



Students' Perception on the Workbook Used in English Proficiency Class

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Abstract

A workbook is one of the most desirable instructional items that can help learners quickly grasp their lessons in a certain subject on their own. A student workbook is an educational tool that includes components that help students learn and ensure knowledge and ability in accordance with the goals outlined in teaching plans. Yet, the workbook used needs some aspect to be maintained or improved according to students view. This descriptive-quantitative research was conducted to five indicator of the workbook based on Cunningsworth criteria of a proper book; approach, skills, topics, practical consideration and organization. The sample was 121 students from both education and non-education program of English Department. These samples were asked about their opinion towards the workbook used in EP class and then they were given questionnaire adapting 28 statements on the perception indicators of the workbook. The collected data were analysed by using descriptive statistical calculation. It was found that the students have positive perception from those indicators of their workbook used in EP class.

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INTRODUCTION

Workbook is one of the most desirable instructional items that can assist learners quickly grasp their lessons in a certain subject on their own. A student workbook is an educational tool that includes components that helps learning and help students ensure knowledge and ability in accordance with the goals outlined in teaching plans (Özlem, 2017). According to Omega (2016) a workbook is a type of teaching resource that can help students learn. Meanwhile, Bordia (2022) argues that workbooks are a sort of educational resource that usually includes components to help students learn in the classroom. They contribute in ensuring that students achieve the course outcomes.

BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

Workbooks are a beneficial teacher's initial tool for moving forward with such approaches of making learning easier. The workbook is intended to assist teachers in building a solid base of learning and study habits for their students to use both in the classroom and at home (Gurian, 2010). The workbook should be directly related to the main material and contain exercises that match to the lesson. Using a workbook, teachers can assess their students' learning progress and simply determine how to help them grow further. Gramlick (2019) states several benefits of using a workbook: 1) It encourages students to work independently by practicing self-study without the guidance of a teacher and allows them to take the learning into their own control, this indicates that learners do not have to wait for teacher commands to start learning and direct their own learning outside of the classroom. 2) A workbook can help teachers assess student achievement, is a good way to review what was taught in class, and encourages students to retain what they have learned in class.

Besides its benefits, workbooks also have some weaknesses. According to Gramlick (2019); 1) The use of workbooks can make the teacher feel too at ease, this is because occasionally, a teacher will assign multiple exercises from the workbook in a day or multiple worksheets during the course of a single session. 2) A workbook alone will not teach students as well as an engaged teacher. Workbooks are intended to supplement, not replace, the teacher's instruction. A workbook cannot take the place of a teacher. In fact, both should run equally. If one of them is missing, in-depth knowledge cannot be obtained; however, the uniformity and substance of the book, as well as the intellectual level of the teacher lecturing, must be considered (Horam, 2017). 3) Another weakness of using workbooks is the lack of hands-on learning, this means that students are not involved from digging up information, asking questions, doing activities, discovering, and concluding the lesson. Students only focus on doing exercises in workbooks, so they cannot remember the learning well.

Workbooks as educational materials can assist students enhance their academic performance, particularly in the field of English. Workbooks for learning English according to Wyels (2016) are excellent tools in ongoing efforts to encourage students to engage their brains in learning English as a foreign language or a second language throughout class. The use of workbooks for English teaching and learning has also been implemented in one of the courses in the English Department of Universitas Negeri Padang, namely the English Proficiency (EP) class. This course is a crucial subject in the department that consists of 5 credits of basic techniques required for college students to understand English skills, including speaking, writing, reading, listening and grammar studying (Nasution & Sari, 2023). This subject appears in the first semester of college in English Department of Universitas Negeri Padang with the aim as a decisive course for students to be able to continue their education in the English department or be advised to transfer to another department. The workbook is utilized as a learning resource in this course, and the lecturer urges students to work on it before discussing it in depth in class.

Cunningsworth (as cited in, Astuti 2019) explains the theory of criteria that should be in a good student workbook. It consists of five criteria, including approaches, skills, topics, practical consideration and organization as explained below:

1. **Approaches** refer to the alignment of the textbook's goal with the goal of the teaching program and the needs of the learners. Furthermore, they try to determine whether the textbook is appropriate for the learning/teaching environment, whether it is comprehensive and a helpful resource for students and teachers, and whether it covers the majority or all of what the teacher and students require. Finally, aims and approaches seek to determine whether a textbook is adaptable and allows for varied teaching and learning styles.

2. **Skills**, the content of the textbook, whether it contains four skills or not, is referred to as skills. This includes the material, reading passages and accompanying tasks, listening material, spoken English material, and writing activities.
3. **Topics**, the topic are related to how well the book conveys the issue. It has enough material of genuine interest to students, topic variety and range, and advanced topics. In communication, cultural settings such as the image of life presented, the attitude transmitted, and social cultural norms are also utilized.
4. **Practical consideration**, this criterion discusses the appearance of the book as well as the specific equipment used within it.
5. **Organization**, the term organization refers to how the components of the whole course package (e.g., students' books, teachers' books, worksheets, cassettes, etc.) are structured and sequenced for learners and teachers.

It is essential to conduct this research on the workbook used for students and discover students' points of view towards it because lecturers have utilized workbooks as media of learning for years. By researching this topic, the researcher can learn more about how student sees the workbook used in EP class whether there are some aspects that should be maintained or improved according to student during the use of it. Moreover, the aim of this study is to identify students' point of view of the workbook used in EP class according to its approach, skills, topics, practical considerations and organization.

METHOD

This research was conducted under the English Department, Universitas Negeri Padang to investigate students' perception on workbooks used in English Proficiency class. The sample of this research consists of 121 students from education and non-education program in 2022 academic year. Online questionnaire using 4-Likert Point was used to collect the data of this research. Some processes were followed in order to gather the data. First, the link to the online questionnaire was distributed via WhatsApp to the sample. Second, by clicking the provided link, the sample gained access to respond to each statement in the questionnaire. Finally, all Google Form replies were downloaded and extracted so that the collected responses (data) could be opened in Microsoft Excel. The acquired data was then evaluated by calculating the mean score for each section. The mean scores (MS) were calculated based on the proportion of respondents who selected strongly agree (SA), agree (A), disagree (D), and strongly disagree (SD). The mean scores were then translated to degrees of perception (DP): very positive (VP), positive (P), very negative (VN) and negative (N).

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Findings

Findings of the questionnaire according to the five indicators of it are presented in the following tables:

Table 1: students' responses towards the approach of the workbooks

Item	Statement	Responses				MS	DP
		SD	D	A	SA		
1.	Students are provided with exercises to do independently at home in the form of a workbook.	9	8	33	71	3.37	P
2.	The instructions in the workbook are clear enough and make it easier for students to do the work.	8	10	46	57	3.25	P
3.	The workbook comes with explanations and answer keys.	11	37	47	26	2.72	P
4.	Workbook is one of the media for students to learn independently outside the classroom.	7	10	43	63	3.30	P
5.	The workbook helps students understand and recall lessons learned in class.	6	9	42	64	3.35	P
6.	According to students, the exercises in the workbook have covered all four skills (speaking, reading, writing & listening).	8	9	51	53	3.23	P
7.	The exercises in the workbook are in line with the material learned in class.	7	10	38	66	3.34	P
8.	Workbooks are always completed after a unit has been studied by students.	8	10	45	58	3.26	P
9.	The workbook comes with complementary media such as tapes, CDs, and audio.	12	21	50	38	2.94	P
Main score						3.19	P

SA : Strongly Agree

MS : Mean Score

P : Positive

A : Agree

SD : Strongly Disagree

D : Disagree

From the table (1) the four higher scores are (3.37), (3.35), (3.34) and (3.30) which come from statements 1, 5, 7, and 4 which means that students are provided with exercises to do individually outside of the classroom and it can assist them in working on their own or in group outside of the class because the material in the workbook is in line with what they have learned in the classroom. Meanwhile, the two lower scores (2.94) and (2.72) in this aspect

were obtained by statements number 3 and 9. It seemed that some students could not find the exact explanation and answer key to the exercises in the workbook, and probably there are also less complementary media to use the workbooks. Moreover, the instruction in the workbooks is clear enough for students to understand that helps them to use the workbook and the exercises in the workbooks have already covered all four basic English skills in EP class according to the data obtained by statement number 2 and 6. All in all, students had positive perceptions towards the approach of the workbook.

Table 2: students' responses towards skills in the workbooks

Item	Statement	Responses				MS	DP
		SD	D	A	SA		
1.	The reading passages and associated activities are suitable for learners' levels and interests.	4	16	65	36	3.09	P
2.	There are sufficient materials for all four skills.	8	13	55	45	3.13	P
3.	The reading passages for all four skills encourage meaningful language use.	8	7	55	51	3.23	P
4.	The materials encourage learners to work individually and group.	9	7	46	60	3.28	P
5.	The reading passages and practices promote creative, original and independent responses.	3	12	57	49	3.25	P
Main score						3.14	P

SA : Strongly Agree MS : Mean Score P : Positive
 A : Agree
 SD : Strongly Disagree
 D : Disagree

According to table (2) above, the mean score for the skills in the workbooks was (3.14). It means that the students had a positive perception of the skills aspect of their workbook. The highest score that is found in this indicator is from the statement number 4 'The materials encourage learners to work individually and in groups, with a (3.28) score. It seemed that students agreed that the skills in the workbooks allow students to be not just independent learners but also collaborate with other students. Meanwhile, the lowest score came from the statement 'The reading passages and associated activities are suitable for learners' levels and interests, with a (3.09) score. Probably, some students found the reading passages and activities in the workbook less attractive and did not match their level of knowledge. Some improvement is needed in choosing activities that fit to learner's interest.

Nevertheless, in some responses, students said that the reading passages are varied and contain meaningful language use that can be practiced by students. Even so, the reading passages for all the four skills allow students to be creative in answering questions and are not tied to the written answer in the book. Overall, students also had a positive perception of the skills in the workbooks used in EP class.

Table 3: students' responses towards topics in the workbooks

Item	Statement	Responses				MS	DP
		SD	D	A	SA		
1.	There are sufficient materials of genuine interest to learners	8	10	45	58	3.26	P
2.	There is enough variety of range of topic.	8	8	47	58	3.28	P
3.	The topics help expand learners' awareness and enrich their experience.	5	9	51	56	3.30	P
4.	The topics of the materials are realistic and likely to appeal to the learners.	4	13	56	48	3.22	P
5.	The topics are relevant and encourage learners to express themselves.	4	11	57	49	3.24	P
6.	The topics encourage critical thinking and active learning.	4	12	55	50	3.24	P
Main score						3.25	P

SA : Strongly Agree

MS : Mean Score

P : Positive

A : Agree

SD : Strongly Disagree

D : Disagree

Table 3. Shows the highest score in this indicator came from the statement number 3 *'The topics help expand learners' awareness and enrich their experience'* which was scored (3.30). It showed that students gained positive point of view that the topics provided in the workbook are able to broaden their knowledge and give them more experience in language use. Next, the statement that had the second highest score was *'There is enough variety in the range of topics.'* that came from statement number 2. It means that students perceived positive attitudes that the workbooks are provided with a wide variety of topics so that each unit of material is not repetitive.

Meanwhile, the lowest score came from statement number 4 *'The topics of the materials are realistic and likely to appeal to the learners'* which was scored (3.22). Even so, the score obtained is still classified as positive. It showed that some students found the materials less related to them, which means that the topics provided are far enough away from the real-life experiences or feelings of students that they had difficulty feeling close and relate to the topics provided. Overall, the students perceived positively towards the topics of the workbooks.

Table 4: students' responses toward practical consideration of the workbooks

Item	Statement	Responses				MS	DP
		SD	D	A	SA		
1.	The materials content and exercises are look interesting.	5	15	50	51	3.21	P
2.	The materials are attractive in appearance.	5	14	59	43	3.15	P
3.	The font size and type used in the materials are appropriate for learners.	8	7	52	52	3.25	P
Main score						3.20	P

SA : Strongly Agree MS : Mean Score P : Positive
 A : Agree
 SD : Strongly Disagree
 D : Disagree

As shown in the table 4 statement number 3, 'The font size and type used in the materials are appropriate for learners, got the highest score in this aspect (3.25). It means that the student had a positive perception towards the selection of font types in the workbook, which was very suitable for students and made the writing pleasant to look at. Another two statements related to practical consideration scored (3.21) and (3.15) respectively, with statement number 2, which is ranked the lowest, saying that some students disagree that the appearance of the workbook is attractive. Even though the score of the statement is the lowest, it is still categorized as positive. In conclusion, all statements are considered positive with a total main average score of 3.20.

Table 5: students' responses toward organization of the workbooks.

Item	Statement	Responses				MS	DP
		SD	D	A	SA		
1.	The workbook is made up the components such as audio and video.	5	20	56	40	3.08	P
2.	The organization of the materials (according to the structures, functions, topics, and skills) is right for the learners.	3	16	54	48	3.21	P
3.	Materials are organized from easiest to hardest.	7	10	66	38	3.11	P
4.	The material presented is suitable for individualized learning.	4	15	45	57	3.28	P
5.	It is easy to find your way around the materials.	4	14	54	49	3.22	P

Main score	3.18	P
SA : Strongly Agree	MS : Mean Score	P : Positive
A : Agree		
SD : Strongly Disagree		
D : Disagree		

Based on the table above, the average score for the workbook organization aspect is (3.18). This means that students had a positive attitude towards the organization of the workbook. Statement number 4 which reads 'The material presented is suitable for individualized learning' got the highest score in this aspect, namely (3.28). This means that students agreed that the material presented is suitable for use in independent learning. Meanwhile, the lowest score of (3.08) is found in statement number 1 'The workbook consists of components such as audio and video'. Although the statement received the lowest score, it was still considered positive, but there were some students who disagreed that there were other supporting components used in the workbook such as audio and video. The other three statements in this indicator also reflect the positive views perceived by students, stating that the workbook is organized from the easiest to the most difficult material and it is not difficult for students to track their lesson progress.

Although all indicators were in the positive category, there are several things that must still be evaluated in order to improve the use of better and more efficient student workbooks. From the findings above, it can be seen that the *skills* indicator has the lowest score of all indicators. This showed that attention and improvement are still needed in choosing relevant skills and in accordance with the level of the book users, in order to enrich students through the skills that the workbook is expected to provide. The topic has the highest score value, this is very good and must be maintained, because the good perception of students on the topic provided indicates that the workbook is very suitable and can motivate students for language learning. The *approach* and *organization* of the workbook are good and can be maintained because it is in accordance with the benefits of the workbook as an independent learning tool with a supportive arrangement.

Discussion

The finding reveals that aspect 1) *approach* has a total mean score of 3.19, aspect 2) *skills* has a total mean score of 3.14, aspect 3) *topics* has a total mean score of 3.25, aspect 4) *practical consideration* has a total mean score of 3.20, and aspect 5) *organization* has a total mean score of 3.19. Therefore, the overall average total result is 3.19, which is considered to be in the positive category.

The aim of this study was to analyze students' perception towards the use of workbooks in English Proficiency (EP) class seeing from five aspects: the approach, skills, topics, practical consideration and organization. As presented in the finding, student perceived positively in all aspects of students' workbook in EP class.

Among all aspects, aspect number 3 which contains *the topics* that provided in the workbooks got the highest score of (3.25). It showed that the student gained positive perception and still believed the topics included in the workbooks could support and motivate their learning. Also, that the most important thing in topic based on student perception is the topics that provided in the workbook could help expand learners' awareness and enrich their experience, as stated in previous research conducted by Utami et al. (2020) the topics included in the student

workbook are intended to encourage student to experience the activities that students are engaged in.

The finding in this aspect is also supported by Cunningsworth (as described in Ayu, 2020), that revealed learning tools that are developed for learning processes should aim to expand students' knowledge and experience. Furthermore Richard (2019) in his research also verified that workbooks are an important component in language programs learning since they serve as the primary source of language information (language input) for both language learning and English practice inside and outside of the classroom. This goes hand in hand with the range of topics for students, which earned a relatively high positive perception, indicating that the variety of topics can boost students' wealth of information and learning experiences. It can also be stated that students gained a positive point of view and agreed that the topics in the workbook are relevant to them, able to encourage learners to express themselves, promote active learning and encourage critical thinking. This is in keeping with the findings of a study conducted by Benning and Agyei (2016), who discovered that students who utilize a workbook or spreadsheet boost their critical thinking skills and knowledge. In addition, McCharty (2014) in his research revealed that student interest and relevance in a topic is quite powerful, when a topic is related to what students enjoy doing, their engagement grows as they spend more time thinking, dialoguing, and developing ideas in meaningful ways. It means that if the topics provided are really fascinating to students, they will cheerfully complete the workbook tasks without feeling pushed or burdened. Therefore, if the topics provided is not relevant and giving student a proper way of thinking, then it can be considered unsuitable. It is in line with Ashar (2014) mentioned that improper topics materials can be characterized as materials that do not match the learner's interest or learning style.

Then, students also perceived quite positive of *practical consideration* of the workbooks. It can be stated that the most essential aspect is that the font type and size in the materials are appropriate for them to learn and makes them able to remember the words. This is in line with research carried by Haque et, al. (2018) which explained Easy-to-read fonts required less effort to comprehend the word, resulting in enhanced comprehension and memory. Improvement is needed in terms of appearance of the workbooks which gained the lowest score in this aspect even though it is still categorizes as positive because Neill (as cited in Hoshangabadwala, 2015) argued that appearance of students' workbooks is an important aspect, the appearance of the book may affect students' psychological perception of the book; the more attractive the display, the greater the students' motivation and desire to use it. This is also reinforced by Mayasari (2015) in the findings of practical considerations using the theory of Cunningsworth, that stated a good book is one that can attract students' interest by also paying attention to the details in it, such as color selection, type, and size of letters.

The total score of all current statements has also demonstrated positive perceptual results based on the *approach* aspect, although there is room for improvement in some areas such as the complementary media and key answer. According to the findings, students appeared to have positive perception that the workbook used in the EP class has fulfilled Cunningsworth's theory of book approach, which was cited by Apriyani and Robiasih (2019). This approach refers to the conformity of the goal of the book with the goal of the teaching program and the needs of the learners and determine whether the book is appropriate for the learning/teaching setting. Because one of the teachings in the EP class is independent learning using a workbook, students had positive opinion that the workbook is one of the media and can assist them to self-study outside of the classroom with material/exercises that is in accordance with what has been taught in class. The findings of this study are also consistent with Prastowo's (2014) assumption that student workbooks serve to bring students closer to the subject matter and allow them to interact with the material presented. Furthermore, he mentioned that student workbooks can train students' learning independence and assist

educators in assigning homework to students (Prastowo, 2014). This also supported by a research conducted by Barrys (2020) that revealed one of the benefits of using workbook is supposed to encourage student to learn independently with a brief instruction written in the workbook.

This research also sees the *organization* of the workbook used in EP class. Although the organization aspect score was in the bottom two. The findings revealed that student perceptions are still categorized as positive because the organization of the workbook is has already accordance for learners. Also, the content is well-organized based on difficulty level which can helps students in mastering the material from easy to difficult. This finding is in line with Akhmad et al (2022) who stated that a proper student workbook should be arranged from easiest to hardest. Moreover, some of the materials presented are suitable for individual study, because workbook also requires students to work on their own (Cunningsworth, in Apriani & Robiasih 2019).

Conforming to that, this research also sees the indicator *skills*. Although this aspect scored the lowest with the main mean score (3.14), students still perceived positively toward it. Findings shows that the most important thing in workbook skill is that the skills provided encourage learners to work individually or even in group and students have positive perception that workbook is able to train them to creative and construct independent responses. The workbook has also covered all skills of the basic English which helps student to master basic English skills as stated by Cunningsworth (in Nurhamsyih and Syahril, 2017) that the workbook should deal with the four skills, means that educating English to learner entails educating them to comprehend what they read and understanding what they hear. It also entails teaching student how to articulate themselves and communicate their ideas both orally and in writing, so that the learner can experience the meaningful language use.

In summary, students perceived positive opinion towards the use of students' workbooks according to the approach, skills, topics, practical consideration and organization of the workbook. It has been proved by the number of data obtained in this research.

CONCLUSION

The result of the data analysis shows that all aspect statements of the questionnaire have a >2.01 main mean score, which indicates that the respondent has a positive opinion or perception towards the use of workbooks in English Proficiency class. Students gained positive attitudes toward the use of a workbook in EP class in aspects of the approach that allows them to self-study and recall the lesson that they have learned; skills provided help them to master all the basic skills of English; topics included in the workbooks are able to support and motivate their learning; they also enrich their knowledge in language use; the font type and size of the workbooks are suitable and helpful for the learners to remember the passage in the aspect of practical consideration; and moreover, the organization of the workbooks is arranged in proper terms.

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