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EVALUATION OF “GROW WITH ENGLISH BOOK 1”

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Abstrak

Tujuan dari paper ini adalah untuk mengevaluasi “Grow with English book 1” yang digunakan untuk siswa-siswa sekolah dasar kelas satu. Tujuan dari evaluasi adalah untuk mengetahui apakah buku tersebut dapat dipakai langsung atau perlu disesuaikan dengan mengidentifikasi kekuatan dan kelemahannya. Beberapa saran diberikan untuk mengatasi kelemahan yang ditemukan di buku tersebut.

Kata kunci: evaluasi, buku ajar, aktivitas.

Abstract

The purpose of this paper is to evaluate “Grow with English book 1” which is used for elementary students of grade one. The purpose of the evaluation is to know whether the book can be adopted or adapted by identifying the strengths and weaknesses. Some suggestions for overcoming the weaknesses encountered in the book are given.

Key words: evaluation, coursebook, activity.

Introduction

Many English coursebooks for elementary students are available in the bookstores because elementary students in Indonesia have been taught English. Choosing an appropriate coursebook to be taught for elementary students is a very crucial; therefore, evaluation of coursebook is needed to judge whether the chosen coursebook can be adopted or adapted.

The data of the book that the writer evaluated are as follows: the title: “Grow with English book 1”, written by Dr. Mukarto, M.Sc., Sujatmiko B.S., S.Pd., Josephine Sri Murwani, S.Pd., and Widya Kiswara, S.Pd., editor: Windy Hastasasi and Dwi Wahyu Priyanto, published by Penerbit Erlangga, Jakarta, 2007, ISBN 978-979-015-020-1, 111 pages, the price is Rp. 32.500. The writer got difficulty to buy the flashcards and the audiocassette because they were not available in the bookstore.

The purpose of the evaluation of this book, “Grow with English book 1” is to know whether this book can be adopted or adapted. Cunningsworth (1995) states that

materials evaluation activities are aimed to adopt or to adapt coursebooks by identifying their strengths and weaknesses. For in-depth evaluation, topics, approach to learning, organization of content, teaching techniques and many others should also be taken into consideration.

Methodology

The contents of the book consist of 10 units and a review after 5 units. “List of vocabulary” and “how to use the book” are available at the end of the book. The writer evaluated the book based on the questionnaire proposed by Brewster, Ellis, and Girard (2007). The questionnaire consists of 23 questions.

Findings and Discussion

Based on the questionnaire proposed by Brewster, Ellis, and Girard (2007), the findings and discussion are elaborated as follows:

1. What sort of methodology does the book appear to adopt?

It seems that this coursebook applies the Audio-Lingual Method because some of

the principles of the Audio-Lingual Method can be seen in this coursebook. They are elaborated as follows:

- a. The purpose of using this method is that students are able to communicate in the target language. For example: The topic of unit 1 is greeting. The objectives of unit 1 are a) students are able to say "morning, afternoon, and evening", and they are able to use these words according to the situation, b) students are able to do short conversation, c) students are able to greet and to reply a greeting.
- b. It is teaching-centred, it means that the teacher controls and directs the students. The teacher's role here is very dominant in the classroom. For example: In unit 1 part (a) Let's look and say, part (b) Let's look and say, and part (c) Let's listen and repeat, based on the teacher's guide, the students are asked to look at the picture, to listen to the teacher and to repeat what the teacher reads. So, the activities depend on the teacher.
- c. Students learn the dialogs through imitation, repetition, and memorization. Through the dialogs, vocabulary and structural patterns are learnt, and grammar is taught inductively. For example: in unit 1 part (a) Let's look and say, (b) Let's look and say, and (c) Let's listen and repeat, the students learn the dialogs and new words through imitation and repetition. In unit 1 part (d) Let's practice with your friend, and part (e) Let's play a game, the students have an opportunity to practice their speaking skills in pair and in group, but they do the dialogs through memorization.
- d. The emphasis is on the everyday speech. Students begin with simple pattern, then it will be graded to more complex speech. For example: the topic of unit 1 is about greeting.
- e. Aural-oral skills are emphasized. For example: in unit 1 part (a) Let's look and say, until (e) Let's play a game, and (j) Let's sing a song are related to aural-oral skills, so aural-oral skills have a big portion in this coursebook.

Since this coursebook uses teaching-centred which means that the teacher controls the actions in the classroom, does a lot of the talking by explaining, giving directions and asking lots of questions which students answer, this may mean that the students have little chance to do more than repeat what the teacher says and have no opportunities for real interaction. This technique may also mean that students are relatively passive, they do not spend much time working in pairs or groups and may not be encouraged to reflect on their learning since they feel the teacher is in charge of their learning (Brewster, Ellis, and Girard, 2007).

It will be better if the teacher may try to balance these more teaching-centred activities with ones which are more learning-centred or interactional where students have a chance to work on tasks in order to engage in organized talk with each other, that is to use language in a less controlled and more creative way.

The important thing for language teachers is to find an appropriate balance between the teaching-centred and learning-centred which complies with their expectations and which best promotes effective learning.

2. Does one approach predominate? If yes, what are the implications of this relation to the rest of the curriculum?

This coursebook applies the Audio-Lingual Method; therefore, behaviorism predominates in this coursebook because behaviorism has a strong influence on the Audio-Lingual Method. The implications of this relation to the rest of the curriculum are that teaching-centred is very dominant, and that not enough emphasis is placed on meaning or encouraging students to think for themselves or produce language independently.

Behaviorism consists of three important elements: a stimulus, a response and reinforcement (Skinner, 1957; Brown, 1980 as cited in Richards & Rodgers, 2002). Skinner uses the stimulus-response reinforcement theory to the way humans acquire language. He believes that language as a form of

behavior. Reinforcement is very crucial in the early stages of learning, and must be provided frequently in order to form intended behavior. Correct behavior is strengthened with rewards, and mistakes are corrected immediately (Chitravelu, Sithamparam & Teh, 2005). He also believes that language learning as a process of habit formation. Giving correct responses are good habits and intended to occur again, while mistakes are not intended to occur again. Mistakes can be minimized by memorizing dialogs, repetition and drills. (Richards & Rodgers, 2002; Chitravelu et al., 2005).

However, Richards & Rodgers (2002) state that students still could not use skills through the Audio-Lingual Method based on the behaviorism to real communication outside the classroom, and many practitioners find that studying through the Audio-Lingual Method is boring and unsatisfying. Therefore, it will be better if Communicative Language Teaching is also used because Richards & Rodgers (2002) argue that the Communicative Language Teaching is considered to be more humanistic approach to teaching in which the priority is the interaction in the communication. Moreover, the Communicative Language Teaching is learning-centred, it means that students have a chance to interact with each other by communicating in a less controlled and more creative way. The students are encouraged to express opinions, to ask each other questions or to make suggestions by using pair or group work in the classroom (Brewster, Ellis, and Girard, 2007).

Based on the considerations above, both teaching-centred and learning-centred are used to create an appropriate balance and to promote effective learning. Therefore, it will be better if the combination of the Audio-Lingual Method and the Communicative Language Teaching is used in delivering this coursebook.

3. How are new teaching points graded? How frequently are they introduced and how much practice material separates them?

The new teaching points in this coursebook are that each unit presents approximately ten new words related to the topic, one or two language functions commonly used in the topic, and sentence structures or patterns that support the language functions. The sentence patterns are arranged in such a way that the patterns presented in a unit serve as a building block for the patterns presented in the next units. For example:

In unit 5, the students learn the following short conversation:

A : "What is this?"

B : "This is a fork."

In unit 6, the students will learn a more complex conversation as follows:

A : "Is it a butterfly?"

B : "No, it is not."

A : "What is it?"

B : "It is a bee."

So, the structures gradually increase in complexity.

In this coursebook, the presentation of new teaching points is reasonable because the new teaching points are graded from unit 1 which is the easiest and simplest one to unit 10 which is the most difficult and complicated one. In other words, the arrangement of new teaching points is sequenced. Sequencing refers to the order in which new items are taught, how the components fit with one another and how the range of language taught develops as students progress through the course. Implicit in sequencing is the concept of progression, with the expectation that there will be a principled development from a beginning point to an end point (Cunningsworth, 1995).

4. Is the organization of the course linear or cyclical? Linear – teaching points are added one at a time, each being practiced before moving on to the next. Cyclical – a particular teaching point recurs in a different context to be enlarged on throughout the course.

What are the implications of this to young learners?

The organization of the course is cyclical. For example: unit 5 in the kitchen, in part (b) “a stove” is introduced; unit 6 my garden, in part (b) “a tree” is introduced; unit 7 my living room, in part (b) “a television” is introduced. These phrases – “a stove”, “a tree”, and “a television” are used again in unit 8 my house part (c) on page 69.

The organization of the course which is cyclical is suitable for elementary students. In the example above, the vocabulary in the coursebook is cyclical. According to Cameron (2001), vocabulary needs to be met and recycled at intervals, in different activities, with new knowledge and new connections developed each time the same words are met again. Nation (1990 as cited in Cameron, 2001) suggests that a new word needs to be met at least five or six times in a coursebook unit before it has any chance of being learnt. The emphasis is the need for words to recur, not just in a unit, but across units or chapters, and across levels and years. For children who start language learning young, this is particularly important.

5. Are there any special pages for revision, self-testing, self-assessment or reference?

There are no special pages for revision, self-testing, self-assessment or reference. However, there are two reviews – review 1 after unit 5 and review 2 after unit 10. The purpose of review 1 is that the students can remember again the units (1 – 5) that they have learnt, and the purpose of review 2 is that the students can remember again the units (6 – 10) that they have learnt.

The existence of the reviews are helpful for the students in preparing for the formative and summative tests. However, it will be better if self-assessment, for example, also exists in the coursebook because by completing self-assessment sheets, the students can reflect on the content of learning, upon how they learn as well as to reflect on

their own performance throughout a lesson and their contribution to the class. This in turn will help them monitor their progress and maintain motivation, and highlight strong and weak points (Brewster, Ellis, and Girard, 2007).

6. Are opportunities for independent work provided such as through project work?

There are no opportunities for independent work provided such as through project work. It will be better if project work is provided because many teachers can use project work as an alternative tool for assessment. According to Pinter (2006), the advantage of the project work is that it combines all four language skills and the joint effort of several students. Working together with others and completing a substantial task can be very motivating for weaker students because of the opportunities to learn from friends. It is also beneficial for stronger students because they have a chance to display their knowledge and skills. In addition, project work is an opportunity for children to demonstrate other non-linguistic strengths such as drawing or acting.

7. Are learning strategies developed in a systematic and explicit way?

This coursebook only uses cognitive strategies because the activities involve students in doing things with the language and their learning materials, and relate to specific activities in specific skills areas. For example: in unit 1 part (f) the students have to match the words and pictures by drawing lines; in unit 2 part (c) the students have to memorize the dialog.

It will be better if this coursebook also applies metacognitive strategies and socioaffective strategies because metacognitive strategies, such as comparing, self-assessment, self-correction, etc, encourage students to think about and to reflect on aspects of the learning process, while socioaffective strategies, such as pair or group work

activities, project work, interview and surveys, etc, encourage students to collaborate and cooperate in language learning activities.

8. What are the illustrations and layout like? Are they attractive? Are they useful or only decorative? Will your students like them?

The illustrations are clear, simple and attractive, and they are suitable for young children. The illustrations are very useful because they support the texts. The students will like them because the characters in the coursebook are at the same age of the students.

However, some of the illustrations are not suitable for the cognitive complexity of the children's age. In unit 1 and 2, "morning" is described by the picture of a sun which is covered by a cloud. It could be interpreted in the afternoon because the sun also could be covered by a cloud in the afternoon. Therefore, the illustration of morning is not appropriate. It will be better if the illustration is that there is a sun which just rises behind a mountain, and a cock is crowing. Besides that, the gesture of some illustrations in unit 1 and 2 is not suitable, especially the hands. Some children do not look like that they want to greet their friends, but they look like that they want to hit their friends.

9. Does the course include any examples of authentic language and materials?

The course includes some examples of authentic language and materials. For example: a short dialog in unit 1 part (a) is as follows:

A : Hello. Good morning, Dita.

B : Good morning, Tessa.

A : How are you?

B : Fine. And you?

A : Fine.

This kind of dialog is very useful because it can also be used by the students in their daily life. So, the students can

directly apply the knowledge that they get from this coursebook to their daily life.

10. What components does the coursebook offer?

The components of the course are a coursebook, an audiocassette and flashcards. The audiocassette is provided for listening activities only. However, the audiocassette and flashcards are rather difficult to buy, it might require to contact to the publisher.

The teacher's guide containing suggestion on how to use the book is put at the back part of the coursebook. The purpose is to give guidance for inexperienced teacher, so the teacher can use the coursebook effectively. However, it will be better if the teacher's guide is separated because there are tape scripts. For example: there is a tapescript for unit 4 part (i) in the teacher's guide. As a consequence, the students will not listen to the audiocassette, but they will directly copy the answers from the teacher's guide.

11. Is the teacher's guide easy to follow? Does it contain interleaved pages from the student's book?

The teacher's guide is easy to follow because what the teacher should do in every part of the unit is presented in the teacher's guide. However, the teacher's guide does not contain interleaved pages from the student's book because the teacher's guide is put at the back part of the coursebook.

The existence of teacher's guide is very helpful for inexperienced teacher. However, the teacher should also supplement some activities to make the process of teaching learning more interesting and meaningful to the students.

12. What is the socio-cultural context represented in the materials? Do they avoid sexual, racial and cultural stereotypes? Are there opportunities

for cross-cultural comparison? What values are projected through the materials? What scope is there for developing citizenship education?

The Indonesian socio-cultural context is represented in the materials, for example: the names of the characters in the coursebook like Dita, Tessa, Ali, Nina, and so on. The coursebook avoids sexual, racial and cultural stereotypes because both boys and girls are treated the same in all units. There are no opportunities for cross-cultural comparison. The value of being polite is projected through the materials, for example: in unit 1 about greeting, the students are taught how to greet someone, so they are intended to be able to greet someone in their everyday life. Introducing the occupations of people is for developing citizenship education, for example: in unit 10 the students are introduced the occupations of people who work in a school such as teacher, principal, librarian, etc.

It will be better if the English socio-cultural context is also represented in the materials because the students can compare differences and similarities between Indonesian culture and English culture, so they become aware of cultural variety. This can arouse their curiosity about language and develop language awareness.

13. Can you spot any notable omissions? Will you have to supplement the coursebook in any way?

There are no any notable omissions in the coursebook, but it will better if the teacher can supplement some activities related to metacognitive strategies such as comparing, self-assessment, self-correction, etc, to encourage students to think about and to reflect on aspects of the learning process, and socioaffective strategies, such as pair or group work activities, project work, interview and surveys, etc, to encourage students to

collaborate and cooperate in language learning activities.

14. What sorts of demands are made on the teacher in terms of management skills and fluency?

This coursebook has 10 units and two reviews for one year, and English is usually given to the elementary students for 2 X 35 minutes in a week. The numbers of exercises in each unit are quite reasonable based on the available time allotment, so the teachers can manage their time for practicing skills and fluency. Besides that, there is still a room for the teachers to supplement some activities based on their creativity.

15. How is each unit titled? Will it be clear to your students what they are expected to learn in the unit and what they have to do?

Each unit is titled according to the topic. The font of the title of each unit is the biggest, and the color is light purple. There is a boxed number on the top right to show the number order of the unit and a title on the top left. At every sub unit, there is an orange circle, with an alphabet in order of the activity and title of the activity which explicitly conveys what the students have to do in the activity.

However, some titles of the activity in sub unit seem not suitable, for example: in unit 1 part (a) Let's look and say, part (b) Let's look and say, and part (c) Let's listen and repeat, the students are asked to look at the picture, to listen to the teacher and to repeat what the teacher reads. Therefore the instruction of part (a), (b) and (c) should be "Let's look, listen and repeat" because the students do the same activities in these parts. It will be better if the titles of the activity match to what the students have to do in that activity.

16. How is new language presented? How is the meaning of items

conveyed? Are new items related to what has been learned previously?

New language is presented through model of dialogs, and pictures completed with words. A picture conveys the meaning of a word, and the picture also helps to make the context clear. New items are related to what has been learnt previously because the organization of the course is cyclical. For example: in unit 1, the students learn about greeting such as good morning, good afternoon, and good evening. In unit 2, the new items are about self-introduction and asking name. In the practice of the new items in unit 2, greeting which is learnt in unit 1 is also used. Here are the examples:

The dialog in unit 2 part (c) is as follows:

- A : Hello. Good morning.
B : Good morning.
A : My name is Dita.
B : My name is Yoko.

The dialog in unit 2 part (d) is as follows:

- A : Hello. Good morning.
B : Good morning.
A : My name is Tommy. What is your name?
B : My name is Rani.

The presentation of new language and the meaning of items are quite communicative, and the presentation of new items which are related to what has been learnt is suitable for the students.

17. Does the presentation of new language force the teacher to follow the unit sequence of the coursebook?

The presentation of new language forces the teacher to follow the unit sequence of the coursebook because teaching materials are graded from unit 1 which is the easiest and simplest one to unit 10 which is the most difficult and complicated one. Besides that, the sentence patterns are arranged in such a way that the patterns presented in a unit serves as a building block for the patterns presented in the next units.

The unit sequence of the coursebook is very helpful for the teachers because it makes the teachers easy to follow, especially for inexperienced teachers. Besides that, the teachers will not waste their time to think which unit should be presented first for their students.

18. How much new language is printed in each unit? Is the rate at which new material is introduced appropriate for your students?

Each unit presents approximately ten new words related to the topic, one or two language functions commonly used in the topic, and sentence structures or patterns that support the language functions. The rate at which new material is introduced is appropriate for the elementary students of grade 1. For example: in unit 7 part (b), eleven new words are introduced, they are: fan, clock, armchair, sofa, vase, table, carpet, picture, curtain, telephone, and television.

19. What kind of practice activities are there? Is there an appropriate balance between controlled and freer practice, accuracy and fluency? Are they motivating and meaningful? Do they provide opportunities for real language use and possibilities for interaction?

Since the coursebook applies the Audio-Lingual Method, many activities are in the form of imitation, repetition, and memorization. For example: in unit 1 part (a) Let's look and say, part (b) Let's look and say, and part (c) Let's listen and repeat, the students learn the dialogs and new words through imitation and repetition. In unit 1 part (d) Let's practice with your friend, and part (e) Let's play a game, the students have an opportunity to practice their speaking skills through memorization. Therefore, many activities are controlled, there is no freer practice. As a result, accuracy is demanded from the students because in the Audio-Lingual Method which is based on behaviorism,

giving correct responses are good habits and intended to occur again, while mistakes are not intended to occur again. Mistakes can be minimized by memorizing dialogs, repetition and drills. Such kinds of activities will make students get bored, and the activities will not be motivating and meaningful to the students. These kinds of activities do not provide opportunities for real language use and possibilities for interaction.

It will be better if the teacher may try to balance these more teaching-centred activities with ones which are more learning-centred or interactional where students have a chance to work on tasks in order to engage in organized talk with each other, that is to use language in a less controlled and more creative way. Besides that, fluency should come first before the accuracy. If the accuracy comes first, it will discourage students to talk.

20. Does the book offer L1 translation? Do you regard this as useful or not?

The coursebook does not offer L1 translation, except list of vocabulary on page 101. This list of vocabulary is not useful because the students will depend on it. As a result, they will not listen to the teacher's explanation about the vocabulary in the process of teaching learning. The teacher usually can do recasting for the vocabulary that the students do not understand. Besides that, the coursebook has already presented the illustrations to help the students understand the vocabulary.

In delivering the coursebook, the teacher also should not use L1 translation. According to Krashen (1989), the first language can be used improperly as well, in a way that discourages comprehensible input. This occurs when concurrent translation is used, a technique in which the teacher speaks a little in one language, then translates what was said into the other language. When this happens, students quite naturally listen to the

message in their own language and pay no attention to the English input. In concurrent translation, the teacher does not have to try to make the English input comprehensible by using extralinguistic support (realia, gesture) or paraphrase because a translation is available.

21. How are the different skills treated? Are they integrated?

The four skills – listening, reading, speaking and writing are integrated equally. However, the emphasis is on aural-oral skills – listening, reading and speaking. For example: in unit1 part (a) Let's look and say, until (e) Let's play a game, and (j) Let's sing a song, are related to aural-oral skills, so aural-oral skills have a big portion in this coursebook.

22. How much variety of activity is there?

The variety of activity depends on the topic of each unit. There is not certain number of activities. However, most of the pattern of the variety is model, practice, reinforcement and writing.

23. How much does the coursebook cost? Can your school or the children's parents afford it?

The price of the coursebook - "Grow with English Book 1" is Rp. 32,500. The price is quite reasonable for students who live in the big cities of Indonesia, and they can buy this coursebook easily because this coursebook is available in bookstores. However, it might be a problem on both price and availability for the students who live in the villages or remote areas.

Conclusion

This coursebook still can be used for the elementary students of grade 1. However, the teachers should be creative in supplementing some activities. For example: 1) The teachers should find an appropriate balance between the teaching-centred and learning-centred. 2) The teacher should be able to combine the Audio-Lingual Method and the

Communicative Language Teaching in delivering the coursebook. 3) The teacher should be able to apply metacognitive strategies and socioaffective strategies. 4) The teacher should be able to give extra listening tasks because the tapescripts of listening tasks in the coursebook are in the teacher's guide, so

the students can easily find the answers without listening. 5) The teacher should be able to present English socio-cultural context. 6) The teacher usually can do recasting for the vocabulary that the students do not understand, but the teacher should not translate to L1.

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