



ANCOLT

International Proseeding on Language Teaching

Vol. 1, No. 1, Maret 2024, pp.1-12

The Evaluation of English Course Book Used in Mambaus Sholihin Senior High School Students Learning: Teacher and Students Perspective

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Abstract

The oldest Indonesian education schools, pesantrens, have historically included English as a foreign language (EFL) as a compulsory subject in their curriculum. Teachers rely on learning resources like textbooks and course books to guide instruction and achieve material objectives. Regular evaluation of teaching materials is crucial to ensure they are effective and align with students' needs and expectations. This study aims to address this gap by examining the perceptions of teachers and students at Mamba'us Sholihin Islamic boarding school. The researchers used descriptive narratives and analyzed data transcripts from interviews. The study found that the Mambaus Sholihin English course book is adequate, but it still has shortcomings such as typing errors, less relevant content, and less clear image media display. The study suggests that the Mambaus Sholihin English course book needs revisions to address these shortcomings and improve the learning experience for students.

Keywords: *teaching English at pesantren, course book, evaluation.*

INTRODUCTION

Islamic boarding school, known as pesantren is one of the Islamic institutions that are well-known for its education quality (Khoiroh, 2020) and its superiority in teaching foreign language to its students. As the oldest Indonesian education schools, pesantrens have historically implemented English as a foreign language (EFL) as one of the compulsory subjects in their curriculum. It means that pesantren also gives foreign language subject to be learned by students. English has become one of foreign languages that is commonly taught in Islamic boarding schools.

Mamba'us Sholihin Islamic boarding school is a significant institution in Islamic education, integrating religious teachings with modern academic

curricula. Mastering English is crucial for accessing global knowledge and engaging in cross-cultural dialogues. The school has implemented English as a foreign language, requiring students to practice it in daily conversations.

Teaching English at pesantren involves a comprehensive approach that integrates language proficiency, cultural sensitivity, and character development rooted in Islamic principles. This approach is based on Islamic values, cultural context, and holistic education. Key references include works like "Islamization of English Language Teaching" by Mohd Nazri Latiff and journals like the Journal of Islamic Studies and Cultural Sciences. This approach often includes literature, critical thinking, and communication within the Islamic teachings framework.

Teaching English in Indonesia is not always running well. Challenges in teaching English are also frequently faced by English teachers in Indonesia (Marzulina, 2021). Teaching English to students with no prior background, a diverse first language, and varying personalities is indeed challenging. Some teachers find it difficult to establish connections with the material, choose suitable teaching methods, and explain concepts clearly (Aziz, 2020). Learning a foreign language like English can be very challenging for students who do not have a wide vocabulary. Although it may be easy for teachers, it has proved to be difficult for some students. Related to challenges in teaching English, Songbatumis found that some challenges emerged, from students, teachers, and the school's facility (Lestari, 2021). Students are challenged by their lack of vocabulary mastery, low concentration, lack of discipline, boredom, and speaking problems. Meanwhile, teachers's challenges are shortage of training, language proficiency issues, limited mastery of teaching methods, unfamiliarity with technology, and lack of professional development facilities, resources, and time constraints.

There are still many obstacles to learn English in Islamic boarding schools in Indonesia. Normalita and Oktavia (2019) stated that if you look at the culture in Islamic boarding schools, students come from various regions to study in Islamic boarding schools. This slowly gives rise to a new culture, which can be multilingual, or the use of many languages in Islamic boarding schools. Therefore, the students not only use one of their local languages but also participate in adapting the language of their peers. The use of more than one language means that the community is called a multilingual society. We cannot deny that students come from different skill and interest background, several of them may like learning and be able to understand foreign language easily, but some of them may not. Learning a foreign language such as English can provide challenges for students who are not used to practicing a foreign

language before. This case becomes a challenge for teachers to deliver the material to students.

Indonesia considers English a foreign language and places it in school curriculum, teaching it in primary, junior high school, and senior high schools. Instructional materials are used to aid teachers in conducting instructions and achieving material objectives, facilitating classroom learning activities. Teaching and learning resources include textbooks or course books that play a vital role (Herlina, 2020). Andon states that materials are at the very center of language teaching, and understanding what goes into creating them is an essential part of a professional language teacher's development (Tomlinson, 1998). For several teachers, English course books are crucial for teachers to teach English material effectively and according to the institution's course outline. They provide learners and teachers with a language course, influencing students' English skill development. Students must understand the material provided by teachers to develop their skills. In other situations, materials should be suitable for students' level capacity and easily understood by them. Therefore, it is essential for the materials to be easily understood by students.

Mambaus Sholihin English course book is expected to present as a solution for this problem. The book is designed for fulfilling students and teachers needs in doing learning activity. It offers considerable advantages for both students and teachers when they are being used in ESL/EFL classrooms or courses. Course book is one of learning instruments used to conduct English learning materials. It serves as the cornerstone of language education and shapes the structure and content of the curriculum. The selection and implementation of these materials significantly influence the learning experience, making it imperative to evaluate their effectiveness in meeting the linguistic and cultural needs of students in Islamic boarding schools.

Cunnigsworth (1995) suggested that one benefit of textbooks's multiple roles in the ELT curriculum is their potentation. He argues that textbooks serve as a useful tool for students's self-directed learning as well as an efficient source of information, ideas, and activities. They also serve as a reference for students, a syllabus that reflects pre-established learning objectives, and assistance for inexperienced teachers who are still developing their confidence. In addition to that, one of the primary advantages of using textbooks is that they are psychologically essential for students since their progress and achievement can be measured concretely when we use them.

In engaging learning environments, evaluating teaching materials regularly and systematically is crucial to ensure that the materials are effective and aligned with students's ongoing needs and expectations. Evaluation

serves as a crucial mechanism for educators and researchers to adjust the relevance, adequacy, and quality of the learning material. This process involves comprehensive research on a few good educational materials, such as textbooks, assessing desired learning outcomes, and making a contribution to the overall educational goals of an institution.

Despite the acknowledged importance of the evaluation process in educational contexts, there remains a noticeable gap in the literature, particularly concerning the evaluation of English course books within the specific context of Islamic boarding schools. While general studies on the evaluation of educational materials exist, the unique characteristics and educational philosophies of Islamic boarding schools demand specific attention. The scarcity of research addressing the evaluation of English course books within Islamic boarding schools hinders the development of targeted strategies that consider the intersection of Islamic teachings, cultural nuances, and the global demands for English proficiency.

From several studies that have been done by researchers, there are several gaps found, one of which is the lack of research specifically focusing on the evaluation of English course books used in the learning of Mambaus Sholihin Senior High School students. In addition, there is a need to explore the impact of using the Mambaus Sholihin English course book on the learning outcomes of Mambaus Sholihin Senior High School students. The research gap of this study is the need for more empirical evidence on the effectiveness of English course books in improving students's language skills and learning achievement in English learning. This study aims to address this gap by conducting a comprehensive qualitative exploration of the perceptions held by teachers and students at Mambaus Sholihin Islamic boarding school and providing qualitative evidence on the impact of using the Mambaus Sholihin English course book on the skills and learning achievement of Mambaus Sholihin Senior High School students in learning English based on the perspectives of teachers and students regarding the English course book currently in use.

In navigating this uncharted territory, the study aims to contribute to the academic discourse on the evaluation of educational materials as well as to provide practical insight that can inform the development of curriculum and teaching practices in Islamic boarding schools and similar educational environments. This study aims to answer the following research question: What are the teachers and students perspectives on the relevance and engagement level of the English course book used in teaching English language materials in Mambaus Sholihin Islamic boarding school? And What

are the students needs and challenge in using English course book of Mambaus Sholihin?

METHOD

This study applied a qualitative research approach method because the data produced were descriptive narratives. According to Maleong qualitative research method is a scientific research that aims to understand a phenomenon in natural social context by prioritizing the process of in-depth communication interaction between the researcher and the phenomenon to be discussed. Qualitative research aims to find detailed information. The more in-depth the data obtained, the better the quality of the research. Unlike quantitative research which focuses on the amount of data, qualitative research focuses on how complete and deep the information obtained by researchers is (Nanda, 2023).

This study used an ethnography research design, conducting face-to-face interviews with participants. The interviews covered topics such as teachers' experiences in teaching English, challenges they faced, strategies they used, the need for assistance from course books, students' experiences with course books, challenges they faced, and their needs towards the book. The researchers recorded the interviews and transcribed them into written text for analysis. The participants included three English course teachers and five students from each book level, from level four to level six. The interviews were recorded and transcribed for analysis.

In analyzing the data, the researchers initially reviewed relevant theories to validate the collected data. The recorded interviews were transcribed, and in the second step, the researchers conducted an analysis by comparing the theory with the data transcripts, which represented the participants' responses during the interviews. Finally, the researchers drew conclusions based on their analysis. The recorded data primarily focused on the participants' words and sentences, providing a deeper understanding of how the teachers addressed the challenges encountered in teaching English to young learners, as conveyed by the participants themselves.

The study aims to find out the course book lack, challenge faced by teachers and students in using this book, and students need toward this book . this research is an insight into the case of the language English learning in Mambaus Sholihin islamic boarding school, especially for senior high school students. The research is not closely related to the number and calculation, but it seeks out and evaluate the course book used in teaching english materials. this case study allowed the researcher to study students needs toward the book and challenge they faced during learning english through the

book. it is an attempt to understand anything related the lack and advantage of the book to find out the more spesific evaluation result.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Based on interviews conducted with students who have been selected as participants, there are several things that are not in accordance with the needs of the students, including material that is too concise and explanations that are too short. Students feel that the explanation of the material from each chapter is too short and concise, so students are less able to understand the explanations contained in the material for each chapter. This is also a challenge for teachers to explain the brief explanation to students. Some of the teachers found it difficult to explain the material.

The Mambaus Sholihin level 4-6 English course book basically considered the development of four language skills in an integrated manner. Each unit of this book has clear sections in the development of language skills, namely listening, reading, speaking, and writing. In addition, the activities provided are quite integrated between one language skill and another. The materials for the development of reading, speaking, and writing skills are adequate and appropriate for the level of students in grades 10-12. However, the media used for listening practice is not accompanied by audio recordings as supporting media for listening practice. The activity of developing listening skills only comes from the teacher. In this case teacher must be able to give examples of correct pronunciation to students, so it seems that for the listening ability part, students will depend entirely on the teacher to give examples.

Course books are media that help the learning process, as a guide, and as a learning resource for teachers and students. According to Cunningsworth (1995) in his book, the category of book design and arrangement has six criteria. These criteria relate to the arrangement and sequencing of the contents of the book. In terms of the arrangement and sequencing of material, Mambaus Sholihin English course book still seems less structured where some material that should be taught earlier is taught at the end while material that should be taught at the end is taught in the middle of the learning syllabus. In the level 6 course book material taught in grade 12 there is also material that is less relevant to the level of grade 12 children. According to Setyawan (2023) at that level students should get material such as letter application, listening comprehension, discussion text and text review. However, this material is not found in the English course book Mambaus Sholihin level 6 which is used as teaching material for senior high school level.

Book preparation should basically be sequenced according to topic and skill functions in a consistent manner. At the same time, it is sorted based

on the complexity of language and learning activities (Suryarini, 2019). Furthermore, on the criteria of assessment and lesson progress, this book is adequate because it has many activities that can be done as practice and independent learning and also has a review section that can be used as a reference for student progress to be able to see the fulfilment of external syllabus requirements. However, this book does not provide enough grammar references, probably because the focus of this book is communicative skills so that grammar references are not clearly given only as support for skills at the functional literacy level.

A good course book must present good learning content as well. Content in learning can be interpreted as information in the form of learning materials prepared by educators (Sudarsana, 2020). Interesting learning content can increase the motivation of students so that it can encourage the desire to keep learning which has an impact on improving learning outcomes (Sadewa, 2022). Learning content can be in the form of text, images, sound, video, and multimedia or a combination of text, images, sound, and video. In addition, there is also interactive learning content that is able to interact with learners.

Mambaus Sholihin course book actually already has interesting and good content in it. However, in its presentation, it still has some content that is considered less relevant to the situation of the students. In presenting the content, things in pesantren that are often encountered by students should also be included, because such things are often encountered by students so that they are easily understood and practised by students.

The presentation of learning media in a learning content of a book is a supporting element so that the learning content of the book looks more interesting and not boring. Some of the learning media in the English course book include image media. Media in the form of images is a tool that teachers can use in the learning process with the aim of forming meaningful learning for students. So that the role of a teacher who has expertise, provision and ability in the use of these media is very influential on the formation of learning interest in students (Magdalena, 2021). Some of picture illustrations in Mambaus Sholihin English course book according to the students are less clear so that students have difficulty describing what is illustrated. According to the teachers, the illustrated pictures should be more relevant to what is often encountered in the daily lives of students in pesantren.

The Mambaus Sholihin English course book offers diverse and interesting topics to increase students' interest in learning. However, not all materials are suitable for students' interests. The topics are adapted to situations and conditions students are likely to experience, representing socio-

cultural conditions in Indonesia. The gender representation is balanced, ensuring no inequality. However, the book lacks clear representation of relevant topics for students' habits and ethnic groups in Indonesia. According to Cunningsworth, the book is appropriate, but more topics should be added to cater to students' daily lives.

In addition, this book in the evaluation does not have supporting components such as teacher books and workbooks separately and does not provide tapes to support listening skills. From the various presentation of interesting and relevant topics and materials, Mambaus Sholihin English course book unfortunately does not have a teacher's book so that some teachers find it difficult to determine the right teaching methods in teaching. The existence of special teachers guide book will greatly assist teachers in determining the methods and teaching styles that will be applied in the classroom. As mentioned above, textbooks in public schools are quite different from English textbooks in general. In terms of writing, in the English course book Mambaus Sholihin there are still some typing errors, so that both teachers and students feel confused and have difficulty reading the information in the book.

According to Grant (1987), the textbook must encounter the need of official public teaching syllabus. In other words, textbooks used in the classroom should contain the materials proposed by Standard of the national curriculum teaching syllabus. In fact, there is some materials proposed by Standards of National Curriculum which are not found in Mambaus Sholihin English course book. It can be concluded that this English textbook need some revision in terms of material coverage based on the current curriculum.

CONCLUSION

Teaching English as a foreign language presents various challenges, particularly in an environment where English has limited practical use (Songbatumis, 2017). English teachers in an Islamic School face challenges like students' lack of knowledge, low motivation, negative language perceptions, time constraints, and resource issues. To overcome these, they should use creativity, seek assistance, and collaborate with stakeholders. Teachers' role nowadays is as facilitator, not instructor anymore. As facilitators, teachers should facilitate their students by providing good materials. This textbook also has weakness especially in listening tasks, teacher should bridge the gap by providing unavailable materials that should be taught based on Standard of Curriculum 2013 proposed by the government.

Choosing a good course book for learners is a must. A good and decent coursebook will improve learners' learning achievement. Interesting learning

content will also provide students with a better learning experience so that students can understand the subject matter presented easily. Mambaus Sholihin's English course book has fulfilled the criteria of a decent course book according to Cunningsworth (1995), but there are still some shortcomings found in the book. Based on students' perceptions, the Mambaus Sholihin English course book lacks further explanation of the material in the book, the visualisation of images is also considered less attractive to students. The content presented is also considered less relevant to the needs of students and what students encounter in their daily lives. Meanwhile, based on the experience of the teachers while teaching using the book, the Mambaus Sholihin English course book needs a teacher's book as a teaching support guide. According to them, with a teacher's book, it will help teachers in choosing the right teaching methods and styles for them.

Based on the analysis of this study, it can be concluded that Mambaus Sholihin course book needs to be revised. Some typing errors are still found in the level 6 course book. Providing audio and listening media is also necessary so that teachers can more easily provide listening exercises to improve students' listening skills. The content presented must be more relevant, interesting and in accordance with the needs of students, so that students can get a better learning experience.

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