be too expensive in the content analysis checklist. In spite of the high price of the textbook, NCEI appeared to be good quality and value for money. In term of these conditions, NCEI appeared to measure up quite well in the interviews.

Activities and Tasks

The structure of NCEI is based on using a Task-Based approach (sometimes referred as Task-Based Learning or TBL). This could be perceived from the pattern of activities and tasks employed throughout the textbook. The activities and tasks in NCEI are primarily organized as follows:

1. A warm up activity where the students perform some pre-task activities which involve questions and vocabulary checking. This activity prepares the students for more challenging tasks later on by activating their schemata of content, grammar, and vocabulary.
2. A listening task is often designed to cover a range of skills such as listening for specific information, gist listening, and making inferences. Only after the task have been performed and completed, are the students given an explanation about the language that was used.
3. To do the task completion work, the students are encouraged to work in pairs or groups for most activities and they are motivated to expand their language use in various situations and interlocutors.
4. At the end of each module, a practice section is provided to test and measure the students' proficiency and comprehension of the previous materials.

These layout and organization schema fit the learning stages of TBL such as Pre-Task, Task-cycle and Language Focus (Willis, 1996).

Regarding the activities and tasks in NCEI from the content analysis checklist, most teachers seemed to give positive feedback. They assumed that the exercises and activities in the textbook promoted learner's language development and engaged them in accurately meaningful and effective communication such as negotiation of meaning. This gives potential to develop a considerable advantage in some teaching and learning contexts.

Grammar

In NCEI textbook, the grammar sections were integrated with the skills used in the tasks and activities. After completing the tasks, the students were encouraged to analyze and deduce the grammar used within the activities. In order to assist the learners, an analysis box and sample exercises were provided in NCEI. It contained the summary of the grammar used in each of the tasks. This becomes a potential benefit for the students since they learn the grammar directly from the context. It means that the textbook takes into account and integrates both meaning and form. At this point, the grammar and vocabulary can be learnt in a meaningful context and in an authentic use. As a result, as the grammar element in the textbook develops and the vocabulary base becomes more challenging, the skills activities also become more challenging. A close examination of each module, for instance, revealed that dialogues become more complex as the units progress. Similarly, listening passages become a little longer and are occasionally spoken quicker or with slightly non-standard accents or dialects. Reading texts also become slightly longer while the discourse structure becomes more complex.

Furthermore, the NCEI textbook provides a language summary as one of the appendices for the students. The language summary is a concise description of the language structures used in the textbook. According to the interview results, it is interesting that all the teachers considered the textbook was able to facilitate the learners linguistic needs, particularly the structures used in the activities.

Skills

a. Reading

According to the standard competency no. 5.1 and 11 in SBC, the reading material that should be included in the textbook include short

functional texts (such as: banners, pamphlets, posters, etc.) and short scientific essays or reports, narratives, analytical expositions, spoofs, and hortatory exposition texts. Unfortunately, NCEI textbook offered only a few short functional texts. This could be due to the fact that this textbook is intended for the Intermediate English level of students (B1 and B2 of the global scale in the Common European Framework) who are expected to already understand the main ideas of complex texts. As a result, only a few samples of short functional texts are provided in NCEI textbook, such as: emails (on page 14), advertisements (on pages 44 and 54), notes and cards (on page 89).

On the other hand, NCEI textbook presented abundant report text types that required in the standard competency no. 11 from SBC, for instance; report texts (on pages 9, 21, 29, 74) and narratives (on pages 104 and 106). However, no spoofs, analytical and hortatory exposition text samples were presented in NCEI textbook.

b. Speaking

From the table of contents, it can be seen that speaking skills are undoubtedly a dominant skill in NCEI textbook. This is due to the fact that almost all the tasks and activities include speaking either as the introductory activity or the core activity. Speaking exercises occur through the verbal presentation and practice of new language items, in dialogue work (on page 13), role plays (on page 23), group work (on pages 32-33), and class activities (on page 67).

According to the standard competency (no. 3 and 9) in SBC, speaking materials that should be included in the textbook are expressing and asking opinions, expressing satisfaction and dissatisfaction, giving advice and warnings, and expressing relief, pain, and pleasure. In NCEI textbook, some competencies are provided such as: expressing and asking opinion (on page 13), giving advice and warning (on page 74), expressing satisfaction and dissatisfaction (on page 65). However, this textbook did not include expressing relief, pain and pleasure. It introduced several expressions in interpersonal conversation instead, for example: expressions for remembering and forgetting (on page 23), recommending (on page 33), expressing admiration (on page 43) and for giving a recommendation (on page 54). From the previous examples, it can be inferred that some speaking expressions in NCEI textbook were not included in the standard competencies and materials for speaking in SBC.

c. Listening

As mentioned earlier in the content section, NCEI textbook is reinforced by audio CDs. The conversations or talks recorded in the CD's appear to be conducted at a normal rate of speaking. It can be assumed that the authors avoided using simplified input or foreigner talk discourse (FTD) in facilitating the comprehension for students. Additionally, even though the main English accent employed in NCE is British, a variety of registers and non-native accents such as South East Asian, Russian and Chinese can also be heard in the recordings. Almost all the teachers viewed this as one of the good points of NCEI textbook which takes into account the diversity of English accents.

Regarding the standard competencies no. 1 and 7 in SBC, the listening materials that should be included in the textbook are responding to some expressions, for instance: expressing and asking opinions, expressing satisfaction and dissatisfaction, giving advice and warning, and expressing relief, pain, and pleasure. In NCEI textbook, some competencies are provided such as: responding to expressing and asking for an opinion (on page 13), giving advice and warning (on page 74), expressing satisfaction and dissatisfaction (on page 65). However, the textbook did not include responding to expressing relief, pain and pleasure. It introduced several expressions in interpersonal conversation instead, for example; asking and answering questions (on page 6), finding things in common (on page 12), designing a tour (on page 32), and booking a flight (on page 34). From the previous examples, many listening standard competencies of SBC were not provided in NCEI textbook.

d. Writing

Regarding the standard competencies no. 6 and 12 in SBC, the writing materials that should be included in the textbook are short functional texts (such as: banners, pamphlets, posters, etc.) and scientific essays or reports, narratives, analytical expositions, spoofs, and hortatory exposition texts. The standard competencies expected for writing skills are the same as the standard competencies expected for reading skills. This means that students are expected to write their texts after analyzing the model texts provided in the textbook.

Unlike the requirements from SBC, NCEI textbook provided only a few short functional texts (such as emails, advertisements, notes, and cards) plus samples of reports and narratives. Spoofs, analytical and hortatory exposition texts were not included in this textbook. For

writing, NCEI textbook required students to perform a diverse range of interpersonal tasks, for instance: writing e-mails (on page 14), curriculum vitae (on page 45), postcards, consumer reviews (on page 66), covering letters (on page 56), notes and stories (on page 104). More significantly, this textbook did not introduce the generic structure of texts included nor did it provide the models for spoofs or analytical and hortatory exposition texts. This is because this textbook was not designed based on the genre approach.

DISCUSSION

In order to find out the compatibility of NCEI textbook with SBC, its relevancy needs to be measured according to some criteria such as the coverage of language aspects, the teaching approach, and the cultural implications.

The Standpoint of Language

It is inevitable to state that NCEI and SBC have different standpoints of what language is. This can be inferred from the dissimilar approaches applied to language teaching. NCE that applied Task Based Learning (TBL) or Task Based approach views language as an instrument which is used to complete the task in order to achieve a specific outcome. From this point of view, language is considered as a central factor in social communication and as a fundamental to the development of the meaningful nature of social life (Sealey & Carter, 2004). Therefore, cooperating with the appropriate interlocutor (for example, native speaker) will eventually assist the L2 learners' performance. Learners can collaboratively construct the linguistic knowledge through socially situated cognitive processes (Dobao, 2012). For these reasons, the activities and tasks in NCEI textbook are designed to reflect real life and create opportunities for language acquisition. For examples: playing a game (on page 23), solving a problem (on page 44), sharing information, or experiences (on pages 32-33).

SBC that employed genre approach, in contrast, views language as an open dynamic system, where knowledge about language is taught in an explicit manner; and genres (types of texts) are used as the starting point for modeling, deconstructing and understanding language. As the model of language used in this approach, a number of texts used are based on their purposes. A genre-based approach has been developed

from Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) which proposes a model of language comprising the context of situation and the context of culture. While SFL accounts for the syntactic structure of language, it places the function of language as central (what language does, and how it does it), in preference to more structural approaches, which place the elements of language and their combinations as central. SFL starts with social context and looks at how language both acts upon, and is constrained by this social context.

From the explanation, it can be deduced that NCEI textbook has a different standpoint from SBC on the basis of language. On one hand, NCEI tends to focus more at the sentence level than the text level. On the other hand, since SBC employs text as the media, it mainly focuses on the text level and places the functions of language as central. Due to these differences from the standpoint of language, the relevancy of NCEI textbook to the SBC may be questioned.

The Approach to Language Teaching

NCEI textbook and the SBC appear to employ different teaching approaches to language. As mentioned earlier in the section on Activities and Tasks, NCEI textbook employs TBL i.e., has a task based approach while the SBC employs a genre approach in introducing the target language to the students.

Due to TBL approach, NCEI often utilizes real life activities and tasks such as booking a flight (on page 26) or making a polite request (on page 70). It highlights learning to communicate through purposeful interaction in the target language. Additionally, academic tasks are also included within the textbook, for instance, writing curriculum vitae (on page 45), answering a questionnaire (on pages 48-49), explaining the best candidate (on pages 54-55), and writing a covering letter (on page 56). These tasks proved that NCEI textbook employed TBL as its approach to the ESL /EFL teaching and learning process.

On the other hand, the Genre approach mainly focuses on the text and its purpose. Some language experts even use the term ‘genre’ and ‘text type’ interchangeably. The Genre-Based approach emphasizes the construction of meaning at the level of the entire text. This approach can be found in SBC where several texts are introduced and scrutinized for the students at senior high school level such as recounting texts, narratives, procedures, descriptions, news items, reports, analytical expositions, hortatory expositions, spoofs, explanations, discussions and reviews.

Thus it can be seen that the Genre approach that underlies SBC is undoubtedly different from the Task Based approach which is used in NCEI textbook. The SBC puts emphasis on reading and writing in its curriculum. Whilst, NCEI textbook places emphasis on communication tasks; indeed the text types that are introduced to the students are limited. The SBC sets out 6 text types: short functional text, spoof, report, and narratives, analytical and hortatory expositions that should be taught to the students at the 2nd grade of Senior high school, whereas NCEI offers only 3 text types: short functional texts, reports and narratives. In other words, NCEI textbook did not provide all the text types for the 2nd grade students of senior high school as required by SBC. Consequently, the lack of text types provided in NCEI textbook may make it incompatible with SBC.

Cultural Implications

As mentioned above, NCEI textbook seemed to take into account the students' cultural backgrounds when designing the contents or materials. Nevertheless, since NCEI is designed for international students and is not intended for particular students, it comprises of several cultures from all over the world such as English, Thai, Russian, Hong Kong, etc. This cultural information can expand the horizon of readers and learners. Hence, it is very convenient for learners who intend to pursue their studies abroad. That is not to say that there is no attention paid to the learners' local culture. From the data obtained in the checklist and interviews, the teachers considered NCEI sensitive to the cultural background and interests of the students. They pointed this out from the textbook activities at the end or beginning of the tasks, the students are often asked and encouraged to describe their own cultures (on page 33).

Due to the fact that genre is not identical across cultures, SBC allows the teachers or educators to modify their teaching materials according to the needs of students. However, genre-based pedagogy recognizes that certain genres are more powerful than others such as Javanese cultures in the Indonesian context. Hence, in most cases, the text type (genre) used in the teaching learning process tends to be generalized although the cultures may be varied. Furthermore, the government policy to allow the text modification based on regional needs seems not to play a big role in the text choice since the textbooks used in the classroom are typically produced by national and international publishers such as Gramedia, Aneka Ilmu, Cambridge,

Longman etc. Due to these phenomena, it is suggested that the Indonesian Department of Education should reconsider the application of Genre approach in SBC in Indonesia.

However, NCEI textbook cannot be assumed to be an unqualified textbook simply because it was not compatible with SBC. This is due to the fact that the focuses of language that they offered were different. Since NCEI textbook was designed based on TBL, it concentrates on building and improving fluency over accuracy in the ESL/EFL classroom through real communication tasks. NCEI textbook highlights learning to communicate through purposeful interaction in the target language.

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS

Conclusion

This research was conducted to investigate the compatibility of New Cutting Edge Intermediate (or NCEI) (2nd edition) English textbook with the current curriculum implemented in Indonesia, the School Based Curriculum (SBC) (*Kurikulum Tingkat Satuan Pendidikan* or KTSP). NCEI textbook has been published for an international audience of universal learners, including adult and young learners. On the other hand, SBC is applied only in Indonesia as a domestic curriculum intended for young adolescent learners. These dissimilar purposes lead to a controversy as to whether NCEI textbook is incompatible with the approach of SBC for 2nd grade senior high school students.

As a result of the diverse approaches to language acquisition, and the different perspective of language and cultural implication, it may be challenging and problematic to apply SBC using NCEI textbook. From the content analysis, it can be concluded that the textbook was not designed according to SBC. More importantly, their emphasis on the syllabus designs including the four English skills were offered differently. More significantly, some text types (spoof, analytical and hortatory expositions) and the generic structures which required in SBC were not included in NCEI textbook. Due to these reasons, it can be stated that the textbook contents are not compatible to the standard competencies in SBC.

NCEI textbook, nonetheless, can be used in Indonesian context with some modifications and elucidation to illuminate certain text types and their generic structures. Moreover, NCEI textbook cannot be

considered as an unqualified textbook simply because it was not compatible with SBC. It is due to the fact that the focuses of language that they offered were different.

The following is a summary of the strong and weak features of NCEI textbook.

The Strong Features of NCEI Textbook

- It offers a complete collection of supplementary teaching materials for example; class audio CDs, students' workbook, students' audio CD, teacher's resource book, tests, videos and companion website (www.longman.com/cuttingedge).
- The text is printed on high-quality, durable paper and the presentation of information is clear, concise, and user-friendly.
- The linguistic elements such as grammar and vocabulary items are closely linked to the skills-base. At this point, the grammar and vocabulary can be learnt in a meaningful context and in an authentic user context.
- NCEI textbook has a mini-dictionary with clear pronunciation and definitions for each word plus synonyms, antonyms and examples showing each word in a real world context.
- A language summary is offered as an appendix which includes a concise description of the grammar used in NCEI textbook, and uses a combination of top-down and bottom-up processing skills.
- NCEI avoids the simplified input or foreigner talk discourse (FTD) in facilitating comprehension for students.
- NCEI takes into account the diversity of English accents, including South East Asian, Russian and Chinese accents.
- NCEI presents product and process approaches in teaching writing skills.

The Weak Features of NCEI Textbook

- The page numbers for tasks and activities, including the language focus are not mentioned in the table of contents.
- ESL/ EFL students may have difficulty in understanding the real rate utterances of the native speakers in the CDs.
- NCEI is not printed locally, so it is hard to buy it in Aceh.

Suggestions

At the end, some suggestions are made in order to maximize the use of NCEI textbook in the teaching-learning process which eventually should assist the ESL/EFL student learners communication and their progression in writing proficiency, they are:

- Teachers need to select a textbook with appropriate contents in order to cover their students' needs. Hence, it is recommended to do a textbook evaluation before deciding on a textbook for their students.
- Teachers need to adapt NCEI contents to cope with the SBC requirements, such as the text types that are required to be taught from SBC. Thus, the students will be made familiar with these text types and their generic structures even though they are not included in NCEI textbook.

The data analyzed in this research were obtained mainly from local teachers, while only one foreign teacher was interviewed. Therefore, further research needs to be carried out in order to gain deeper perspectives of NCEI textbook.

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