## Teach and Learn English Beyond Pages: Other Options Beside Textbooks

**Esamada Rose Nursaputri**
Universitas PGRI Delta, Sidoarjo
esamadarn@gmail.com

### Abstract

*Some teachers consider textbooks to be the main learning material in class. This is because textbooks provide various benefits such as providing systematic material, accompanied by well-designed pictures and graphs, and having practice sessions for students to practice. However, textbooks also have weaknesses. The weaknesses are the high price, monotonous and boring structure, a context that is not suitable for everyday life, and so on. Weaknesses found in textbooks can actually be overcome. The way to overcome this deficiency is to use alternative materials. Alternative materials vary greatly, so that determining or creating alternative materials requires teacher effort in selecting materials that suit the needs and character of students. In this way, the aim of using learning materials will be achieved, namely supporting students in achieving the learning goals that have been set.*

***Keywords****: Weakness, Textbook, Alternative material*

## INTRODUCTION

English is an international language that is generally studied as a foreign language in Indonesia. It is very crucial to make our students proficient in using English (Lowella et al., 2023) so that English teaching is applied in every level of education, namely kindergarten, elementary school, middle school, and high school until higher education such as college and university.

English which is intended for various kinds of students with differences in backgrounds such as age, cognitive level, comprehension ability, and motivation in learning, makes teaching very challenging. The challenges faced include classroom management, language barriers, student motivation, and lesson planning (Copland et al., 2014; Deocampo, 2020). Besides those mentioned challenges, teachers also may face challenges regarding teaching materials (Jeyaraj, 2019).

Material is anything that is used to support the English teaching and learning process (Nikoopour & Farsani, 2011). Thus, teaching materials can be presented in any form such as printed (book, picture, worksheets), digital (video, audio), or internet (Khoiroh, 2022). Those materials allow teachers to have more meaningful interactions with the students (Frimpong, 2021).

In English teaching, the learning materials that are widely used are textbooks. Textbooks are material that brings positive impact to the classroom (Putri & Jufrizal, 2022). According to Wuttisrisiriporn et al. (2020), using appropriate textbooks will make it easier for students to achieve learning goals. This statement is supported by NNamdi-Eruchalu (2012), that textbooks facilitate students with learning experiences that suit their needs. Not only for students, textbooks also provide benefits to teachers.

As stated by Wachyunni & Olivia (2020) in their research, several teachers have a positive view of the existence of textbooks. Textbooks provide very clear instructions and provide many exercises that can be used to conduct classroom activities. Textbooks also make it easier for teachers to make students focus. Students will focus on the images and text available on the book page in front of them.

Apart from the advantages, textbooks also have several disadvantages. Many researchers have conducted research on this matter. Nilsson (2006) stated that textbooks bored students, this was because the format in each chapter was always the same and repeated. He also conveyed that textbooks are not very helpful in developing English speaking, the underlying reason is that most textbooks failed to provide authentic and real conversation. Most of the dialogues provided are made up only for teaching program to run.

Textbooks also have many weaknesses because they are not created based on analysis from each student. This is impacted the content presented in the book is not appropriate to the knowledge background, culture or cognitive level of the students (Kodriyah et al., 2018).

Some of these weaknesses can be used as reasons for teachers to consider choosing teaching materials other than textbooks. Because if teachers insist on using textbooks for every teaching and learning activity, it means they are closing many possibilities for students to achieve teaching goals. However, before moving forward, teachers require additional direction and knowledge regarding the advantages and disadvantages of using textbooks in the classroom in order to make the best decisions and be able to persuade dissatisfied students that there are benefits to using a particular method that will aid in their English language learning.

This study aims to provide descriptions of the advantages and disadvantages of text books and other alternative materials. The results of the study can be used as a guide or basis for increasing the choice of teaching materials rather than being forced to use textbooks for all occasions. This will be beneficial for teachers and students as subjects of the learning and teaching process.

**METHOD**

This study used literature review approach to conduct a conceptualized systematic elaboration of how the curriculum development benefits student especially towards their learning experience. The data were collected in form of article journal of previous studies uploaded online on the internet. This study is a qualitative study which is dealing with all written sources to be discussed.

**RESULT AND DISCUSSION**

Books are very common teaching materials and are often used by teachers. In this section, the definition of the book, its strengths and weaknesses will be explained clearly. Then other materials are also presented that can complement the shortcomings of the book, so that the teacher does not only focus and focus on the book. Teachers can be more creative and more exploratory in using and providing materials in the classroom.

***Definition of Textbook***

Textbooks are books that written and published and used specifically in a classroom (Lund, 2006). Meanwhile according Rahmawati (2016) textbook is a book that students use in supporting learning activities contains descriptions of certain material which are arranged systematically with specific purpose, the textbook of this lesson used by students in activities learning at school, usually apart from contains material and also contains questions that students can work on train students' independent learning activities.

Textbooks are the most popular tool in teaching and learning activity especially in language classes (Radić-Bojanić & Topalov, 2016). Not only popular, textbooks also have a very crucial role due to their benefits towards teachers and students (Haryadi et al., 2021). According to Kodriyah et al. (2018), textbooks are tool that widely used by teacher in conducting classroom activities because they help students reach the lesson objectives. Textbooks serve as a teacher's guide or reference when delivering lessons so that learning goals are correctly met (Sulistiyo et al., 2021).

According to Soares (2005), a textbook is teaching tool that appear extremely teacher-friendly and be published with the contributions of well-known authors, a clean and appealing layout, a built-in teacher's manual with copyable extra exercises, and other features. But, textbooks are not the one and only teaching materials available. Since a textbook offers a selection of materials and activities that teachers can use, it is considered a resource (Radić-Bojanić & Topalov, 2016). Thus, textbooks are only one of the resources available to teachers to help them meet their learning objectives (Mithans & Grmek, 2020).

It is reasonable to believe that textbooks are carefully considered, authored, and published as original contributions to the advancement of knowledge, given their central role in any curriculum and importance to educators (Zohrabi et al., 2012). A textbook is also defined as a compilation of educational resources linked to the curriculum that help students reach their full potential, improve the information and abilities they require in social situations, and give back to the community (Putri & Jufrizal, 2022). Equipped with suitable teaching facilities, the textbook also serves as a foundation for a curriculum (L. E. Rahmawati et al., 2021).

**The Role of Textbook in English Teaching**

Textbooks are crucial in language learning environments. Furthermore, because the instructor is not a native English speaker and has limited English proficiency, they may use it as a main source, an extended exercise, a variety of activities designed to aid in the learning process, or even as a curriculum in and of itself (Haryadi et al., 2021). Since they are not native English speakers, the foreign teachers clearly rely on the English textbook as their primary source of content and instructional materials in order to teach their students.

Textbooks provide a lot of material that covers the four English language skills, including listening, speaking, reading and writing (Mohammadi & Abdi, 2014; Putri & Jufrizal, 2022; Wachyunni & Olivia, 2020). It serves as a tool for both instruction and formative learning since it imparts knowledge while also facilitating the growth of abilities, values, and competence (Mithans & Grmek, 2020). Textbooks provide clear material, equipped with pictures and graphics (Gómez-Rodríguez, 2010) also lots of exercises in the form of conversations that can be used as activities in class. Apart from that, students also will get a lot of vocabulary input from the text displayed in the textbook. Teachers no longer need to list vocabulary from outside the available material. The textbooks have a role as a language input itslef (Zohrabi et al., 2012).

Apart from playing a role in making it easier for teachers to teach, textbooks also play a role in student learning. Textbooks play a role in providing exposure to English to students. This is based on the fact that students, especially in Indonesia, do not use English in their daily lives, so the exposure they get is very limited. According to Mohammadi & Abdi (2014), by exposing students to the attitudes of a different culture, textbook can enhance their general awareness and experiences. Additionaly, when it comes to introducing students to different cultural expressions and the diversity of cultures, textbooks can be a very helpful resource (Lund, 2006).

Another role in students' learning experience is that student have a primary source of learning that able to bring back home. Students rarely get the chance to practise their English outside of the classroom, the textbooks serve as the primary resource used by teachers when assigning tasks, homework, and tests to their students (Kodriyah et al., 2018). The textbook has always been a crucial component of education because teachers utilise them in their lessons and rely on them to assign homework and administer tests to their students. Since student can work ahead of time when they choose to and know exactly what to accomplish when necessary, most of them found working with textbooks to be enjoyable (Nilsson, 2006).

Meanwhile, according to Mohammadi & Abdi (2014), determining the precise use of textbooks in language classrooms is a challenging task. They conveyed meeting students' requirements with textbooks alone—that is, without any extra material—is not the most effective way. According to Haryadi et al. (2021), there is no single textbook that can meet the needs of all learning participants in a class. Same statement conveyed by Zohrabi et al. (2012), no textbook provides answer for every students' learning necessities. Based on this opinion, it can be seen that the use of textbooks in language classes cannot be careless, textbooks still need help from other teaching materials.

By serving as one of the resources for learning materials, textbooks can enhance students' experiences and general awareness. Nevertheless, they should be carefully chosen to meet the demands of the students. Teachers should choose a textbook that is appropriate for the students' learning goals, curriculum, and learning environment (Kodriyah et al., 2018).

### Strength and Weakness of Textbook

There have been many studies that explain the various strength that can be felt when using textbooks as teaching materials in the classroom. The strength give benefits that are felt to be very large, especially for new teachers who have little experience and also teachers who have been teaching for a long time and have various teaching experiences. The first strength is

regarding the availability and readiness of materials used in teaching so as to give teachers a short time to prepare lesson plans. According to Radić-Bojanić & Topalov (2016), most teachers feel comfortable basing their lesson plans off of a textbook. They find that using textbooks as teaching aids is helpful since they give students a sense of security regarding the material that will be covered in class. Less experienced educators can gradually increase their attention to the unique needs of each student by using the textbook as a framework of reference as well.

In Nilsson's study, a female teacher claimed that using a textbook saves her a significant amount of time because she doesn't have to create any materials herself, and it also saves her students energy because they don't have to keep track of different handouts or other alternative materials that they frequently misplace.

The second strength is regarding the textbook appearance. Textbooks are printed in sheets and equipped with covers that have been designed very beautifully. The content is presented in various chapters, accompanied by color or black and white images which are guaranteed to be interesting for all levels of students. Thus, according to Monica et al. (2023) textboox can affect the degree of success in learning English by inspiring students and maximising their learning competencies. Most textbook texts are fascinating, students like reading them. The different topic is covered in every chapter of the books, they enjoy the variety offer by the textbooks. In addition, they think the texts are quite informative and have taught them a lot about the subjects (Nilsson, 2006).

Third strength is regarding students' learning experiences. Zohrabi et al. (2012) stated that a textbook's comprehensive method of teaching provides students with an organised and efficient way to communicate the material. They feel more content and self-assured because they always have a book to relate to. Additionally, a textbook gives them the chance to review and practise at any time. Students can use it as a reference tool and for independent study as well. Further, Chang (2020) found students who used textbooks also appeared to be more prepared, attended class more frequently, and understood the lessons and subject matter more effective.

Textbooks are not only have various strengths but also many weaknesses. Researchers have been studying this for a long time, starting from the use of textbooks in general to focusing on English textbooks used in schools. The weaknesses found cover various aspects such as content format, provision of practice questions, and the negative impact on teachers and students as everyday users.

A prominent weakness of texbooks is their very inflated prices. This is widely discussed because it is a complaint, especially by students. According to Kodriyah et al. (2018),  publishers use textbooks as a tool to make quick profits. Too many textbooks are sold with significant issues, poor design, and applicability limitations. Lin (2019) found in his research that students considered textbooks to be very expensive and not worth it because they would quickly become outdated. A research participant in a study by Shell (2016) also conveys that money is a major factor in book selection, since the award may take precedence over the book's quality. Haryadi et al. (2021) also stated that textbooks are relatively expensive, but according to him the price is the second thing, the most important thing is that the book he buys has a very good quality.

The next weakness is regarding the things offered in textbooks. Textbooks provide many things such as material in chapters, explanations along with descriptions of pictures and graphs, if in English books there will be conversations available for practice, a collection of vocabulary and various practice questions. However, these things are not necessarily able to meet the needs of all students in a class (Banaruee et al., 2023; Haryadi et al., 2021). According to Kodriyah et al. (2018), this can happen because basically books are not made based on the background of each particular student. Textbooks are basically a reflection of the current syllabus and curriculum (Putri & Jufrizal, 2022).

This condition requires teachers to be selective in choosing textbooks to be used in the classroom. In fact, teachers are advised not to stick to textbooks alone, but are strongly advised to support them with other alternative materials (Gómez-Rodríguez, 2010). This in line with Shell (2016) who stated that In order to make up for the textbook's flaws, teachers must locate alternative resources or create their own content because some areas are not well covered. Gómez-Rodríguez (2010) suggests teacher can use short videos, movies, and songs as a complementary materials.

The distinctive characteristics of textbooks are the chapter format and uniform content. Research by Nilsson (2006) shows that some students complain because they feel bored when using textbooks due to the same structure in every chapter. The same format and repetitive patterns make the learning and teaching process monotonous. Fry & Mercer (1979) conveyed that the lesson turns into a boring routine with no joy or excitement for the teacher or the students due to its repetitive structure. Textbooks give teachers a list of learning objectives, which they then translate into instructional explanations of the content meant for teaching (Pavešić & Cankar, 2022). However, if teachers merely utilise the textbook and aren't willing to provide

other materials, then classroom activities might become rather dull (Fry & Mercer, 1979). Sometimes using materials other than the textbook seems to be energising and exciting for the students (Shell, 2016).

The weaknesses of textbooks, apart from having an impact on students' learning experiences in class, also have an impact on teachers. Especially regarding teachers' creativity. A book with super good quality, namely one that has a teaching and learning guide, a collection of assignments, is equipped with VCDs and listening material, covers all language skills (David R.A, 2005; Mohammadi & Abdi, 2014), will have an impact on blunting a teacher's creativity (Nilsson, 2006). Teachers will feel very dependent on the existence of books. This makes teachers lazy to explore other learning materials.

Another weakness can be found in the provision of material in the textbook itself. The textbook provides a variety of exercises covering English skills including speaking. One of these exercises is by providing various conversational texts. However, conversations were found that were not relevant to daily life, mainly Indonesian students. Apart from that, the text also displays vocabulary and structures that are more complicated and not appropriate to the student's level (Haryadi et al., 2021). Weaknesses in the provision of writing materials were also found specially regarding the texbook used in Iran. The book does not include authentic writing activities such as writing a letter to the teacher, to a friend, and to parents (Zohrabi et al., 2012).

### Alternative Materials

Apart from depending on textbooks, teachers can actually turn to alternative materials. Alterinative materials are every materials that is used in class excluding textbook and coursebook (Johansson, 2006). According to (Harsono, 2015), alternative material can be used as main material or as support material for the textbook. Another attempt to address the shortcomings of the current textbooks that do not align with the syllabus, curriculum, or learning objectives is to supplement the ones that are currently in use. The additional teaching/learning resources may change based on what is readily available or the teachers' inventiveness.

Alternative materials are very diverse. Teachers can make it themselves according to their creativity. Such as pictures, flash cards, videos or audio recordings, all of which are their own creations (Nilsson, 2006). The advantage of self-made alternative materials is that the materials can be precisely suited to students' needs and desires. Because making alternative materials is based on the results of a teacher's observations of students' character and behavior which have been carried out first before making alternative materials (Harsono, 2015). Thus, the self-made materials are

understandable and significantly help students to make progress (Johansson, 2006). This is very positive because learning in class is not based merely on textbooks and goes beyond the pages.

The fact that alternative material provides a variety of ways to discuss topics that are relevant to both the class and society at large is another benefit. This is crucial because knowledge of current global concerns is necessary for students to have an equal chance of passing the national exams (Nilsson, 2006). Teachers can also hold effective discussions regarding the recent phenomenon in society which are useful in giving and getting feedback from students. This discussion is usually carried out orally which also supports students in developing speaking skills,

Authentic materials can also be used as alternative materials. Qamariah (2016) conveys that authentic material, whether written or spoken, is material intended for native speakers and is not designed for learning from non-native speakers. However, authentic material has the potential to be a very useful alternative material for use in the classroom.

There are several classifications of authentic material, namely Listening-Viewing materials (TV commercials, comedy shows, news, novels and songs), Visual Materials (magazines, post cards, street signs, etc.), and Printed Materials (electronic manuals, song lyrics, brochures, catalogues, etc.) (Gebhard, 1996). The materials mentioned above can provide exposure for students in class. However, according to Qamariah (2016) although exposure is better given as early as possible, its use cannot be done randomly. It takes a teacher's astuteness to sort out which authentic materials can meet the language learning needs of his/her class.

Alternative materials can also be provided by students. Teachers are allowed to give their students freedom to determine the material they want. According to Nilsson (2006), This improves the students' capacity to locate quality, course-relevant material. When presented with an extensive array of alternative educational materials, students are able to think critically and assess whether the material is worthwhile. They are unable to learn this skill as much when using a textbook because their entire concentration is on using the book. The study results also show that students are more enthusiastic and motivated because they can discover new things that they cannot find in textbooks.

### Web-based Teaching Materials

Technological developments also play a role in the development of learning materials. In the digital era, almost all activities can be done using gadgets and via websites. Naturally, a teacher's responsibility extends beyond just creating engaging lessons; they also have to construct lessons

that help students overcome obstacles and make learning engaging and creative. As a result, in order to meet the demands of a more technologically advanced age, improvements in education are required. Learning materials are also developed in the same way as web-based teaching materials. According to (Risa et al., 2022) web-based teaching materials are those that will be created in the future and take the shape of a web. Subsequently using blogs to facilitate web-based learning with content, questions, student assignments, grades, and much more.

Enhancing student learning using web-based teaching and learning materials involves two key components. The availability of materials in the selected topic of study is the first consideration. Institutions must share teaching and learning resources since producing high-quality educational materials is expensive. Complete courses and shorter materials can be found among the online resources offered over the World Wide Web. Locating and evaluating pertinent content is the second facet of employing web-based teaching and learning resources. It is frequently inefficient to find materials using standard web search engines. The existence of portals, or websites that serve as access points to other websites, is advantageous for those conducting relevant online searches (Orhun, 2004).

Web-based materials promote the flexibility of learning. Suriaman et al. (2018) convey Students can access the contents at any time and from any location thanks to the adaptable learning environment. This enables individuals to study without relying entirely on the instructors and the classroom. Because of its accessibility, students can practise accessing information on their own at all times. If this habit is maintained over time, it will eventually encourage autonomous learning. Thus, web-based materials also encourage students to be anotomous student.

Web-based teaching materials may potentially improve performance by facilitating learning. As a matter of fact, web-based materials enhanced rather than replaced conventional teaching materials. Their primary goal was to provide students the chance to preview lectures that they would be attending, double-check their notes before exams, go through for-profit websites that showcased the ideas they were learning, and gain further exposure to the subject matter (Karuppan, 2001).

## CONCLUSION

Textbooks as the most popular source of learning material and have many benefits actually also have several weaknesses. This weakness can be felt by teachers and students as well. Monotonous and unvaried learning, content that does not suit students' abilities and character, lack of exposure, and price

problems are the shortcomings of textbooks. To deal with this shortage, teachers have another option called alternative materials. Alternative materials are more flexible and offer material that is more suited to students' needs and characteristics, and can even be adapted to a teacher's teaching style. Alternative materials are very diverse, ranging from visual, audio, audio-visual, print, to web-based. Whatever learning materials are used by teachers when teaching, they are encouraged to be selective in terms of selection. The best choice is based on the students' needs, interests, cognitive level and intelligence.

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