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# Improving Reading Comprehension in English for Nusantara: A Case Study

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**Abstract:** This research investigates the effectiveness of using the textbook "English for Nusantara" for grade 7, to improve reading comprehension skills among students at Al-Amin Middle School in Palangka Raya City, Indonesia. This research uses a qualitative approach, utilizing questionnaires and student interviews to analyze how textbooks facilitate reading comprehension. This research focuses on a sample of 10 students and aims to identify the strengths and the content of "English for Nusantara" textbook in improving reading comprehension. This analysis will explore four main aspects: general attributes, teaching-learning content, vocabulary development, and grammatical understanding. The findings from this research will provide valuable insight the potential to be an effective tool for enhancing reading comprehension and the content of the book "English for Nusantara" from the views of Al-Amin Palangkaraya Middle School students and contribute to the ongoing dialogue about effective teaching of reading comprehension in secondary schools in Indonesia.

**Keywords:** Reading Comprehension, English for Nusantara Textbook, Qualitative, Students

## Introduction

With the increasing interconnectedness of our world, the ability to speak English fluently is no longer a privilege, but a requirement. English proficiency acts as a bridge, enabling effective communication and granting access to a vast amount of knowledge. Reading comprehension lies at the core of this skill, as it is an interactive process. Readers actively engage with the text, using their existing language skills and knowledge to construct meaning (Metsala, 2021; Zhang, 2022).

Textbooks continue to be a prominent feature in Indonesian classrooms, serving as a key resource for both educators and students. However, the effectiveness of textbooks depends on their ability to cater to the specific needs of the learners. The way a textbook is designed, including the topics chosen, how the content is structured (Baker, 2020; Farah, 2019; Townsend, 2020; Tufo, 2019), the type of text used, how it is organized, the visual elements included, and even the format it is presented in, can all significantly impact how well students understand the material (Chalaysap, 2012). For instance, even if the vocabulary in a text is simple, complex sentence structures or unfamiliar subject matter can create comprehension difficulties (Chalaysap, 2012). Therefore, it is essential that textbooks are designed with the capabilities of second language learners in mind.

Despite the widespread use of textbooks, there is a lack of research in Indonesia on how design elements within these textbooks might influence students' comprehension. This study aims to bridge this gap by investigating the challenges faced by students in Class 7A at Al-Amin Middle School in Palangkaraya, Central Kalimantan, with reading comprehension using the "English for Nusantara" textbook. By analyzing student performance and examining the content and design of the textbook, this research hopes to identify areas for improvement and contribute to the development of more effective English language learning materials for Indonesian classrooms (Kim, 2021; Medina, 2021; Scott, 2020).

The textbook is a central element in the language teaching and learning process (Pou Bori, 2018). Language textbook itself is a guide for students to learn to master what is discussed in it. Likewise, for the teacher, the language textbook is a tool to deliver the material to be delivered. These textbooks play a crucial role in shaping students' English language proficiency and overall learning experience. Therefore, the content of the language textbook learning must be in accordance with the circumstances and needs of EFL learners in Indonesia.

Furthermore, having understanding and skills in language is very influential in terms of teaching and learning. The ability to read and understand the contents of the language textbook is also influential (Babayigit, 2020; Ritonga, 2022; Wolf, 2019). By having good reading literacy skills, students are expected to have the competence to understand the literature (Syamsul, 2018) in the EFL language textbook. Teaching and learning method are also comprehensively changed into student-centred. (Mulyarti, 2019).

Currently, the Indonesian Ministry of Education and Culture has revised the curriculum for primary and secondary schools, the Merdeka Curriculum. According to this curriculum, they aim to 'give educators the flexibility to create quality learning that suits the

needs and learning environment of learners'. Therefore, a book was published from this curriculum "English for Nusantara" which is aimed at junior high schools. The contextualisation in this study should be related to students' understanding and level. The contextuality uses the framework of conditions, which is the environment in which the book is used. The National Board of Education Standards (BSNP) of Indonesia (2008) determine that the content of an English language textbook should be suitable with its users (Silvester & Suwarsih, 2018).

## Methodology

The objective of this research is to conduct an in-depth analysis of the book "English for Nusantara," with the main aim of carefully comparing the content of the book with the level of understanding possessed by students regarding the taught material. This analysis will encompass various aspects of the book, including its structure and content, thereby providing a deeper understanding of the effectiveness of the textbook source of English language learning in Indonesia.

This research uses a qualitative approach, analyzing the textbook with the aim of achieving a comprehensive understanding of Al-Amin students' perceptions and evaluations of the EFL textbook. This research utilizes two instruments, a checklist-form questionnaire and interview sessions, aimed at exploring the extent of students' understanding of textbook content through reading activities. The participants in this research are 10 seventh-grade students from Al-Amin middle school, all from class A. The EFL textbook used for this research is "English for Nusantara," published by Kemdikbud in 2022.

The evaluation checklist used in this paper is the modification of Cunningsworth's (Oxford: Alan Cunningsworth, 1995), 2. There are four issues of textbook evaluating in this checklist: (1) General Attributes; (2) Learning Teaching Content; (3) Vocabulary; and (4) Grammar. In each dimension, several statements provided and the textbook was graded for each statement by the rating agree and disagree.

## Result and Discussion

### A. General Attribute

**Table 1.** General Attribute

No.	Statements	Rating
1	Do you feel your English is good?	Agree
2	Do you feel this book needs to be made easier?	Agree
3	Do you agree that this book matches your abilities?	Agree
4	Do you find it difficult to understand the tasks in the book?	Disagree
5	Can you understand the context provided in this book?	Agree

This table presents the results of a book review conducted by nine 7th graders from al-amin middle school on a textbook titled "english for nusantara." the analysis showed the

book fit the students' age, interests, and learning goals well. The students liked that the book could be used with different teaching styles in English language classes (ELT). However, this finding suggests that the textbook's difficulty level might require slight adjustments to cater to a wider range of learners within the middle school age group.

## B. Learning Teaching Content

**Table 2.** Learning Teaching Content

No.	Statements	Rating
1	Does the textbook have practical exercises to strengthen agree language comprehension?	Agree
2	Does the language textbook cover basic vocabulary?	Agree
3	Does the textbook include example dialogs to assist in everyday situations?	Agree
4	Is this book very helpful in the learning process?	Agree
5	Has your English language proficiency increased since using this book?	Agree
6	Do you find it difficult to understand the tasks in the book?	Disagree
7	Are the instructions/ explanations in the book well explained?	Agree
8	Does this book make it difficult/helpful to grasp English lessons?	Agree
9	Does this book add clear pictures/visuals?	Agree

This table suggests the textbook offers a comprehensive learning experience that caters to various learning styles. It features practical exercises that solidify language comprehension and build foundational vocabulary with a focus on frequently used words. The inclusion of example dialogues relevant to everyday situations provides learners with practical applications of the language. This combination of clear explanations, well-explained concepts, and engaging visuals creates a user-friendly environment that promotes effective learning. Furthermore, the manageable difficulty level ensures that students are neither overwhelmed nor under-challenged, fostering a positive learning experience.

## C. Vocabulary and Grammar

**Table 3.** Vocabulary and Grammar

No.	Statements	Rating
1	Does the English textbook you read provide a list of frequently used agree Vocabulary?	Agree
2	Does the English textbook you use have a chapter on grammar?	Disagree
3	Does the English textbook you use have listening exercises?	Agree

No.	Statements	Rating
4	Does the language textbook you have provide opportunities to agree practice through group activities?	Agree
5	Are there examples of group activities provided in the textbook?	Agree

This table suggests the textbook effectively manages vocabulary load for learners. First, the new vocabulary introduced in each lesson is deemed appropriate for the level, preventing learners from feeling overwhelmed or under-stimulated. Second, the distribution of vocabulary throughout the chapters is commended, showing a clear progression from simple to complex words. Finally, the strategic repetition and recycling of vocabulary throughout the book are praised, indicating a well-designed approach to solidify vocabulary retention.

Additionally, the textbook incorporates a list of frequently used vocabulary, making it easier for students to build their foundational knowledge. Listening exercises enhance comprehension skills by exposing students to spoken English. Group practice activities promote collaborative learning. Finally, clear examples provide students with reference points for understanding new concepts. However, a potential shortcoming identified is the lack of a dedicated grammar chapter. This might necessitate supplementing the textbook with additional grammar resources to ensure a well-rounded learning experience.

This study examined the strengths and weaknesses of "English For Nusantara" as a textbook for 7th graders at Al-Amin Middle School. The analysis, based on reviews from three tables, revealed several positive aspects. Students found the content relevant to their interests and learning goals, indicating good alignment with their age group (Table 1). Additionally, the textbook's structure allows for flexibility in teaching styles within the ELT curriculum, offering adaptability for educators (Table 1). The review also highlighted the textbook's comprehensive approach, incorporating practical exercises, relevant vocabulary building, example dialogues for everyday use, clear explanations, engaging visuals, and a manageable difficulty level (Tables 2 & 3). Furthermore, the effective management of vocabulary load, with appropriate levels per lesson, well-distributed progression, and strategic repetition, fosters strong vocabulary retention (Table 3). The presence of a frequently used vocabulary list, listening exercises, and group practice activities further supports a well-rounded learning experience (Table 3).

However, a potential shortcoming identified in the review is the lack of a dedicated grammar chapter (Table 3). This finding warrants further discussion on how to address this gap. Possibilities include integrating grammar instruction within existing exercises or supplementing with additional materials.

Another point for discussion is catering to students with varying learning abilities within the same age group. While the review suggests a manageable difficulty level overall, additional resources might be necessary to support students at different levels. Furthermore, maximizing the textbook's adaptability and catering to diverse learning styles might require specific teacher training to fully utilize its flexibility.

Overall, "English for Nusantara" appears to be a promising textbook with a well-structured approach and engaging content. Addressing the potential gaps in grammar instruction and differentiating instruction for students with varying abilities would further enhance its effectiveness for 7th graders at Al-Amin Middle School. Future research could investigate the impact of implementing these suggestions on student learning outcomes.

## Conclusion

This study investigated the effectiveness of "English for Nusantara" as a textbook for seventh-grade students at Al-Amin Middle School. The analysis, based on student evaluations, revealed several strengths of the textbook. Students found the content relevant and engaging, and the textbook structure allowed for flexibility in teaching styles. Additionally, the textbook offered a comprehensive approach, incorporating practical exercises, vocabulary building, dialogues for everyday use, clear explanations, and engaging visuals. The textbook effectively managed vocabulary load and provided resources for listening and group activities. The study also identified a potential shortcoming: the lack of a dedicated grammar chapter. Future iterations of the textbook or teacher training could address this gap by integrating grammar instruction within existing exercises or supplementing with additional materials. Overall, "English for Nusantara" appears to be a valuable resource with a well-structured approach and engaging content. Addressing the potential gaps in grammar instruction and differentiating instruction for students with varying abilities would further enhance its effectiveness for seventh-graders at Al-Amin Middle School. Future research could investigate the impact of implementing these suggestions on student learning outcomes.

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