

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

This chapter covers the general overview of this study. It contains background of the study, research questions, objectives of the study, significance of the study, scope and limitation of the study, and definition of key terms.

Background of the study

The teaching and learning process cannot be separated from learning sources. Learning sources is one of many aspects which play important roles in supplying materials in teaching and learning process. Material plays a prominent role in the teaching and learning process. It is not the only crucial solution to a country's education system, but it is a major element that supports many curricula and education system (IIEP, 2010).

As a developing country, Indonesian government is trying to improve education by fostering curriculum. The latest curriculum issued by the government is called the 2013 Curriculum. In the latest curriculum, the students are expected to be more critical and active in exploring their knowledge, so they must be provided with some instruments to support the learning process. Book writers have arranged English materials in course books based on the curriculum. It provides the framework of the curriculum as the guidance for novice teachers or the experienced ones. For teacher, a course book may serve as a form of teacher training which provides ideas on how to plan and teach lessons (Richards, 2001). In other words, course

books are important sources for teaching. Therefore, a teacher as a facilitator in teaching and learning process has to know how to choose and use a course book.

Course books become common learning materials that teachers use as their guidance to teach the students. Very often, course book becomes the only material that teachers use in the classroom. There are many course books from various publishers in the market with various qualities. Hence, it is necessary for teachers to be careful when they are going to choose a course book as their main reference in the teaching process.

According to Cunningsworth (1995), a course book has a prominent role in English teaching. It serves as the following (1) a resource for presentation materials, (2) a source of activities for student practice and communicative interaction, (3) a reference source for students on grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation, and others, (4) a source of stimulation and ideas for classroom activities, (5) a syllabus which accommodates learning objectives, and (6) a support for less experienced teachers who have yet to gain in confidence. In accordance with that, Zohrabi, Sabouri and Behroozian (2012) states that the role of course books can become tools for learners' self-study, showcases for the latest theories, syllabus planners and overall guidelines for teachers. Therefore, with the importance of course books' role, teachers need to carefully select the course books used in classroom.

The selection of a course book is one of the most important decisions a teacher will make in shaping the content and nature of teaching and learning. It involves matching the material against the context in which it is going to be used, following the aims of the teaching program, as well as fitting the personal methodology of the teacher. Harmer (2007) states that the most important aspect of course book use is for teachers to try to engage students with the content they are going to be dealing with. Consequently, teachers should deliver the materials from the course books which are suitable with students' need in teaching and learning process in order to get students comprehend what are being delivered by teachers.

English is the first foreign language taught to students in Indonesia. The primary aim of teaching English in the early years of schooling is to prepare young learners to be ready and have self-confident in learning English at higher levels of education. This is a challenging situation for teachers who have to teach English to young learners because teaching English to young learners is not an easy job. However, it is not very difficult, if they know how to do it. Many teaching methods applied by teachers to teach young learners are unique experiences which are challenging and fun. Compared to adults, young learners are more energetic, have shorter attention spans, and learn language according to specific stages of development (Cameron, 2001). To attract and hold the attention of young learners, one of the tools used is a course book which contains interesting materials. The key to teaching English to young learners

is to understand the principles of language acquisition and apply it in ways that keep young learners motivated to learn. One of the way to keep young learners motivated in learning English is using attractive materials which teacher can find in course books.

There are many English course books for young learners, especially elementary school students. They come from different publishers offered in the market, for examples, Erlangga, Elex media Computindo, Mitra Abadi, and Yudhistira. However, not all course books that are published have good a quality. Some course books are good but some of them do not fulfill the principles of Teaching English to Young Learners (TEYL). In this case, teachers should wisely select the course book which is meeting the young learners' need and the principles of TEYL. The problem is not all teachers are able to evaluate an English course book which they will use to teach English to young learners in their classroom. Responding to many English coursebooks for young learners from many publishers, evaluation on English course books for young learners is worth conducting to find out whether the books fit standard quality of a good coursebook which meet with learners need.

There are many stages in evaluating course books (Roberts, 1996) which covers various stages. It means that prior to using the course book, teachers should test and evaluate the book. This is in aiming to view risk of some factors and the circumstances which influence the materials' production process, the need for a mindful and in-depth evaluation process becomes obvious, the way to the

exploration of course-book evaluation by teachers (Kayapinar, 2009). Therefore, before using a course book, a teacher needs to identify the positive and negative points of it by evaluating one or some course books. After evaluating the course books, the teacher can select the one which meets the criteria of a good English course book for young learners and resembles with the objective of teaching. All in all, a research on coursebook evaluation needs to be done. The researcher found that there are not many study on course book evaluation for young learners conducted by researchers in Indonesia. Most of the studies in Indonesia are conducted evaluation on junior and senior high school English course book. Limited coursebook evaluation on elementary school textbook is due to the absence of English as a subject taught in elementary level. In contrast, English is highly demanded by society therefore most elementary schools still give English as one of the subjects to be taken at school. Therefore, it is essential to conduct textbook evaluation for elementary students. To know whether the textbook used to teach elementary students is suitable, the textbook should be evaluated based on the criteria of textbook for young learners. In addition, it is important that the themes provided in the textbook is in line with the themes recommended in the 2013.

Considering the explanations above, the researcher is interested to conduct a research in English course book evaluation for young learners. It is worth conducting since there are plenty course book evaluation on junior and high schools' course book

while research concerning course book for young learners is scarce. Moreover, the absence of English course book published by government makes the researcher interested to investigate whether English course book marketed by private publishers provide themes recommended by curriculum 2013. So far, there is limited research about the themes which are recommended in curriculum 2013. Therefore, this research is substantial to conduct.

To be specific, the researcher is interested in conducting research about course book evaluation for young learners to give valuable contribution in the development of the field of study. To make it worth contributing for knowledge, the researcher is conducting present study which is focusing on evaluating one book entitled *Let's Talk in English* which is analyzing whether the coursebook meet the criteria of a course book for young learners and whether the themes in the coursebook in line with those recommended in the 2013 Curriculum. A course book evaluation focuses largely on the needs of the users of the materials and makes subjective judgments about their effects (Tomlinson, 2003 cited on Dickinson (2010)). Therefore, this study comes up with the idea to analyze the course book *Let's Talk in English*, one of the books used in state schools and Islamic private schools in Lakarsantri, Surabaya, for fourth grade of elementary students published by *Mitra Abadi*. It is expected that by carrying out the research, it can give input to English teachers for young learners on how to evaluate a course book using those two factors, criteria of a course book for young learners

and themes recommended in the 2013 curriculum. Furthermore, the result of this research can be a useful guide for readers and teachers who need to use the evaluation of English course book and develop more methods to suit their own needs.

Research Questions

This study attempts to answer the following questions:

- Does *Let's Talk in English* course book meet the criteria of a course book for young learners?
- Are the themes in *Let's Talk in English* in line with those recommended in the 2013 Curriculum?

Objectives of the Study

Based on the problems stated above, the objectives of study are, first, to evaluate whether *Let's Talk in English* course book meet the criteria of a course book for young learners, and the second, to find out whether the themes in *Let's Talk in English* book are in line with those recommended in the 2013 curriculum or not.

Significance of the study

Despite the fact that the national curriculum does not put English as the core subject in elementary schools, this study is expected to contribute some information as a reference of English material for teachers of English at elementary school. This is

important considering that English is taught at many elementary schools although not as the core subject. Therefore, this study tries to evaluate the book based on the themes given for elementary school in the 2013 curriculum. Furthermore, the study also aims at providing a practical module and instruments of how teachers can evaluate the course book.

This evaluation would benefit not only teachers and students, who are always in the forefront of every educational improvement, but also course book designers and publishers and, ultimately, decision makers. The gains would come in the form of advice to classroom instructors on areas where a course book can achieve its goals and on what parts would they need to use supplementary materials. For course book designers and decision makers, the study would give them a feedback about the course book and how it can be developed.

Scope and limitation of the study

The scope of this study is evaluation on *Let's Talk in English* course book for elementary level. The book that is going to be analyzed is published by CV *Mitra Abadi* Publisher. The grade which is going to be chosen is fourth grade because young learners aged 8-10 already have distinct opinions about what they like and dislike (Hashemi et al, 2011). This study will focus on analyzing the content of the book based on TEYL course books principles.

Definition of key terms

To make a better understanding in this study, the general definition of the key terms related to this study is provided. The key terms are as follows:

- Themes** refer to the subject areas of broad topics set in the 2013 curriculum which should be used for the teaching materials.
- English course book** referring to a manual instruction in the English subject that is proceeding according to the demands of educational institution. The course book in this study is EFL course book from *CV Mitra Abadi* Publisher entitled *Let's Talk in English*.
- Young Learners** Young learners here means children between five and eleven years old (Dickinson, 2010).