Main Users' Evaluation of The English E-Book for Seventh Graders in Secondary Education

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Abstract

This paper discusses an evaluation of the English e-book which have been prescribed for use in grade 7 classes by the Indonesian Ministry of National Education in state-owned junior high schools. A 108 items of a modified e-book evaluation checklist was responded by 7 teachers and 96 students. It is to expose their perceptions concerning various aspects of the e-book. Both parties were asked to what extent the e-book had represented all the aspects of the standard of the e-book for English learning. Findings revealed that from 11 indicators, the teachers and the students displayed moderate positive perception in evaluating the nine indicators, namely; the general appearance, design and illustration, topic content, language component, social and cultural context, language skills, flexibility, and vocabulary and grammar. Meanwhile, they perceived negatively in evaluating the last two indicators, namely; the e-book elements and the interactivity. Suggestions are offered for the future revision and/or designing a need-based e-book for young learners of English.

Keywords: E-book evaluation, E-book elements, Interactivity, High school education

1. Introduction

The use of e-books is rapidly gaining position in education. Recently, it is potentially functioned as one alternative tool in teaching and learning. As Abrams suggests that '-well-constructed e-books can become the framework for the entire pedagogy of a course, a grade, a subject or more...if we take steps to improve the learning experience and add additional features in the shift to an electronic format (cited in Marques, 2012).

E-books promote great advantages not only for teachers but also for learners. Teachers would be challenged to have a remarkable experience and spend efficient time in teaching as well as learners would engage the learning. Electronic books allow teachers to customize and produce content to suit what needs to be taught, using different modules that may suit a learner's learning style, background, language, or level of skill, while following to the local education standards. Learners' familiarity with ICT enable them to access more course information than the paper-based books prescribed by the teacher, suggesting that learning can take place without the teacher's or adult's involvement or even in spite of it since multimedia, in essence, replaces the adult mediator (Dowling, 2003; Al-Jarf, 2005; Roskos et al, 2009; Ismail et al, 2010, as cited in Ezza, 2012).

As main users of the English language e-books, it is essential to extract teachers' and students' perceptions toward their use. A compromise between teacher and students perceptions is considered effective to manage their own learning and reducing the risk of conflicting expectation, at the same time (Maley, 1995; Hye-Yeo, 2002; Littlejohn, 1992). Moreover, teacher and learners' perceptions is   regarded as one of the teaching aspects in a learning context (Cheng & Falvey, 2000).

With the privilege offered by the e-books in teaching and learning context, it is necessary to evaluate the aspects that make e-book, an e-book from the main users' view point. The e-books evaluation is somewhat important for using them as learning tools (Woody et al. 2010). Not only evaluating the contents and the multimedia tools exist as the internal part of an e-book, but also the general appearance as the external part. The purpose of this paper is to evaluate the English language e-book which was introduced to grade 7 students at several state-owned junior high schools in Indonesia since 2013.

2. The Policy of e-Book Use in Indonesian Highschools

The e-book policy issued by the Indonesian Ministry of Education was in favour of providing inexpensive books for schools. It was printed in the Ministry of Education and Culture Decree No. 46/2007. The Ministry of Education and Culture purchased the copyrights from the book writers and made the books accessible for free on the Internet.

The e-book publications then renewed under the Minister of Education and Culture Decree No. 41/2008. By January 2012, 927 titles had been uploaded to the Internet server of the Ministry of Education and Education. The e-books are accessible and downloadable from http://bse.kemdiknas.go.id/. Electronic School Book is a government program to provide inexpensive books and to promote technology enhancement. The Ministry of Education have bought the copyrights of the books from the authors so it was free. The books have been

reviewed and certified as qualified by the National Bureau of Education Standard. These policies grounds the objectives listed in the new curriculum of 2013.   Among the new curriculum objectives were promoting learners' communicative proficiency in English by fostering technology integrated learning with particular emphasis on reading and writing.

3. Method

This study used a questionnaire comprising 108 statements dealing English e-book evaluation. It was a 5 Likert Scale questionnaire which was adopted from several checklists of textbook evaluation and a checklist of e-book standard. A parallel questionnaire   was developed for teachers and students. They were demanded to indicate their responses from a five scale ranging from strongly agree to strongly disagree to signify their agreement and disagreement by ticking the appropriate column. The questionnaire was written in English and it was translated into Bahasa Indonesia. During the administration of the questionnaire, the Indonesian version was used. There were 11 major components discussed in the questionnaire, namely; general appearance, design and illustration, topic contents, language components, social and cultural context, language skills, flexibility, vocabulary and grammar, practice and testing, e-book elements, and interactivity.

Furthermore, a focus group discussion was held with the teachers and the seventh graders. It was conducted with 7 teachers and 18 seventh graders in junior highschools located in Jambi municipality.   The FGD was conducted in Bahasa Indonesia. Once the discussion completed, the responses were then classified, tabulated, and translated into English in order to be used in the process of data analysis.

4. Result and Discussion

This section discussed the evaluation of the English e-book based on the teachers and the students' perceptions. Besides, it also examined the level of equality of both parties' perceptions. The teachers and the students' mean scores were compared and analyzed by using the independent sample T-test from SPSS to seek the equality of means.

The teachers and the students perceived positively about 'language skills' within the e-book yet it was not significant. Meanwhile, they had a significant similar positive opinions toward the other 8 issues about the e-book, i.e. the general appearance, design and illustration, topic content, language component, social and cultural context, vocabulary and grammar, flexibility, practice and testing.   In addition, the teachers and the students had a significant negative perceptions toward the last 2 aspects of an e-book, namely; the e-book element and interactivity.

4.1 General Appearance of the e-Book

The result of equality of means from both the teachers and the students' scores showed that there was no difference in their perceptions. It is illustrated in table 1 as follows:

Table 1. Equality level of teachers and students' perceptions of General Appearance of the e-book.

Group Statistics					
	Criteria	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
GA	Teachers	7	75,1429	6,20292	2,34448
	Students	96	76,8438	12,06939	1,23183

Independent Samples Test										
		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
									Lower	Upper
GA	Equal variances assumed	3,093	,082	-,368	101	,714	-1,70089	4,62075	-10,86723	7,46544
	Equal variances not assumed			-,642	9,723	,536	-1,70089	2,64839	-7,62474	4,22295

The first table showed the mean score of teachers' perceptions about 'general appearance of the e-book was 75.1429 versus 76.8438 for students' perception. Both groups perceived positively toward the e-book's cover, orientation page, table of content, titles, and glossaries. It was also defined that the two groups significantly had a similar perception, with the p-value 0.714. Based on the Lavene's t-test for equality of means, if the p-value is > 0.05 meaning that the groups are equal in perceptions. Therefore, it can be concluded that both parties were quite satisfied with the qualities of the e-book's general appearance.

4.2 Design and Illustration of the e-Book

The design and illustration of the e-book covered the use of headings, icons, labels, italics as well as various, attractive, stimulated, and functional illustrations. From the data it was shown that the teachers and students perceived positively about the design and illustration of the e-book. The responses of both parties were still regarded positive in which teachers achieved 68.1429 and the students achieved 75.2188. Moreover, the equality of their perceptions illustrated in the p value of 0.100. In conclusion, the teachers and the students shared their agreement in perceiving that the design and illustration of the e-Book to some extent, was acceptable. The fact was described statistically in table 2.

Table 2. Equality level of teachers and students' perceptions of Design and Illustration of the e-book

	Criteria	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
DI	Teachers	7	68,1429	10,51077	3,97270
	Students	96	75,2188	10,92482	1,11501

Independent Samples Test										
		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
									Lower	Upper
DI	Equal variances assumed	,004	,950	-1,658	101	,100	-7,07589	4,26763	-15,54172	1,38994
	Equal variances not assumed			-1,715	6,980	,130	-7,07589	4,12620	-16,83854	2,68676

4.3 Topic Content of the e-Book

The issue of topic content was also emerged as a predominant concern in a textbook. The topic contents evaluated whether or not the topics of the e-book were appealing for different interests and personalities, encouraging, and allowing students' critical thinking. Being one of the issues analysed in the study, the topic content of the e-book was positively perceived by the teachers and the students. The mean score of the former was 73.5714 while the latter was 73.8854.

The perception of the teachers and students was also significantly similar with each other. In other words, they had a significant similar positive perception about the topic content of the e-book with the p value of 0.949. It was more than half of the teachers and the students agreed to say some of the qualities attached to the topic content were representative. The statistic data was illustrated in table 3.

Table 3. Equality means of teachers and students' perceptions of Topic Contents of the e-book

Group Statistics					
	Criteria	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
TC	Teachers	7	73,5714	7,76439	2,93466
	Students	96	73,8854	12,66397	1,29251

Independent Samples Test									
		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means					
		F	Sig.	T	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
									Lower	Upper
TC	Equal variances assumed	1,284	,260	-,065	101	,949	-,31399	4,86519	-9,96522	9,33725
	Equal variances not assumed			-,098	8,533	,924	-,31399	3,20669	-7,62895	7,00098

4.4 Language Component of the e-Book

Language components concerned with the existence of the materials for teaching vocabulary, grammar, pronunciation, subject matters, target culture contents, and reading selections within the e-book. The data showed the mean of each group were regarded positive. The students' mean score was 71.3542. It was somewhat higher than the teachers' mean score which was 63.7143. They were considered to have similar perceptions by the existence of the p value 0.108. In other words, both groups perceived similarly that they pretty satisfied with the language component attached to the e-Book. The supporting data was illustrated in table 4 to facilitate the understanding.

Table 4. Equality means of teachers and students' perceptions of Language Components of the e-book

Group Statistics					
	Criteria	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
LC	Teachers	7	63,7143	7,60952	2,87613
	Students	96	71,3542	12,26117	1,25140

Independent Samples Test									
		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means					
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
									Lower	Upper
LC	Equal variances assumed	1,432	,234	-1,621	101	,108	-7,63988	4,71179	-16,98681	1,70705
	Equal variances not assumed			-2,436	8,468	,039	-7,63988	3,13658	-14,80390	-,47586

4.5 Social and Cultural Context of the e-Book

A set of questions was set to investigate the social and cultural context discussed within the e-book. Culture provides humans with an overall framework for organizing their thoughts, emotions, and behaviors in relation to their environment. Table 5 highlighted the mean score and the equality of means of the teachers and students' perceptions on the issue of the social and cultural context of the e-book. The issue of the social and cultural context evaluated whether or not the e-book expresses a positive view about ethnic origins, occupations, age groups, disability, local culture, international culture, or blend cultures.

The mean score of the teachers was 69.1429. It was slightly lower than the students' mean score which was 74.8646. These scores were categorized as positive responses. The result of t-test to represent the equality of perception from both parties. The value of the equality of means was 0.207 which was higher than the p value 0,05. It was concluded that they were of the same opinion about the social and cultural context represented within the e-book. In other words, the teachers and the students have a significant similar positive opinion on the social and culture issue.

Table 5. Equality means of teachers and students' perceptions of Social and Cultural Context of the e-book

Group Statistics					
	Criteria	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
SCC	Teachers	7	69,1429	11,30529	4,27300
	Students	96	74,8646	11,52354	1,17612

Independent Samples Test									
		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means					
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
									Lower	Upper
SCC	Equal variances assumed	,011	,916	-1,270	101	,207	-5,72173	4,50646	-14,66133	3,21788
	Equal variances not assumed			-1,291	6,941	,238	-5,72173	4,43190	-16,21958	4,77613

4.6 Language Skills of the e-Book

Learning a language involves a certain set of skills to make a meaningful comprehension. Language skills can be characterized as receptive, which involves readings and listening, then

as productive which includes speaking and writing. The integration of the skills is considered essential to be used in a learning context because none of the skills have to be used in isolation but rather used in combination (Grant, 1987).

The statistic analysis exemplified a similar result from the teachers and the students. The mean score of the teachers was also not very much different from the students' concerning the language skills issue within the e-book. The teachers' mean score was 69.5714 while the students' was 79.4688. Furthermore, the p value of both parties appeared to be slightly higher (0.064) than the standard (0.05). This fact showed that the teachers and the students had a similar perception but it was not significant. They shared their agreement toward the quality of language skills presented in the e-book. Table 6 showed the distribution of the teachers and the students score of means and t-test.

Table 6. Equality means of teachers and students' perceptions of Language Skills of the e-book

Group Statistics					
	Criteria	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
LS	Teachers	7	69,5714	10,75263	4,06411
	Students	96	79,4688	12,47056	1,27277

Independent Samples Test									
		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means					
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
									Lower	Upper
LS	Equal variances assumed	,274	,602	-2,043	101	,064	-9,89732	4,84490	-19,50830	-,28634
	Equal variances not assumed			-2,324	7,230	,072	-9,89732	4,25875	-19,90302	,10837

4.7 Vocabulary and Grammar of the e-Book

The investigation of the vocabulary and grammar in the study reflected that to what extent this aspect existed within the e-book. This aspect evaluated whether or not the vocabulary were presented in variety of ways and at an appropriate rate; repeated in subsequent lessons to reinforce their meaning and use. Besides, it also investigated whether the vocabulary was functional, thematic, authentic, and practical. The grammar within the e-book was also investigated in terms of its logical manner, level of difficulty, as well as its oral and written

practice.

The statistic result conveyed that the teachers and the students shared the opinion about the existence of vocabulary and grammar. They were in agreement to perceive that the vocabulary and grammar were acceptable. The positive opinion was indicated through a mean score which were 71.4268 and 75.8125. This phenomenon was also supported by the equality of means from both parties with the p value of 0.330 which means that their perceptions were significantly similar with each other.

Table 7. Equality means of teachers and students' perceptions of Vocabulary and Grammar of the e-book

Group Statistics					
	Criteria	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
VG	Teachers	7	71,4286	6,62966	2,50578
	Students	96	75,8125	11,67662	1,19174

Independent Samples Test										
		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
									Lower	Upper
VG	Equal variances assumed	4,875	,030	-,979	101	,330	-4,38393	4,47846	-13,26799	4,50014
	Equal variances not assumed			-1,580	8,992	,149	-4,38393	2,77474	-10,66164	1,89379

4.8 Flexibility of the e-Book

The flexibility of the e-book concerned with whether or not the e-book was appealing and useful, catered for different level of formality, as well as provided opportunities for teachers and students to localize activities. As described in table 8, the teachers' mean score (68, 5714) was quite lower than the students' mean score (77, 2917). The score revealed that both groups perceived positively about the flexibility of the e-book. The equality of means from both groups also showed that its score (0,160) is higher form the standard p value which was 0.05. This revealed a conclusion that the teachers and the students had a significant similar perceptions concerning the flexibility of the e-book. In other words, they found the book was quite flexible.

Table 8. Equality means of teachers and students' perceptions of Flexibility of the e-book.

Group Statistics					
	Criteria	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
FLEX	Teachers	7	68,5714	17,96160	6,78885
	Students	96	77,2917	15,59211	1,59136

Independent Samples Test										
		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
									Lower	Upper
FLEX	Equal variances assumed	,011	,917	-1,415	101	,160	-8,72024	6,16335	-20,94668	3,50620
	Equal variances not assumed			-1,251	6,676	,253	-8,72024	6,97287	-25,37195	7,93147

4.9 Practice and Testing of the e-Book

The evaluation toward the issue of practice and testing mainly concerned with whether or not the e-book provided communicative, clear directed, and reasonable number of exercises. Moreover, it also investigated about the valid tests which assessed all four skills and cultures. The e-book was also questioned about the provision of final achievement test like and multiple forms of exams as well as portfolios.

Table 9 displayed the mean score of the teachers was 66.2857 while the students' mean score was 74.4375. This number concluded that generally, both parties perceived positively toward the aspect of practice and testing within the e-book. Meanwhile, the result of the t-test clearly demonstrated that the teachers' perception was corresponded to the students' significantly with the p value of 0.102. Hence, the score from table 9 also revealed that both parties were moderately satisfied with the quality of practice and testing attached to the e-Book.

Table 9. Equality means of teachers and students' perceptions of Practice and testing of the e-book

Group Statistics					
	Criteria	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
PT	Teachers	7	66,2857	7,78276	2,94161
	Students	96	74,4375	12,86759	1,31329

Independent Samples Test									
		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means					
		F	Sig.	T	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
									Lower	Upper
PT	Equal variances assumed	3,167	,078	-1,650	101	,102	-8,15179	4,94188	-17,95515	1,65158
	Equal variances not assumed			-2,530	8,609	,033	-8,15179	3,22146	-15,49005	-,81352

4.10 E-book Elements of the e-Book

The e-book elements held a very essential part of an e-book. The aspect evaluated were the availability of cross-referencing, graphic, lay-out, e-bookmarking, annotating, hypertext, thesauri, manipulable font-size, and search tools. As revealed in table 10, the teachers and the students perceived negatively about e-book elements attached to the English e-book. They did not satisfy with the e-Book elements. Each group demonstrated almost similar score, which is 44.5714 for the teachers' and 42.5938 for the students' score. Moreover, the statistic number of the equality of means showed the score of p value (0.704) from both perceptions. It was concluded that the teachers and the students had a significant similar perceptions.

Table 10. Equality means of teachers and students' perceptions of e-Book Elements of the e-book

Group Statistics					
	Criteria	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
eTL	Teachers	7	44,5714	21,07809	7,96677
	Students	96	42,5938	12,60708	1,28670

Independent Samples Test									
		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means					
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
									Lower	Upper
eTL	Equal variances assumed	1,315	,254	,381	101	,704	1,97768	5,19223	-8,32232	12,27768
	Equal variances not assumed			,245	6,317	,814	1,97768	8,07001	-17,53130	21,48666

4.11 Interactivity of the e-Book

Interactivity was considered potential to enhance learning motivations. The evaluation of interactivity mainly concerned with the availability of internal and external media, interactive games, and simulations within the e-book. From the result, the teachers and the students perceived negatively toward the absence the interactivity. Both groups hardly found the qualified interactivity within the e-Book. It was illustrated by the means score which were 47,7143 and 48,8958. The similarity in perceptions is supported by the equality of mean score. The data discovered that p-value was 0.772 which was much higher than the standard (0.05). The statistic results were illustrated in table 11.

Table 11. Equality means of teachers and students' perceptions of Interactivity of the e-book.

Group Statistics					
	Criteria	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
INT	Teachers	7	47,7143	22,95441	8,67595
	Students	96	48,8958	9,03965	,92261

Independent Samples Test									
		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means					
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
									Lower	Upper
INT	Equal variances assumed	22,450	,000	-,290	101	,772	-1,18155	4,07166	-9,25863	6,89554
	Equal variances not assumed			-,135	6,136	,897	-1,18155	8,72487	-22,41601	20,05291

5. Conclusion

This study evaluates the English e-book 'When English Rings the Bell' which is currently in use in Indonesian state junior highschools. The retrospective evaluation is based on the teachers and the students' perceptions. The result attained from the study suggests that the e-book is carefully designed dealing with its appearance, design and illustration, topic contents, language components, social and cultural contexts, language skills, flexibility, as well as vocabulary and grammar.

However, the e-book has not represented the features' of an e-book regarding the e-book elements and interactivity. The study of this e-book is conducted for the first time. It is suggested to perform such evaluation of the e-books regularly to provide further insights in revising and improving the English e-books for formal and informal learning.

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