

# A CONTENT ANALYSIS ON THE *ENGLISH FOR VOCATIONAL HIGH SCHOOL* TEXTBOOK

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**Abstract:** This article aims to describe the quality of the textbook “English for Vocational High School III,” an English textbook for the third grade of vocational high school, which is written by Yiyis Krisnani and is published by LP2IP Yogyakarta, viewed from the compatibility of the tasks with the curriculum, Kurikulum Tingkat Satuan Pendidikan (KTSP), and their level of communicativeness. The compatibility is identified from the availability of the materials demanded by the indicators in the curriculum and how well the activities developed the learners’ mastery of the materials. The level of communicativeness is based on the classification of communicative activities proposed by Littlewood (1981) that consists of three levels: 1) pre-communicative, functional communication, and social interaction activities. The result of the analysis shows that the compatibility of the tasks with the curriculum is good; 66.67% of the indicators in the curriculum are developed in this book. The level of communicativeness of this book is fair; only 41.67% of the types of communicative activities proposed by Littlewood are developed.

**Keywords:** content analysis, task, indicator, curriculum, communicative activity

## INTRODUCTION

In language teaching, learning materials including course books or textbooks function as sources of materials (Cunningsworth, 1995; Richards, 2001) and sources of activities and interactions (Cunningsworth, 1995). Textbooks are developed especially for teachers to use in their classroom (Richards, 2001) so that the contents of the textbooks are designed to meet the classroom objectives, both the materials and the activities to do. Since the objectives of classrooms in Indonesia are stated the curriculum designed by the government, the objectives of the textbooks used in the classroom should be in line with the intended ones. The textbooks should help the users to achieve them.

In English language classroom, teachers should be able to provide activities for the learners to be able to communicate since language is a means of communication (Richards, 2001). This theory underlines the purpose of Communicative Language Teaching method in which communicative competence is the purpose of the teaching learning process. In order to achieve that purpose, the learners are to engage in purposeful and meaningful communication (Tomlinson, 2008; Larsen-Freeman, 2000). They are supposed to be given “situations similar to those outside the classroom” (Littlewood, 1981) in which they have real interaction with each other. In CLT classrooms, materials can influence the quality of the interaction and the use of the language in the classroom (Richards and

Rodgers, 2001) so that it is important for a textbook to be able to provide activities to enable the learners interact in meaningful and purposeful communication.

However, due to some potential conflicts in their creation, such as commercial exploitation and public assessment, there seems to be a gap between what should be there in ideal textbooks and what is actually there in commercial textbooks (Greenall in Sheldon, 1998). Teachers should carefully look at the materials and the activities provided in the textbooks first before using it in their class. Therefore, it is important to analyze whether or not the contents of the textbooks fulfill the criteria of ideal textbooks, in this case the curriculum as the purpose of the teaching learning process and the principle of communicative activities.

Moreover, in many cases, teachers view textbooks as syllabus in their classes. Teachers tend to use a textbook as the main, or even the only, source of materials that is used in their classes. They teach what are there in the textbooks even they are not compatible with the indicators demanded by the curriculum. They have the learners do the activities in the textbooks even though they do not provide skills needed in their future or demanded by the curriculum.

Hence, content analysis is important for all related parties to conduct as it can be used as a technique to analyze the contents of the textbooks (Neuman, 2007) and to reveal the real message on them. Through content analysis, we can look deeper into what essentially there in the textbooks rather than what are claimed to be there by the creator and the publisher.

This study is aimed to analyze the contents of the textbook *English for Vocational High School III*, an English textbook for the third-grade students of vocational high school which is written by

Yiyis Krisnani and published by LP2IP Yogyakarta, in order to identify whether or not the activities provided are compatible with the curriculum and whether or not the activities are communicative.

## RESEARCH METHODS

The method used in this research is descriptive research in which the writer is describing the characteristics of a particular individual (Kothari, 2004). This is a content analysis research which belongs to qualitative research methodology (Ary, Jacobs, and Sorensen; 2010). This research aimed to describe the characteristics of the tasks in the textbook *English for Vocational High School III* for the third grade for vocational high school, which is written by Yiyis Krisnani, to determine the quality of the textbook. The description is based on its compatibility with indicators in the curriculum and the level of communicativeness of the tasks. The data are collected by using document analysis as one of non-interactive method (Guetz and Lecompte in Sutopo, 2002).

The data analyzed in this research were all the tasks displayed in the textbook. All the tasks, viewed from the material presented and the activity for the learners to do, were analyzed to identify its ability to help the learners in achieving all the indicators stated in *Kurikulum Tingkat Satuan Pendidikan (KTSP)*. If a task is able to help the learners achieve a certain indicator demanded by the curriculum, it is compatible with it.

The second analysis is based on the level of communicativeness of each task based on the level of communicativeness proposed by Littlewood (1981) who classify the level into three: pre-communicative activity, functional communication activity, and social interaction activity.

The data are analyzed into three steps: 1) organizing and familiarizing, 2) coding and reducing, and 3) interpreting and representing (Ary, Jacobs, and Sorensen, 2010). All the tasks in the textbook *English for Vocational High School* were familiarized by continuously being read and re-read, and were then given codes based on the chapter number, task number, and page number. After that, the researcher interpreted the meaning of the tasks based on the criteria of compatibility and communicativeness.

## RESEARCH FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

The result of the analysis on the compatibility of the tasks with the curriculum of 129 tasks found in the textbook shows that 98 of them are compatible with the curriculum and 14 out of 21 indicators stated in the curriculum, *KTSP*, are developed in this textbook. The number of tasks designed for each indicator can be described in Table 2.

Table 1. The Number of Tasks Compatible with Each Indicator

No.	Indicators	Number of Tasks
1.	Answering questions regarding general information related to a monologue correctly.	6
2.	Answering questions regarding to the content of a monologue (specific information) correctly.	7
3.	Rewriting a monologue that appears on a certain work situation in the form of summary ( <i>taking notes</i> ).	0
4.	Responding to sentences related to <i>making reservation</i> which is done by native speaker.	6
5.	Responding to <i>complaints</i> made by native speaker.	15
6.	Using words/ phrases related to <i>arrangement</i> well.	0
7.	Giving some expressions to <i>confirm and cancel an agreement</i> .	0
8.	Stating some expressions of hope in a real or unreal situation in the future, present or past ( <i>conditional sentence and subjunctive wish</i> ).	12
9.	Producing expressions for interviewing in a good way.	0
10.	Writing an outline of report <i>prakerin</i> in power point slides or transparent using concise sentences.	0
11.	Presenting a report of <i>prakerin</i> orally in the form of presentation.	6
12.	Answering questions related to a manual of equipment correctly.	7
13.	Expressing an instruction of how to use equipment (two manuals in minimum) in their own words correctly.	4
14.	Answering questions related to the content of business letters correctly.	7
15.	Retelling the content of business letters correctly.	0
16.	Answering questions related to the content of Standard Operating Procedure correctly.	4
17.	Retelling Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) in the workplace using their own words correctly.	4
18.	Making simple business letters (bid order, inquiry, etc.).	7
19.	Replying business letters (bid order, inquiry, etc.) in written form correctly.	0
20.	Responding to job advertisement by making a cover letter properly.	1
21.	Presenting a <i>prakerin</i> report in the form of written report.	11
	Number of tasks compatible	97
	Number of indicators developed	14

All the basic competences demanded by the curriculum are developed, but not all indicators in each basic competence are developed. For some basic competences, such as the ones related to letters, monologues, and technical documents, the learners are supposed to be able to understand the content of those letters not to produce ones. Therefore, almost all of the activities related to those texts belong to reading and listening activities in which the learners are given those texts and asked to answer some specific information related to them. It means this book quite succeeds in fulfilling what the curriculum demands.

As for activities related to transactional and interpersonal expressions, instead of giving the learners chances to communicate using those expressions, this book tends to provide activities in which they are given written dialogues containing those expressions and some questions asking about specific information in the dialogue. This kind of activity does not reflect real condition in which the learners will be possibly engaged in the future in which they find a written dialogue and find specific meaning in it. The most possible situations in which they will meet is using those expressions in real communication. Therefore, in this case, this book does not quite succeed in providing appropriate activity for this material.

The curriculum also demands for the learners to be able to produce a certain grammar, such as conditional sentences and subjunctive. For this matter, this book gives the learners enough practices for each

structure although most of them are written activities. This book is quite successful in developing this aspect. However, in providing activities to help the learners produce a certain document such as a report or a letter, is not quite successful since it only provides an example of each part of a report, for example, and asks the learners to write their own without giving the way or techniques to do so. There is also another fatal mistake that the examples of a report given are made by some learners which contains some mistakes and errors so that they cannot be used as language source for the learners to imitate.

Overall, this book provides most all of the materials demanded by the curriculum but not all the activities are appropriate or effective to help the learners in mastering those materials.

The next analysis deals with the level of communicativeness of the tasks based on the level of communicativeness developed by Littlewood (1981) and the result shows that only 5 out of 16 types of communicative activities are developed in this book. The detail of the result of the analysis is described in Table 3.

Most of the activities in this textbook belong to pre-communicative activities. Structural practice activities are dominated by the activities on producing grammatically correct sentences which deals with subjunctive and conditional sentence. Answering some questions about specific information belongs to pre-communicative activity of relating language to specific meaning.

Table 2. *Distribution of Communicative Activities*

No.	Types of communicative activities	Sub-types of communicative activities	Number of tasks
1.	Pre-communicative activities (focusing on the structure of the language to use)	Structural practice	29
		Relating structure to communicative function	2
		Relating language to specific meaning	71
		Relating language to social context	0
2.	Functional communication activities (focusing on the meaning to communicate)	Sharing information with restricted cooperation	0
		Sharing information with unrestricted cooperation	0
		Sharing and processing information	0
		Processing information	3
3.	Social interaction activities (focusing on the social acceptability)	Role-playing controlled through cued dialogues	0
		Role-playing controlled through cues and information	2
		Role-playing controlled through situation and goals	0
		Role-playing in the form of debate or discussion	0

There are two activities which actually contain the same things to do for the learners in which they are given some dialogues then asked to answer questions regarding to it but they have to do the task in pairs in which they have to interact to complete the task. Having learners working in pairs does not mean that an activity can be automatically communicative. Moreover, the activities for the learners to do in those tasks do not give enough need for the learners to have to work with their pairs. However, the presence of interaction in those activities can be seen as an effort to have the learners engage in an interaction. Since its low level of needs of the learners to interact, teachers' control is really needed to make the main purpose of functional communication activities is achieved that is to have the learners engage in an interaction.

Social interaction activities are developed through activities in which the learners engage in interaction in which their social role are clear as well as the context they are in. They are given cues and information for them to keep the interaction going. They are also free to use any kind of language to express the meaning they are going to convey. The same problem applies in this stage is that the level of difficulty of the task makes teachers have to give high control to the process of the task application.

As many as 102 activities of 107 communicative activities belong to pre-communicative activities; it means that this book serves in preparatory stage of developing the learners' communicative competence.

Based on the result of the analysis of the data, it can be summarized in Table 3 below:

Table 3. *The Percentage of the Quality of English for Vocational High School III*

No.	Criteria	Percentage	Quality
1.	The compatibility	66.67%	Good
2.	The level of communicativeness	41.67%	Fair

From the table above, it can be concluded that the quality of the textbook viewed from the compatibility with the curriculum is good, that is 66.67% of all indicators are developed. This percentage represents the number of tasks containing materials demanded by the curriculum, such as letters, reports, manuals, etc. However, from the point of view of the activities for the learners to do, this book does not give adequate activities to help the learners to understand and produce those materials.

This textbook frequently provides activities in which the learners are provided with written or spoken texts and then some questions to answer based on the information that explicitly or implicitly stated in the texts. This might be caused by the fact that many indicators stated in the curriculum demand for the learners to be able to answer some questions regarding to the content of a certain kind of text. For instance, regarding to technical documents, the curriculum states that the learners are supposed to be able to 1) answer the questions related to the content of the documents and 2) retell the content of the documents using their own words. The essence of those two indicators is the same that the learners are able to understand the contents of the documents and their understanding are performed in different manners. In this case, this book has been able to fulfill this goal for providing materials that are demanded by its goal that is the curriculum (Richards, 256).

However, apart from what the book has been provided, if we look at the second indicator closely, it is implied that they are not only supposed to be able to understand the content but also producing their own sentences to express their ideas, their understanding. This skill might be necessary but telling the content of technical documents is less necessary than producing

them. It is because it is rare for someone to tell other party about the content of a document but it is often that someone has to make a document and use it to get something done. Therefore, the ability to produce technical documents is more necessary than the ability to tell their contents. However, the curriculum does not include this competence within it. Hence, it is important to rethink whether the curriculum has been developed to truly cover what the learners need in their future.

The level of communicativeness of the tasks is poor since only 31.25% of the types of communicative activities are developed. Moreover, as much as three out of five communicative developed in this textbook belong to pre-communicative activities which focus on the structure of the language. In fact, in order to be able to communicate, the learners needs more than the competence on linguistic structures (Larsen-Freeman, 2000).

The percentage of the level of communicativeness of the textbook is based on the number of types of communicative activities developed. Each material of course needs to be taught using the pre-communicative activities so that the learners are ready to be engaged in real communicative activities in which they should not focus on the form only but also on the meaning and the social roles they have. Therefore, the ideal condition is that when they are given chance to perform in all of those types of activities. In this matter, textbooks as the source of activities (Cunningsworth, 1995) play their role. However, *English for Vocational High School III* failed to fulfill this criterion.

However, we need to rethink whether it is entirely the writer's failure that this book is not communicative. In the term of its compatibility with the curriculum, this textbook is scored 'good.' Since curriculum

is the result of the combination of the nature of language, that is as a means of communication (Rodgers and Richards, 2001), and language learning (Dubin and Olshtain, 1986), the curriculum itself should bring the notion of communicativeness. It means that if the textbook is labeled as good in the level of compatibility it should also mean that the textbook should be good in the level of communicativeness. However, the fact that is found is different.

Hence it is important to identify why it happens. First, we need to look at the other aspect of the curriculum of vocational high school, in which the purpose of education is to meet learners' relevant needs in their work (Richards, 2001). Therefore, the skills included in the curriculum are the ones that the learners will need in their work life, such as understanding and producing business letters, technical documents, manuals, etc. Since those are texts that are mostly written, the learners should also be taught how to understand the written form of those texts and how to write them. It means that the activity that the learners do in the classroom is to practice to read and write those texts which of course interaction between the learners is not really necessary. The interaction which can be happening is that they discussing the contents of the letters and discussing on how to write. However, it is rare that the learners will face situations in their work life that they have to discuss the content of the letters. Therefore, activities above cannot provide learners with situation resemble to real life contexts (Littlewood, 1981). We cannot deny this fact that it might be one cause that the activities presented in this textbook is less communicative.

Another thing needs to consider as the cause of the low level of communicativeness is that, as stated above, many indicators in the curriculum that

demand the learners to be able to answer some questions regarding to certain texts. This kind of indicator tends to bring the writer to create activities in which the textbook provides texts with some questions to answer. This kind of activities does not give the learners need to interact with each other because of the inexistence of information gap.

## CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTIONS

The findings of this study show that the quality of *English for Vocational High School III* is good in terms of its compatibility to the curriculum, and is poor in term of the level of communicativeness. Although almost all of the materials needed in this grade are provided in this textbook, but the activities are not effective to develop the learners' ability in mastering those materials. This book tends to provide activities which only require the learners' receptive ability such as reading and listening, which might be caused by the demands of the curriculum. However, if we look at the possibility of the skill they need in their future work life, those activities do not represent the real situation they will be engaged with and do not give the learners adequate skill needed in their work life.

There are a few tasks in which the learners have to interact in a real communication in which the expressions they pronouncing are based on their own result of thinking. Most of the activities in the book are focused on the structure of the language which means that this book can only serve in preparatory stage of developing learners' communicative competence.

Due to those findings, both the writer and teachers need to modify the content of the book, especially the activity so that it can really play its role as source of materials and activities as stated by Richards (2001)

and Cunningsworth (1995). They are needed to be modified so that the learners achieve adequate skill needed in their real work life. The modification of the activities can also improve the level of communicativeness of the tasks so that it can provide activities in which the learners are given chance to interact and practice to use the language in real communication in the classroom.

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