THE WRITING AND SUPERVISION OF BRIGHT ENGLISH TEXTBOOK DEVELOPMENT FOR PRIMARY SCHOOL TEACHERS IN INDONESIAN CONTEXT

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ABSTRACT

Although English Language subject is no longer compulsory for primary school level in Indonesia based on the current Curriculum 2013, some regions still consider it essential for their area development and thus making it a compulsory local content subject—Batu Municipality is one of them. Therefore, more efforts are needed to assist English teachers as resources for teaching English is limited due to the lack of support from the national policy level, thus the reasoning for the current project. This paper aims to describe the process of writing and supervising of Bright English Textbook, which is a specifically targeted English textbook for primary schools in Batu, East Java, Indonesia. Qualitative descriptive method was used in this study, involving four primary school teachers as the subjects in the collaborative textbook writing project. The finding presents the step-by-step process from the description during the training process, the actual writing process, until the illustration and lay-outing process. Besides, it also describes the supervision process as well as the problems and solutions related to it. Some highlights and implications of the study are also discussed, with suggestions offered in the form of combined online and face-to-face supervision process and sufficient writing and publication ethics training

provided before the writing process begins. It is expected that this study could benefit other teachers and researchers who want to embark on a collaborative textbook writing process to improve their project effectiveness.

Keywords: *textbook development; 2013 curriculum; primary school*

INTRODUCTION

The idea of writing a complementary book for primary schools in Indonesia has been instilled from the fact that English learning solely relies on one learning resource or textbook provided by the government. Based on the initial report from primary school teachers, this book provides minimum support for the exploration of regional potentials as the government book is made for the whole nation, not for city per city (Tahir, 2011). In addition, this government textbook display less representative topics following the topics presented in the 2013 curriculum. Therefore, Batu, one of the main cities in East Java province, Indonesia, with its abundant natural and tourism potential, requires at least one other source of English language learning that can introduce its natural and cultural wealth, which is adjusted to the topic exposed in the 2013 primary school curriculum.

This planned complementary book is projected to meet the needs of the pioneer city of Indonesia, Batu Municipality more specifically, by not only providing material or content related to language skills such as reading, writing, and speaking, but also cultural knowledge, vocabulary, and love for nature and animals around students. Furthermore, this book also contains expressions of loyalty for the nation through a typical competition, event or celebration of independence, along with forms of local promotion of snacks and/or handicraft products. Also, students will be encouraged to practice communicating more effectively within the school environment, the community, and globally, to support the development of functional tourism in Indonesia in general.

Each unit in this complementary book is divided into two subtopics, with each sub-topic having exercises on reading, writing, and speaking. The two sub-topics are arranged interrelated to support the main topics adjusted to the 2013 government curriculum. The vocabulary items and exercise used in this book supports the

formation of expressions that are easy and practically used in everyday life. By having multiple and extra exercises on the practical use of English, students are expected to spend more time learning independently by practicing the skills as instructed in the book. They can be more aware of cultural aspects to be promoted to others as the main potential of the particular city. English teachers or some practice teachers conducting teaching internship projects in most of the Indonesian primary schools can supervise Independent learning outside of school hours.

Teachers complained of having a less trustworthy resource in teaching English. They could compile the materials from the internet; however, they were afraid of making a rough judgment of whether their materials were suitable to the students' level and whether it supported the goal achievement of the national curriculum (Tahir, 2011). Overlooking this fact in real teaching, it is urgent to develop a complementary textbook for primary school teachers, Bright English. It now becomes prominent to seek answers on how to conduct the writing and supervision of Bright English textbook development for primary school teachers.

LITERATURE REVIEW

This section discusses the review of related literature concerning the English Language Teaching in Indonesian contexts and the current theories and research related to textbook development.

English Language Teaching in Indonesia

As one of the official languages of the United Nations, English is formally taught in many countries around the world, including in Indonesia. English has a very important status in the Indonesian national curriculum in the last few decades (Poedjiastutie, Akhyar, Hidayati, & Gasmi, 2018; Sofiana, Mubarok, & Yuliastri, 2019), for even though it is considered as a foreign language, it is one of the highly prioritized one (Rifa'i, 2017). The teaching of the language proves this in the national curriculum since the 1950s (Madya, 2013; Mustafa, 2018). Although the Indonesian national curriculum has undergone various changes, English Language has been a permanent item to be taught at schools (Purwaningsing, 2013). The

importance of teaching English at primary school level was first enhanced through the Decree of the Education and Culture Ministry in 1993 which recommended the teaching of English Language subjects at primary school level from Grade 4 as one of the local content subjects (Sudrajat, 2015). This proves the importance of English for Indonesia to encourage its people to actively participate in the global community.

Currently, the Indonesian national curriculum is under the 2013 curriculum putting a strong focus on building and strengthening local characters (Kosasih, 2014; Putra, 2018). One of the implications of this policy is the teaching of the English Language is only compulsory starting from the secondary level. In other words, English is not mandated by the curriculum to be taught at the primary school level (Dewi, 2016; Maili, 2018). This policy certainly has some positive and negative sides; one of the positive ones is that it is deemed to allow the strengthening of students' Bahasa Indonesia skills better as one of the national identities or characters, though this is a policy that is still questioned by some language teaching experts such as Maili (2018). As for the negative sides, the most notable one is that the teaching of English, albeit considered important, has to commence at a late start since, at the secondary level, students have generally passed their golden age of language acquisition.

As has been generally accepted, the teaching and learning of foreign languages are suggested to commence early (Hidayati, 2018; Maili, 2018; Sudrajat, 2015,). Many language acquisition theories encourage early start in learning a language. One of the theories is the *Critical Age Hypothesis* (Krashen, 1988) suggests that before puberty, the brain has a higher elasticity which allows children to learn any language like native speakers, thus known as children's 'Golden Age'. In addition, an older and prevalent theory also suggests that every man is born with a so-called 'Language Acquisition Device' in his brain (Chomsky, 1965). This allows people to learn languages as early as possible. Therefore, the 2013 Curriculum omitting the compulsory English Language subject at the primary school level poses a great challenge for English Language teachers to help students to master the language well.

In addition to those language acquisition theories, the teaching of English in primary school level has several benefits that must not be overlooked. According to Dewi (2016), the teaching of English in primary school level allows students to recognize and be more familiar and open to global cultures, a trait essential for our future generation in this day and age. She further elaborates that there are also other benefits such as to encourage awareness and skills to actively participate in the global communication and to support students' better language metacognition development by learning a language other than their first one.

Considering the importance of English skills for its people, some regions in Indonesia still requires English to be taught in Primary school level (Sudrajat, 2015), one of which is in the Municipality of Batu, East Java. Such an attempt can be done in two ways; first, by placing English as one of the Local Content subjects, and second, by setting English as one of the compulsory extra-curricular activities in school. Considering the tourism potential of the region, Batu Municipality considers English Language skills as essential for its people. The international tourists visiting Batu was recorded to reach 4.7 million in 2018 alone ("Radar Malang", 2018). This becomes the main consideration for putting English as one of the Local Content subjects compulsory to be taught in the primary school level.

However, new challenges arose as the omission of English Language as a compulsory subject in the national curriculum means that the support from the Office of National Education for the teaching of English at primary school level is very limited. As suggested by Sudrajat, (2015) which discusses the implementation of English Subjects taught as primary school local content subject in Tenggarong, East Kalimantan, and such policy resulted in the very limited resources and support that are at teacher disposal. Such support usually only came from the local government that obligates the teaching of English in primary schools in their region. A preliminary study in Batu Municipality primary schools corroborated such findings since the support in terms of resources was found only in the form of one type of textbook developed by the local government there. Therefore, to fill the gap, this project serves as one of the solutions to the problem, offering the development of

supplementary material that English teachers and students in Batu could use to better achieve their English learning goals.

Textbook Development

In designing a textbook for elementary schools in Indonesia, especially in the tourism city of Batu, the framework should represent cultural symbols of knowledge and competence of the people (Ivic, 1998). Textbook becomes a major cultural reference that promotes operational and intellectual thinking, adoption of socially constructed ideas in the community and intellectual functioning as well as behavior (Ivic, 1998; Wertsch, 2011). The textbook also acts as a socio-cultural activity source, which mostly serves as an exclusive source of information, not only for students but also for teachers who very much rely on textbooks while organizing and carrying out the teaching process.

Three construction characteristics should be taken as distinctive cultural tools in designing a textbook: First, communicable content that includes culture recognition, influence, and representation; second, internalized values that support higher mental functions of prospective readers; and third, community developmental mission which presents activities that may induce self-reproduction and reflection of the culture. Plut (2013) and Siegler (2013) propose the theory of quality culture based textbook development. A textbook should postulate relevant objectives and implications covering psychological, pedagogical and discourse contexts. Also, the design mentions the list of local principles, values, or morals that are going to be achieved upon book reading completion. Further, the textbook should project concrete structured elements to realize the expected principles, values, or morals. The concrete structured elements are then transferred into the textbook functional writing framework that will be practiced in the process of writing and supervision.

A contextual description of the culturally constructed textbook requires a socio-cultural approach to list and select relevant represented topics (Plut, 2013). Codes, visual representation of local culture, procedures, values, norms and rules, models, categories, and word meaning communicate the demands of the textbook topic selection (Gallimore & Tharp, 1991). To contextualize the general topics by the government, local plants and animal naming, local events and competitions

presentation, local figure storytelling, as well as real-life conversation with foreigner tourists are included in the book writing (McShine, 2011). By including these socio-cultural elements relevant to the implemented 2013 curriculum, the book is projected effective in answering the demands of Batu city elementary school graduates.

METHOD

This study mainly employs a qualitative descriptive research approach, in which such the approach was considered appropriate since the targeted data is more open in nature in the form of rich description of the writing and supervision process of the Bright English book, from the planning, writing, finishing and publishing stages (Magilvy & Thomas, 2009). This research involves four primary school English teachers of Batu Municipality in the process of material development and book writing. Those teachers were from two different primary schools in Batu and they were considered as the representative of English teachers from the region to be included in the book writing process. In addition to the teachers, the current study also used some documents in the form of the teachers' drafts as the object to be studied. Such documents provided a rich description of the results of teachers' works and their progress during the writing of the book.

The data collection generally used observation, reflection and document analysis (Magilvy & Thomas, 2009). The observation was used to gather rich qualitative data about the book training and supervision processes. Then, trainers' and supervisors' reflection notes were also used to collect qualitative data about the writing, supervision, book finishing, as well as the publishing processes. Finally, the document analysis was used to obtain more data about the writing process as reflected in the teachers' works. As for the data analysis, thematic content analysis was employed to understand better about the rich qualitative data obtained (Magilvy & Thomas, 2009). The data was first reduced to map the relevant information to the target of the current study, and then thematically coded to arrive at a more exhaustive and comprehensive description of the writing and supervision process of Bright English book writing. The results of the data analysis are then presented in the Result Section below.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Writing process

The textbook writing idea was introduced to four primary school English teachers of Batu Municipality through an initial visit to the two primary schools in Batu. These schools were seen as representatives of the schools in the region that implemented the 2013 curriculum and general English textbook from the government. The four teachers were selected as they provided positive attitudes in the textbook development plan proposed to primary schools in the target area by fast responding the invitation, ease of communication, committed act and passion to start writing and developing English learning materials as described by Ivic (1998) in Figure 1.

Figure 1. Positive attitudes in text development

The four participants were then invited to attend a book-writing workshop held by the researchers. Three trainers were allowed to share textbook development theory and practice, as well as the construction framework of the aforementioned complementary textbook that would be collaboratively designed.

The workshop consisted of three phases; the first presentation phase was on a learning support textbook theory and resources that was delivered by the first presenter. The presentation was done for one hour. The second presentation part was on book writing formatting and sample writing, which lasted for one hour. The last phase of the agenda was the brainstorming and writing workshop. During the workshop phases, four primary school English teachers from Batu Municipality were enthusiastic and actively participative. They asked questions, joined the discussions, shared ideas and experiences during their teaching and using the general textbook form the government, as well as comparing the teaching documents such as previously used lesson plan to the proposed complementary design. They were able

to generate ideas on how to write a more relevant textbook to their own learning context.

In the last stage of the workshop, teachers were given two examples of Unit 1 and Unit 2 that have been designed and written by the community service team; those were Save the Planets and Animals around Us units. In the units, local wisdom and activities were introduced in three skills, namely reading, writing and speaking skills. Each skill was divided into three to four tasks to improve students' eloquent flow of English learning based on their already acquired knowledge of the local culture. The other topics, such as unity in diversity, going global, public health care, our beloved earth, and school organizations were offered to the teachers to be selected and developed into complete units. Figure 2 displays the stages of textbook writing.

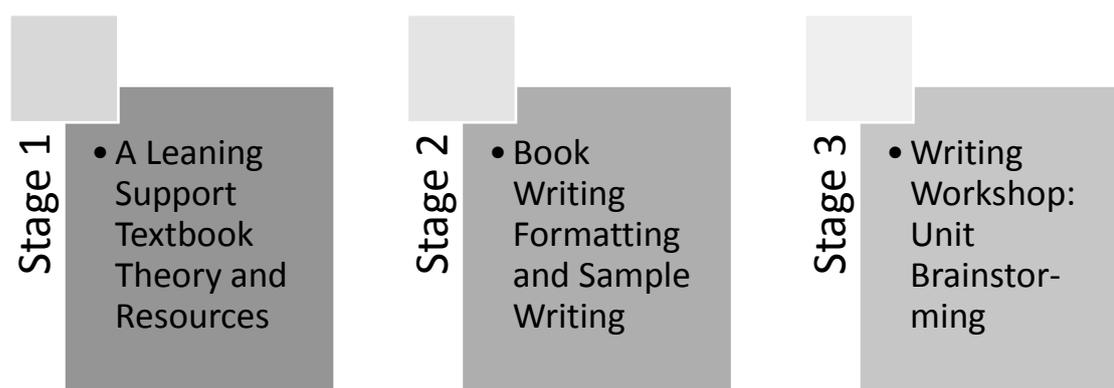| Stage 1	Stage 2	Stage 3
• A Leaning Support Textbook Theory and Resources	• Book Writing Formatting and Sample Writing	• Writing Workshop: Unit Brainstorming

Figure 2. The stages of the textbook writing

Ten units were planned to be compiled, two have been completed by the team, and the other eight were written by the four teachers, hence each teacher was responsible for writing two units. Each unit consisted of ten to twelve pages; the writing format was determined earlier in the second phase workshop. The book writing time allocation was from May to June 2019. However, due to individual constraints, it was prolonged until August 2019. The challenges from the primary school teachers majorly came from time management problems, exercise variations, and English language structure and grammar problems. In order to help the teachers to complete their unit writing, the team conducted online supervision by using two applications: Google-classroom and WhatsApp group discussion. The

team always encouraged the teachers during the writing process by providing ample time, exercise practices, structure and grammar correction, as well as idea generation for activities variations in the unit.

The next step was illustrating the book units. The illustration was taken seriously by hiring one professional illustrator from the Informatics Engineering department to keep the originality of all pictures and displays to avoid plagiarism. The illustration process ran from August until November 2019. The illustrator was sent the units by the team and the illustration results were sent back to the team and being checked. The illustration process was also done to check the consistency of the characters' role in all units. The apps used were *CorelDraw* and *Photoshop*. The final illustrated units were compiled and kept by the team coordinator, which then socialized and returned for the further check to all the book writers.

The publication and printing stages occurred when the experts in primary school book writing did the review process. The suggestions from the book reviewers were allocated from October until November 2019, and the last the compiled unit was printed in December 2019.

Supervision process

Supervision was described as a process of assisting the writing progress of the teachers. In this stage, three supervisors were provided. Each supervisor handled two book units from one writer. The written units from the writers or the teachers were sent via email or Google classroom or Whatsapp application to the supervisor for writing check. The supervisor then examined the format, the language structure, the content suitability with students' age, the task variations, and the vocabulary practice. Furthermore, uniformity of the text, as well as the local contents embedded in the text unit and tasks, were thoroughly reviewed so that it reflected factual and reliable information to the readers. During the supervision time, several challenges were present. Most of the teacher-writers needed time extension for completing their writing quotas. They also needed more ideas and variations in terms of tasks and activities. Furthermore, they had limited time to check the grammar and sentence structure allowing more possible errors to occur. A minimum exposure and practice in writing English textbooks were considered one of the challenges as well.

To solve those problems, supervisors gave extra time allocation for writing to be extended for one more month. The extended time was the result of supervisors-writers negotiation and was approved by both parties. The supervisors also gave alternative ideas, texts, tasks, and vocabulary items relevant to the local content and culture to be used in the book units. Besides, the writing mechanics were checked thoroughly by the help of grammarly.com and extra manual revision by the supervisor. Each supervisor then sent their revised manuscript to the other supervisors to double and cross-checked the works, and then sent the manuscript back to the writer in case of content discrepancy. Then, the finished manuscript was sent to the lay-outer for a printing layout design. From the whole writing and supervision processes, the team obtained the observation notes and reflections on the workshop and brainstorming activities. The teacher presented their curriculum and syllabus to be well adjusted and suited to the complementary textbook design. The team also reflected the whole process from writing, editing, illustrating, layout, and printing in the progress reports. The writing drafts from the teachers were kept to analyze the progress as well.

DISCUSSION

Generally, teachers are seen as a passive doer in the process of curriculum and textbook development (Even and Olsher, 2014). However, the current study has shown that given the right stimulus and treatment, teachers can also be an active part in creating and developing textbooks, as per the suggestion made by Even and Olsher's (2014) study to involve teachers as textbook developers as part of their professional development process. In this process, some hindsight related to the process of writing and supervision of textbook development can be highlighted, and they are presented as follows.

First, the teachers' willingness to participate in the textbook writing project need to be appreciated as it shows their high motivation to improve and develop professionally. As suggested by Ivic (1998), passion, willingness, response and communication are essential elements that shows teachers' positive attitude in textbook development, all of which were found in the teachers involved in the current project. Teachers' professional development is something inevitable. As suggested

by OECD (2009), teachers are expected to undergo continuous professional development process following their initial training in order to keep their skills and expertise up-to-date and to improve their teaching effectiveness. The teachers involved in this program were volunteer-based, and they were committed to spend some time among their busy schedule to write a textbook and be supervised during the process, thus showing a considerable amount of spirit for voluntary professional development attempts that are worth praising.

The second point related to the highlight of the writing and supervision process was in terms of the weak match between the plan and the actual writing process. Working with busy teachers requires a relatively high flexibility especially in terms of time management. Regular reminders were expected during the writing and supervising process to ensure the tasks were done as per the agreed due dates, or to make sure that the delays occurred would not be dragging. Teacher busy schedule has been a rampant issue that frequently becomes a challenge in their professional development efforts (Santos & Miguel, 2016). According to Hennessy, Haßler, & Hofmann, (2015), some solutions to the problem could be in the form of professional development programs that allows collaboration between teachers, and integrates technology. The current project follows both suggestions in its application as the use of technology allows for online supervision with flexible time. However, it is proven to be two-edged knife which positive side was to allow more flexible supervision time management, but with the negative side of less pressure on the deadlines compared to face-to-face supervision meetings. For that problem, the school teacher coordinator had been a source of great assistance to the program, providing a useful direct encouragement toward the other teachers to work better on the agreed due dates.

Another salient finding during the writing and supervision process was the fact that as practitionby makiers, the teachers were at advantage at understanding the target students' level of proficiency. Thus, they were considered to be more aware about the texts' level of difficulty that are more appropriate for their students. As suggested by Mukundan, Hajimohammadi, & Nimehchisalem (2011) 'suitability to learners' become one of the most important criteria for textbook evaluation,

meaning that during the development process, this aspect should be taken well into account. However, the findings show that the contents and exercises made by the teachers tend to be monotonous and thus need improving. In addition, some problems such as some forms of unintended plagiarism and grammar and mechanic errors were also quite rampant. This serve as the main activity conducted during the supervision phase.

Based on these findings and discussion, some lessons learned can be inferred, among others are as follows. First, combined online and face-to-face meetings during the writing and supervision process seem to be expected as the benefits of each can complement the weaknesses. For example, the time flexibility of online writing and supervision process has been proven to allow teachers to drag the due dates of the projects, while face-to-face meeting would provide greater pressure for teachers to finish the targets before the meeting takes place. In that case, some online and some face-to-face meetings could be the middle way to cater for the teachers' busy schedule and the demand for the project.

Second, improving teachers' quality especially related to teaching material development and its publication is a practical problem that needs urgent addressing. The demand for publishing which requires stricter and more systematic filter to ensure plagiarism avoidance should be the main focus to prepare teachers before embarking on a writing project for textbook publishing. This is especially true with regards to the more subtle forms of plagiarism such as unintended plagiarisms practices. In other words, sufficient training for publication ethics, especially those related to plagiarism avoidance need to be conducted before the writing process begins.

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS

The writing process of Bright English textbook for primary school level was conducted through several stages; the workshop, the initial sample display, the writing process, the editing, the illustration, and layout process, as well as the printing. Whereas the supervision stages comprised giving motivation and timeline for unit writing, collecting the writing units from the teachers, providing content, tasks, and structure feedbacks, and units re-collection after revision from the writers.

Bright English was a prototype of a culturally based textbook that reflects the implementation of 2013 curriculum topics relevant to the life skills needed by the Batu Municipality.

Further research should address the exploration of more contextual topics of Batu and with the involvement of more primary school teachers to support the goal of the local government that is to provide practical English skills for Batu's tourism. Bright English is expected to inspire other schools surrounding Batu Municipality, such as primary schools in Malang, Kediri, Blitar, or Surabaya to design similar contextual books for more target-oriented learning results. Besides, for more diverse use of local context and wisdom in Bright English, further researchers may involve a more robust collaboration with the foreign researcher or party to implement the support material in a wider international context. Education-tourism might act as one way to realize this mutual study. The education-tourism field might use Bright English as one source to introduce the local potentials to foreign visitors. Students of primary schools can play the role of guides to foreign visitors and present the local potentials derived from the book.

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