Speaking Materials' Eligibility Standard in "Bahasa Inggris Kelas XI SMK" Textbook

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ABSTRACT

This study evaluates the speaking materials within the "Bahasa Inggris Kelas XI SMK" textbook, acknowledging its critical role in fostering practical communication skills for the workforce as mandated by the Indonesian national curriculum. The primary aim is to assess the eligibility of these materials against five key criteria proposed by Tomlinson (2011): authenticity, relevance, engagement, support, and variety. Employing a descriptive qualitative methodology with a document analysis approach, the research systematically examines the textbook's content using a checklist-based assessment. The findings reveal that the textbook substantially fulfills these eligibility standards. It demonstrates strong authenticity through dialogues and tasks that mirror real-world communication, high relevance by providing activities with clear communicative goals, and effective engagement and support via structured, interactive excercises that build learner confidence. However, a significant limitation was identified in the criterion of variety. The analysis indicates a notable scarcity of activities explicitly designed for auditory and kinesthetic learning styles, with materials predominantly catering to visual learners. This study concludes that while the textbook serves as a valuable resource, its future iterations would benefit significantly from the integration of more diverse activities to ensure greater inclusivity and effectiveness for all learning preferences.

INTRODUCTION

Textbooks are a cornerstone of English language learning, providing essential structure and content for skill acquisition. However, the quality of these materials, particularly for developing speaking proficiency, is not always guaranteed, a matter of

significant concern in educational contexts like Indonesia where speaking is a key competency. The quality of speaking materials has been shown to directly impact learners' proficiency, yet students often face challenges such as a lack of confidence and anxiety, which can be exacerbated by materials that are not varied or engaging. This creates a critical gap between the educational objective of fostering communicative competence and the reality of classroom resources, especially for vocational high school (SMK) students who require practical language skills for the global workforce. Previous studies on similar textbooks have identified deficiencies, including a lack of variation in excercises, insufficient cultural relevance, and inadequate opportunities for authentic practice, underscoring a persistent problem in the field.

The primary objective of this study is to analyze the speaking materials within the "Bahasa Inggris Kelas XI SMK" textbook to determine their alignment with the established eligibility standards for effective language learning materials proposed by Tomlinson (2011). This investigation addresses the crucial question of how well this widely used textbook meets the criteria necessary to support students' development of practical speaking skills. Employing a descriptive qualitative research design with a document analysis approach, this study systematically evaluates the textbook's content against Tomlinson's (2011) five key standards: authenticity, relevance, engagement, support, and variety. The investigation found that the textbook substantially fulfills these eligibility standards, particularly demonstrating strong authenticity through real-world communication scenarios, high relevance via tasks with clear communicative goals, and robust support through structured, interactive exercises. However, a principal finding was a significant limitation in the criterion of variety, with a notable scarcity of activities designed for auditory and kinesthetic learning styles. This research contributes a detailed evaluation of a key educational resource, providing actionable insights for educators and materials developers. It concludes that while the textbook is a valuable asset, its effectiveness could be significantly enhanced by integrating a more diverse range of activities to ensure greater inclusivity for all learning preferences, a question that remains pertinent for future material development.

The evaluation of English language teaching materials is a critical area of academic inquiry, with a focus on how well textbooks facilitate language acquisition. English textbooks are defined as structured collections of materials designed to guide the learning

process across various skills, acting as a bridge between teacher instruction and student experience. Their functions are manifold; they provide a systematic presentation of language concepts, enhance student motivation through engaging content, and offer a reference for teachers in planning and assessment. The selection and evaluation of these textbooks are therefore critical processes that directly influence the effectiveness of language instruction. According to Cunningsworth (1995), selection should be based on relevance to learner needs, material quality, and curriculum alignment.

Speaking materials, specifically, are designed to develop learners' communicative competence through various forms such as dialogues, audio-visual aids, and interactive tasks. Effective speaking materials, according to Harmer (2007), must not only provide opportunities for practice but also engage learners in meaningful communication that is relevant to their interests and needs. The concept of interaction is central to this process; Long (1983) posits that interaction is a key component of language acquisition, as it allows learners to negotiate meaning and receive feedback. Therefore, speaking materials should incorporate collaborative tasks that foster a supportive environment for practice.

To systematically evaluate such materials, various scholars have proposed eligibility standards. The Indonesian National Education Standards Agency (BSNP, 2016) emphasizes that materials should promote interaction, be relevant to real-world communication, and integrate various language skills. Dat Bao (2013) identifies four key aspects: linguistic support, affective support, skill support, and diversity. Cunningsworth (1995) prioritizes interaction, arguing that materials should promote communicative competence through tasks designed for pair and group work. This study adopts the comprehensive framework proposed by Tomlinson (2011), which outlines five interconnected standards. First, authenticity requires that materials introduce language in a context that reflects real-life usage. Second, relevance ensures materials provide opportunities to use the target language for clear communicative objectives. Third, engagement focuses on creating a comfortable and motivating environment where students feel at ease. Fourth, support pertains to learners perceiving the materials as helpful and pertinent to their development. Finally, variety emphasizes that materials should be designed to accommodate diverse learning styles, including visual, auditory, and kinesthetic preferences.

Previous research in this area reveals a consistent need for improvement in textbook materials. A study by Ratmanida and Suryanti (2020) found that an English textbook for tenth graders lacked variation in its speaking exercises, potentially hindering student engagement. Similarly, Gea et al. (2023) using Dat Bao's theory, determined that a textbook for eleventh graders, while providing good linguistic support, was deficient in cultural relevance and the diversity of its speaking activities. Research by Safitri et al. (2023) on materials for eleventh graders showed that despite alignment with learning objectives, the design and organization of the materials needed improvement and lacked sufficient opportunities for authentic practice. Furthermore, Marta et al. (2015) applying Tomlinson's theory to the "Talk Active" textbook, concluded that it lacked the variety and depth needed for fully meaningful communication. Collectively, these studies establish a clear precedent for the evaluation of textbook materials against established standards, highlighting recurring gaps in authenticity, variety, and relevance that the present research aims to investigate in the "Bahasa Inggris Kelas XI SMK" textbook.

METHOD

This study focuses on the speaking materials found within the "Bahasa Inggris Kelas XI SMK" textbook, which is utilized by eleventh-grade students at SMKN 5 Medan during the 2024/2025 academic year. The population for this research includes all students enrolled in the vocational high school program, specifically those who are using this textbook as part of their English language curriculum. The sample for the study consists of selected chapters and activities from the textbook, chosen based on their relevance to the speaking materials eligibility standards proposed by Tomlinson (2011). This targeted approach allows for a comprehensive evaluation of the materials' effectiveness in promoting speaking skills among students.

The primary instrument used in this study is a checklist-based assessment table developed from Tomlinson's (2011) criteria for effective speaking materials. This assessment tool is designed to evaluate the quality of the speaking materials in the textbook across five key eligibility standards: authenticity, relevance, engagement, support, and variety. The checklist includes specific indicators for each criterion, allowing the researcher to systematically assess the materials.

The assessment was conducted through a detailed document analysis of the textbook, where each chapter and corresponding activities were reviewed. The researcher utilized the checklist to record the fulfillment of each criterion, providing explanations and textual evidence from the textbook to support the evaluations. This method ensures a structured and objective analysis of the speaking materials.

Data analysis for this study followed a descriptive qualitative approach, utilizing the framework established by Miles et al. (2020). The analysis process involved several key steps:

1. Data Collection: The researcher conducted a thorough review of the "Bahasa Inggris Kelas XI SMK" textbook, identifying and categorizing the types of speaking activities, texts, illustrations, and audio resources included in each chapter.

2. Data Reduction: After collecting the data, the researcher summarized the findings by categorizing activities according to Tomlinson's indicators. This reduction process focused on identifying patterns and trends in the speaking materials, highlighting key strengths and weaknesses.

3. Data Display: The findings were organized using the checklist table, which visually displayed the fulfillment of each eligibility standard. This table included indicators, fulfillment information (yes or no), and explanations of how each criterion was met.

4. Conclusion Drawing: The final step involved drawing conclusions based on the findings presented in the checklist table. The researcher evaluated how well the textbook meets Tomlinson's Speaking Materials' Eligibility Standards and assessed its overall effectiveness in promoting students' speaking skills.

By employing this systematic approach to data analysis, the study aims to provide reliable and valid insights into the alignment of the "Bahasa Inggris Kelas XI SMK" textbook with the established speaking materials eligibility standards

RESULTS

The results of this study are derived from a systematic document analysis of the "Bahasa Inggris Kelas XI SMK" textbook. The analysis was conducted using a checklist-based rubric developed from Tomlinson's (2011) five criteria for speaking materials eligibility: authenticity, relevance, engagement, support, and variety. The overall analysis reveals that the speaking materials within the textbook substantially fulfill these

established standards. The fulfillment of each criterion is summarized in Table 1, followed by a detailed exposition of the findings for each standard.

Table 1. Fulfillment of Speaking Materials' Eligibility Standards

No	Indicators of Speaking Materials Eligibility Standards (Tomlinson, 2011)	Fulfillment		Summary of Evidence
		Yes	No	
1.	Materials Should Introduce Students to Language in Context (Authenticity).	✔		The textbook consistently uses dialogues on contemporary topics (e.g., digital technology, influencers) and tasks requiring real-world interaction, such as conducting surveys and interviews.
2.	Materials Should Give Students Opportunities to Employ the Target Language for Communicative Objectives (Relevance).	✔		A high number of activities are discussion-based, requiring students to express opinions, agree/disagree, and participate in structured debates, directly fostering communicative competence.
3.	Materials Should Make Students Feel at Ease (Engagement).	✔		Comfort is achieved through structured pair work, practicing pre-written dialogues, and using clear visual prompts, which lower anxiety and encourage participation
4.	Learners Should Consider the Materials Being Taught as Relevant and Helpful (Support).	✔		Practical, multi-step tasks that culminate in real-world applications (e.g., presenting survey findings) demonstrate the tangible utility of the language skills, making the material feel beneficial
5.	Materials Should Be Designed with the Understanding That Learners' Learning Styles Vary (Variety).	✔		The textbook strongly caters to visual learners with numerous activities based on pictures and infographics. However, there is a notable scarcity of activities designed for auditory learners and a clear absence of tasks for kinesthetic learners

The analysis confirms that the textbook places a significant emphasis on authenticity. This is primarily achieved through the consistent use of dialogues that addre

-ss contemporary topics relevant to students, such as the impact of "digital technology on teenagers" (Chapter 1, Activity 1) and "influencer's post" (Chapter 1, Activity 5). Beyond scripted dialogues, authenticity is strengthened by tasks that require real-world information gathering. For example, students are instructed to "Conduct a survey to five of your big family members or neighbours" regarding online minsinformation (Chapter 1, Activity 10) and to "Meet and interview an expert regarding money investment" (Chapter 5, Activity 5). These activities necessitate interaction with real people about genuine societal issues, making the language use purposeful and authentic.
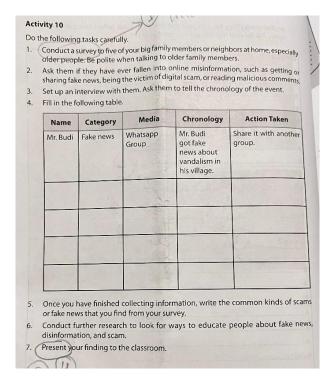

Figure 1. Example of an Authentic Communicative Task

The findings consistently show that the speaking materials are designed to give students extensive opportunities to use English for clear communicative purposes. A prominent feature is the inclusion of discussion-based tasks that prompt students to articulate opinions, agree, and disagree with peers. In Chapter 1, Activity 4, students are required to "Give your opinion" on a text about digital identity and have a classmate "respond to your arguments", relevance is further reinforced through structured debate activities, such as in Chapter 3, Activity 7, where students must defend a position on

topics like "Access to affordable healthcare is a fundamental right". These tasks directly mirror real-life discussions and are fundamental to developing communicative competence.

Engagement Through Learner Support

The textbook successfully fosters an environment where students feel at ease, a key component of engagement. This is achieved through scaffolded activities that reduce speaking anxiety. The frequent use of pair work for creating and practicing dialogues, such as creating a dialogue about an environmental activist with a friend (Chapter 4, Activity 6), allows for shared responsibility and mutual support. Furthermore, the textbook provides strong support by ensuring learners perceive the materials as helpful. Culminating tasks, such as instructing students to "Present the result of the interview in front of the class" after interviewing an expert (Chapter 5, Activity 6), clearly demonstrate the practical utility of the skills being learned, thereby validating their efforts and supporting their motivation.

Variety in Learning Modalities

The analysis indicates that the textbook partially fulfills the criterion of variety by effectively catering to visual learners, but less so for other learning styles. Numerous speaking activities are stimulated by visual prompts. For instance, students are asked to "Observe the pictures below, then answer the questions" about social media logos (Chapter 1, Activity 7) or to create a dialogue based on infographics about ATM safety tips (Chapter 5, Activity 4).

However, a notable gap exists in accommodating auditory and kinesthetic learners. The data reveals only one explicit instruction for an audio-based task, where students are asked to "Record your dialogs and upload it on the internet" (Chapter 1, Activity 9). More significantly, the analysis did not identify any activities explicitly designed to cater to kinesthetic learners through physical movement or hands-on interaction beyond simple dialogue performance. This absence represents a limitation in the textbook's ability to provide a fully varied learning experience for all students.

Figure 2. Example of a Visually-Stimulated Speaking Activity

DISCUSSION

The findings of this study offer significant insights into the practical application of pedagogical theory in commercial textbook design, particularly within the Indonesian vocational education context. The analysis reveals that the "Bahasa Inggris Kelas XI SMK" textbook substantially aligns with Tomlinson's (2011) framework for effective speaking materials, confirming its potential as a valuable educational resource. This section will discuss the importance and consequences of these findings, exploring how they confirm or challenge propositions from existing literature and what larger issues they address.

The textbook's most significant strength lies in its fulfillment of the authenticity and relevance criteria. By embedding speaking tasks within realistic contexts such as digital technology, online misinformation, and financial literacy, the materials directly prepare students for real-world communication demands. This finding is crucial because, as highlighted by Ratmanida and Suryanti (2020), authentic contexts are fundamental for developing practical competence and increasing student motivation. The textbook's focus on topics pertinent to students' lives directly addresses the core need for relevance in language learning. The significance of this cannot be overstated; when materials are relevant, students are more willing to participate. This study's findings affirm the

argument made by Ariatna et al. (2023) who, citing Dornyei (2001), noted that if students cannot see the connection between teaching materials and their own lives, they will be reluctant to communicate and interact. Thus, the textbook's success in this area is a key factor in its overall effectiveness.

In terms of engagement and support, the findings indicate that the textbook effectively creates a low-anxiety learning environment through the use of scaffolded and collaborative tasks, such as pair work and structured dialogues. This approach is of practical importance as it directly counters foreign language anxiety, a significant barrier to speaking practice identified by Horwitz (2013). By providing clear, structured activities, the materials build learner confidence, which supports Tomlinson's (2011) theoretical proposition that feeling at ease is essential for engagement. The culminating tasks, which require students to present the results of their interviews and surveys, further bolster the support criterion by demonstrating the tangible utility of their language skills, thus confirming that a connection to practical outcomes is a powerful form of learner support.

However, the most critical point of discussion arises from the textbook's primary limitation: a lack of variety in catering to diverse learning styles. While the materials are rich in visual prompts, effectively serving visual learners, the analysis revealed a significant scarcity of activities explicitly designed for auditory and kinaesthetic learners. This finding is consistent with the limitations reported in other studies on Indonesian textbooks, such as those by Gea et al. (2023) and Ratmanida and Suryanti (2020), which also noted insufficient variety in speaking activities. The practical consequence of this gap is that the textbook, while strong, may not be equally effective for all students. The absence of kinaesthetic activities is particularly noteworthy, as research by Marhamah (2017) has shown that physical learning strategies can be highly effective in improving English speaking skills. This disconfirms any proposition that a visually-dominant approach is sufficient for a diverse classroom and highlights a larger issue in textbook development: the challenge of creating truly inclusive materials.

Ultimately, this study demonstrates that it is possible for a textbook to align with both pedagogical best practices, like Tomlinson's framework, and national curriculum mandates aimed at fostering communicative competence for the workforce. The textbook successfully bridges theory and practical application. However, the findings also serve as

a justifiable commentary on the importance of comprehensive material evaluation. While the textbook is a valuable resource, its effectiveness could be significantly enhanced. The identified gap in learning style variety provides a clear, actionable direction for improvement for publishers and a practical guide for teachers, who can now consciously supplement the existing materials with auditory and kinesthetic tasks to create a more inclusive and effective learning environment for all vocational students.

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that the "Bahasa Inggris Kelas XI SMK" textbook substantially fulfills the core principles of effective speaking material design as proposed by Tomlinson (2011). The textbook successfully demonstrates strong authenticity, relevance, engagement, and support, making it a valuable and effective resource for developing the communicative competencies required by the Indonesian national curriculum for vocational students. The primary limitation identified is a lack of variety in activities that cater specifically to auditory and kinesthetic learning styles, an area that offers a clear opportunity for future enhancement. Ultimately, the findings affirm the textbook's role in bridging pedagogical theory with practical classroom application, while also highlighting the need for educators and publishers to pursue greater inclusivity in material design to serve all learners optimally.

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