

**THE EVALUATION OF  
WHEN ENGLISH RINGS A BELL (REVISED EDITION):  
TEACHERS' PERSPECTIVES**

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**ABSTRACT**

This study was done to find out the teachers' opinions regarding the coursebook, *When English Rings A Bell (revised edition)*, in terms of (1) the coursebook's language content, (2) the presentation of English skills in the coursebook, and (3) the coursebook's topic, subject content, and social values. The data of this study was the teachers' written and/or oral answers of the questions used as the evaluation guidelines as proposed by Cunningsworth (1995). The teachers stated that (a) the topics, (b) subjects content, and (c) social and cultural values presented in the coursebook were appropriate to the Indonesian people's way of life by not differentiating in gender. In addition, although the book provided practices for all English skills, the book should include additional material to support them, for instance, recorded material on a cassette for listening practices. The book did not also include all language contents as proposed by Cunningsworth (1995).

**Keywords:** Coursebook, Coursebook Evaluation, Teachers' Perspectives.

The use of printed materials such as coursebook is considered as the key component in most Teaching English as Foreign Language (TEFL) programs both for teachers and students. For teachers, coursebook serves as a framework for them in conducting lessons and in achieving teaching goals and objectives (Tok, 2010). In addition, coursebook has potential in serving additional roles in English teaching and learning curriculum; for example, it can be used as supports for beginning or inexperienced teachers who have not gained their confidence (Cunningsworth, 1995). Then, for learners, coursebook is the prominent source which provides activities, practices (on grammar, vocabulary, or pronunciation), knowledge, and information in an understandable and well-ordered way (Cunningsworth, 1995; Ahour and Ahmadi, 2012).

However, according to Grave (2000), the use of coursebook also has the weaknesses that have to be considered. (1) Coursebook may not involve all things related to aspects of language that teachers want to include, and (2) the contents or examples provided in a coursebook may not suit to the classroom activities and students' level.

Regarding the strengths and weaknesses of coursebook in any ELT classroom, then, it can be concluded that there is no "perfect" coursebook. Thus, coursebook evaluation is needed to be done. Clearly, it should be conducted in order "to identify particular strengths and weaknesses in coursebooks already in use, so that optimum use can be made of their strong points, whilst their weaker areas can be strengthened through adaptation or substituting material from other books" (Cunningsworth, 1995, p. 14).

Many studies have been conducted and found that coursebook evaluation has the important role, particularly to find out the strengths and weaknesses of a coursebook, for example, Tok's study in 2010. His study showed that, according to the teachers, the activities as presented in *Spot On* did not provide sufficient and meaningful practices. Besides that, the activities were not suitable for pair and group work. In terms of English skills, *Spot On* integrated the four English skills by paying attention to the other important aspects of ELT, such as vocabulary learning. Mukundan and Kalajahi (2013) also stated that coursebook evaluation should be done in order to know the strengths and weaknesses of a coursebook.

In evaluating a coursebook, Cunningsworth (1995) states that there are six criteria that can be used, namely (1) coursebook package, (2) language content, (3) selection and grading, (4) skills, (5) topic, subject content, and social values, and (6) methodology.

However, the writers of this current study focused on the teachers' opinions regarding the English coursebook, *When English Rings A Bell (revised edition)*, based on three of those six coursebook evaluation, namely:

- (1) language content: This criterion includes the evaluation on grammar, vocabulary, phonology, discourse, appropriacy, and varieties of English in the coursebook.
- (2) skills: This criterion covers the evaluation on four English skills (listening, speaking, reading, and writing), specialized books for skills development, and readers presented in the coursebook.
- (3) topic, subject content, and social values: This last criterion includes the evaluation on the topics, subjects content, and social and cultural values as presented in the coursebook.

Those three criteria became the foci of this study because of some reasons. The first reason was because the coursebook, *When English Rings A Bell (revised edition)*, according to the Indonesian government, was designed to improve the students' language ability (*Kementerian Pendidikan dan Kebudayaan Republik Indonesia, 2014*). The second reason was because this coursebook, according to the Indonesian government, was designed to enable the students to use English to communicate with other people (*Kementerian Pendidikan dan Kebudayaan Republik Indonesia, 2014*). Besides that, this book was designed to support the students in order to be able to produce oral or written texts with the correct language form, function, and other aspects of languages as stated in the specific learning objectives in the 2013 curriculum (*Kementerian Pendidikan dan Kebudayaan Republik Indonesia, 2014*). Thus, regarding those three reasons, language content and skills were chosen as two of the three coursebook evaluation criteria used in this study. Another reason was because the emphasis of the book was the students' understanding towards contexts of the texts (*Kementerian Pendidikan dan Kebudayaan Republik Indonesia, 2014*). Thus, topic, subject content, and social values were chosen as one of the three coursebook evaluation criteria included in this study.

## **METHODS**

This study was carried out in a state junior high school in Surabaya on September – October 2014 to know the teachers' opinions regarding *When English Rings A Bell (revised edition)*. In order to collect the data and answer the research questions, the writers asked two English teachers to evaluate the coursebook, *When English Rings A Bell (revised edition)*, based on the evaluation guidelines. The evaluation guidelines consisted of questions based on the three criteria for evaluating coursebook applied in this study.

When the writers asked the teachers for permission to conduct structured interviews, the teachers did not give permission. They preferred to write down the answers of the questions used as the evaluation guidelines in this study; so, the writers gave the list of questions to be answered by the teachers. After getting the teachers' written answers or opinions regarding (1) the coursebook's language content, (2) the presentation of English skills in the book, and (3) the coursebook's topic, subject content, and cultural values, the writers read and recapped them.

While the writers were recapping the teachers' written opinions regarding the coursebook, the writers found out some unclear responses. They were considered unclear responses because, for example, they were not supported by any reason or example.

Then, in order to clarify the unclear responses and to get further opinions, the writers decided to conduct structured interviews towards the teachers. Thus, the writers met the teachers again to ask for permission to do the interviews and the writers explained the reasons why the interviews should be conducted. After getting teachers' permission, the writers made appointments with the teachers to do structured interviews. Mrs. X was interviewed on October 24<sup>th</sup>, 2014. Then, Mrs. Y was interviewed on October 23<sup>th</sup>, 2014. During the interviews, the writers and two teachers referred to the list of questions that had been answered by the teachers. Each interview took 60 minutes long.

Next, the writers transcribed the recording of the interviews and underlined the interviews questions in transcription. The transcription of the interviews result was clean transcription. After that, the writers analyzed both teachers' written and/or oral opinions regarding the coursebook related to the three coursebook evaluation criteria used in this study.

## **FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION**

The findings of this study would be presented in accordance to the research questions. Thus, the first part would present the teachers' opinions regarding the coursebook's language content. The second part would discuss the teachers' opinions regarding the presentation of English skills in the coursebook. The third part would focus on the teachers' opinions regarding the coursebook's topic, subject content, and social values.

### **A. The Teachers' Opinions Regarding the Coursebook's Language Content**

#### **i. Grammar**

Regarding the presentation of grammar items in the coursebook, Mrs. X and Mrs. Y were in opinion that the treatment of language form and use in the coursebook was imbalanced. It was because the grammatical forms were not explicitly explained in the coursebook. In fact, they were presented through examples of language use in the coursebook. Moreover, Mrs. X and Mrs. Y were also in opinion that the grammar items included in the coursebook were in line with the students' needs. Also, they agreed that the grammar items included in the book were presented for easy learning. They were presented in small units; they were not difficult, nor too easy; they were presented in the relation to the items that the students had already known; and the grammar rules included in the coursebook had one meaning. Here, the writers agreed with the teachers' opinions.

However, Mrs. X and Mrs. Y had different opinion related to the overall presentation of grammar items in the coursebook. Mrs. X considered it as poor. While Mrs. Y considered it as average. Also, they had different opinion related to what grammar items included in the coursebook. According to Mrs. X, the grammar items presented in the coursebook were Present Simple Tense, the introductory of 'there', singular/plural nouns, and be + adjective. While, Mrs. Y stated that the grammar items presented in the coursebook were Present Simple Tense, singular/plural nouns, 'there is/there are', and pronouns. In other words, according to the teachers, there were five grammar items presented in the coursebook. To this, the writers disagreed with the teachers' opinions. The writers observed that the coursebook presented nine grammar items in the coursebook, namely Present Simple Tense, the introductory of 'there', singular/plural nouns, be + adjective, pronouns, Past Simple Tense, article a/an, the modal 'should', and the modal 'can'. In other words, the coursebook had already had enough grammar items to be explained for the 7th grade students.

#### **ii. Vocabulary**

Although Mrs. X and Mrs. Y had different opinion related to the overall presentation of vocabulary-learning in the coursebook, they agreed that the vocabulary-learning in the book was presented in the purposeful way, particularly to achieve the objectives of each chapter in the coursebook. The teachers were also in opinion that the vocabularies in the book were selected based on the topics of each chapter. They were also in opinion that the coursebook enabled the students to expand their own vocabularies by helping them to improve their own learning strategies. They also stated that the vocabulary-learning in the book were prominent; but, it was not considered as the central of the course. Here, the writers agreed with the teachers' opinions.

Moreover, Mrs. X and Mrs. Y argued that the book tried to sensitize the students with the structure of vocabularies through the vocabulary-learning activities based on the situational-based word groups. In this part, the writers added that that the book tried to sensitize the students with the structure of vocabularies through the vocabulary-learning activities based on the situational-based word groups, semantic relationships, and collocation.

#### **iii. Phonology**

Regarding the presentation of phonology in the coursebook, Mrs. X and Mrs. argued that, in general, it was poor. It was because the coursebook did not cover any aspect of phonology, such as sentence stress, articulation of individual sounds, weak forms, and intonation. Thus, the teachers also agreed that terminology related to phonology, phonemic alphabet to articulate individual sounds, diagraphmatic to show stress and intonation, and cassette for pronunciation were not included in the coursebook. Here, the writers were in opinion with the teachers.

**iv. Discourse**

Regarding the presentation of discourse in the coursebook, Mrs. X and Mrs. Y agreed that it was generally average. The aspects of discourse in the book (such as paragraphing, organization of written discourse and reference pronouns, or substitutions) were presented through activities and they provided good models for the students. Besides providing good models, they were also presented progressively from easy to difficult ones. To this, the writers agreed with the teachers' opinions.

Here, the writers added that there was another aspect of discourse covered by the book besides paragraphing or organization of written discourse and reference pronouns or substitutions as what Mrs. X said. That was structure and convention in a conversation, particularly how to ask and answer questions in a conversation based on certain situation.

**v. Appropriacy**

In term of language appropriacy, the teachers had different opinion. According to Mrs. X, there was no reference for language appropriacy in the coursebook. While, according to Mrs. Y, in the book, there was only one reference for language appropriacy that was presented in the reference of choice of vocabularies. Specifically, the language appropriacy presented in the book was related to classroom language used for the students. It was presented on pages 203 until 205 in the coursebook. By presenting it, Mrs. Y added that the book also tried to link the language style to social situation. To this, the writers agreed with Mrs. Y who said that the book presented one reference that was classroom language used for students.

**vi. Varieties of English**

Regarding the varieties of English presented in the book, the teachers agreed that the variety of English used and presented in the coursebook was American English even though there was no statement which explicitly said that the book used this variety. Here, the writers were in opinion with the teachers. The writers added that the words, *color*, *dialog*, and *favorite*, in the coursebook also indicated that the book used American English.

**B. The Teachers' Opinions Regarding the Presentation of English Skills in the Coursebook**

**i. Skills**

Regarding the presentation of skills in the coursebook, Mrs. X and Mrs. Y agreed that the coursebook presented the integration of four English skills practices based on the real situation. Moreover, they argued that the skills practices progression were in line with the grammatical and lexical progression in the coursebook. These two teachers also claimed that the use of authentic material in the coursebook was not too difficult, nor too easy. In other words, it was appropriately presented to the students' level. To this discussion, the writers were in opinion with the teachers. The coursebook used not only authentic material, but also non-authentic material or artificial material. In fact, the materials included in the book were mostly artificial – those which designed for the educational purposes. The artificial materials in the book could provide good models for the students, for instance, descriptive paragraphs presented in the coursebook. They could be considered as good model because they had good organization.

**ii. Listening**

Regarding the presentation of listening skills in the coursebook, Mrs. X and Mrs. Y agreed that the coursebook did not provide any recorded material, such as audio recorded on cassette or video, to support the listening practices in the book. They also agreed that pre-listening activities, tasks, or questions to make the students focus on the topic were not included in the coursebook. Here the writers were in opinion with the teachers.

Although listening practices were not supported with the recorded material and pre-listening activities, Mrs. X and Mrs. Y argued that the listening materials in the coursebook were presented in the realistic contexts. Here, the writers also agreed with the teachers' opinions.

### **iii. Speaking**

Regarding the presentation of speaking skill in the coursebook, Mrs. X and Mrs. Y argued that the book had enough speaking activities. Through the coursebook, the students also had enough practices in speaking English. However, these two teachers were not in opinion related to the emphasis of spoken English in the coursebook. Mrs. X said that it was more than 50% in the book. While, Mrs. Y argued that it was not more than 50%. Moreover, they also had different opinion regarding the availability of strategies for kinds of spoken practices in the coursebook.

Here, the writers agreed with Mrs. X and Mrs. Y who argued that the speaking activities in the book were enough for the students. In addition, they were also in opinion with Mrs. X that the emphasis on speaking practices in the book was more than 50%. In fact, there were more than forty speaking practices in the coursebook. They also agreed with Mrs. Y who said that the book provided strategies for one spoken activity. That was strategy for questioning and answering in a conversation/dialogue.

### **iv. Reading**

Regarding the presentation of reading skill in the coursebook, Mrs. X and Mrs. Y were in opinion that, to develop the students` comprehension skill, the book provided intensive and extensive reading activities. They also agreed that the reading materials presented in the coursebook could be used to expand the students` knowledge and to consolidate the language work. It was because, according to the teachers, some reading materials in the book were related to writing work. To this, the writers added that some reading materials in the book were related to not only writing work, but also listening and speaking works.

Mrs. X and Mrs. Y also agreed that the book did not focus on the development of reading skill and strategies. Moreover, the teachers were in opinion that the length of the reading texts presented in the book was not more than 500 words. Besides that, these teachers argued that the type of reading texts in the book was descriptive text. They also claimed that the subject matter presented in the reading texts was topical. To this, Mrs. Y added that it was also varied. Here, the writers were in opinion with Mrs. X and Mrs. Y. For the subject matter of the reading material, they were in opinion with Mrs. Y who said that it was varied because it was presented based on more than ten topics.

However, these teachers were not in opinion related to the overall presentation of reading skill in the coursebook. Mrs. X considered it as poor. While, Mrs. Y considered it as good. To this, the writers were in opinion with Mrs. X. It was average because the book did not provide pre and post reading activities which were important to give the students` background knowledge related to the reading activity and to make the students focus on the topic being discussed.

### **v. Writing**

Regarding the presentation of writing in the coursebook, Mrs. X and Mrs. Y claimed that there was no attention given to the language resources, specifically, the written form, such as punctuation, spelling, layout, or the others. Also, they agreed that there was no readership identified for writing activities in the book. These teachers were also in opinion that the book did not encourage the students to review and to edit their written work. It showed that accuracy was not really emphasized in the coursebook. To this, the writers agreed with the teachers` opinions.

However, Mrs. X and Mrs. Y were not in opinion related the convention of sort of writing taught in the coursebook. According to Mrs. X, there was no convention of sort of writing taught in the coursebook. While, Mrs. Y claimed that, in general, there was one convention of sort of writing presented in the book. That was convention for writing descriptive paragraph. To this, the writers agreed with Mrs. Y. Moreover, these teachers were not in opinion related to the overall presentation of writing skill in the coursebook. Mrs. X considered it as average. While, Mrs. Y considered it as good. To this, the writers were in opinion with Mrs. X. It was average because the book did not focus on accuracy which was important to make the written work understandable. In this discussion, the writers added that the guidelines for guided writing activity were presented in the form of pictures, examples, and questions.

**vi. Specialized Books for Skills Development**

Regarding the specialized books for skills development Mrs. X and Mrs. Y wrote, “There is no specialized book for skills development to support the coursebook”. To this, the writers added that there was no specialized book for skills development because the book had already had practices for all English skills.

**vii. Readers**

When both teachers were asked whether the coursebook was completed with readers, they answered that there was no reader available to support the coursebook. To this, the writers added that there was no reader included in the coursebook because the book focused on speaking skills.

**C. The teachers` opinions regarding the Coursebook`s Topic, Subject Content, and Social Values**

**i. Topic and Subject Content**

Regarding the coursebook`s topic and subject content, Mrs. X and Mrs. Y were in opinion that the topics and subjects content included in the coursebook could support the students` daily activities. Besides that, the topics and subjects content provided information that related to the use of English in daily life. It meant that they informed something. Moreover, these teachers were in opinion that the topics and subjects content included in the book related to the other subjects, for example, biology. To this, the writers observed that the topics and subjects content in the coursebook also related to history and culture. In addition, Mrs. X and Mrs. Y were in opinion that the topics and subjects content in the book engaged and related to the students` knowledge of world. By having the topics and subjects content in the relation to the students` daily life and students` knowledge system, and the other school subjects, the coursebook could expand the students` experiences and awareness. To this, the writers were in opinion with the teachers.

**ii. Social and Cultural Values**

Regarding the presentation of social and cultural values in the book, Mrs. X and Mrs. Y were in opinion that the book provided equal prominence to men in all aspects of the coursebook. The teachers also argued that learnable inner lives of the characters were presented in the book. They also agreed that the coursebook characters were presented in some social settings, within a social network. To this, the writers were in opinion with the two teachers.

However, Mrs. X and Mrs. Y were not in opinion when they were asked whether the students` could interpret the characters` behavior and relationship in the coursebook. To this the writers agreed with Mrs. X who said that the book clearly presented the relationships and behavior of the characters so that the students could understand it.

**CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS**

Based on the findings and discussion of the teachers` opinions, in general, the book had strong and weak points in terms (1) the coursebook`s language content, and (2) the presentation of skills in the coursebook. However, in terms of the coursebook`s topic, subject content, and social values, the book only showed good points.

In term of language content, the book did not cover all language contents as presented by Cunningsworth. In fact, the book only covered five of them, namely grammar items, vocabulary, discourse, appropriacy, and varieties of English. In term of grammar, the book should add more grammar items to be explained. Besides that, the book should also explicitly explain the grammar rules instead of presenting them through the examples in the book even though the grammar items included in the book corresponded to the students` language needs. In term of vocabulary, the vocabulary-learning in the book was presented in the purposeful way. That was to achieve the learning objectives as stated in each chapter which were also in line with the learning objectives in the Curriculum 2013. In term of phonology, the book did not deal with any aspect of phonological system, such as word stress, articulation of individual words. In term of discourse, the book dealt with enough aspects of discourse, such as reference of pronouns, substitutions, paragraphing

written discourse, and the structure and convention of spoken discourse. In term of appropriacy, the book provided reference of classroom language used for students even though it was not apart of activity in the book. In term of variety of English, the book used American English to be taught through the coursebook.

Regarding the presentation of skills in the book, the book provided practices for all English skills with the focuses on speaking and listening to accustom the students to communicate in English. However, the book needed to include supporting material for skill practices, for examples, pre- and post reading questions, recorded listening material on audio cassette, or video.

In terms of topic and subject content, the book presented topics and subjects content in the relation to the students` daily life. In terms of social and cultural values, the book provided social and cultural values that were acceptable by the learners because they were appropriately presented to the Indonesian people`s social and cultural values. Besides that, the book did not differentiate on gender; men and women characters were given equal prominences in the book.

It is hoped that the findings of this study which show the strong and weak areas of the coursebook can give the government, curriculum developers, and the teachers insights related to the features offered by *When English Rings A Bells (revised edition)* in terms of language content, skills, topic, subject content, and social values. Also, the findings of this study can hopefully encourage the teachers to adapt or substitute the material

The writers hope that further studies which evaluate other coursebooks published by the Indonesian government can be carried out in the future. It would be a good idea to involve both state and private teachers in evaluating the coursebooks. Another idea is to conduct evaluations on English coursebooks used at Indonesian schools; but, they are published by the International publishers. If the same theoretical framework and evaluation guidelines are used, it would be a good idea to devote some time to ensure the evaluators`/respondents` familiarity with the technical terms provided.

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