

ISSN 2302-6278

PROSPECTS

Jurnal Humaniora, Sains, Pendidikan dan Pengajaran

Volume 2, Nomor 1, Mei 2013

*D. Jupriyono, Sudarwati, &
Soekarno Hardjosoewito*

**ANEKA PENDEKATAN SOSIOLOGI SASTRA:
Dari Strukturalisme Genetik ke Resepsi Sastra**

Handini Nurinalla Sari & Hardono
**A STUDY OF RACISM FOUND IN A PASSAGE TO INDIA
BY E.M. FORSTER**

Reni R. Nadzak
PRE WRITING STRATEGIES FOR BEGINNERS EFL STUDENTS

Sudono Noto Pradono
EVALUATION OF "GOGO LOVES ENGLISH 1"

Junathi Soffen Sae
**ETHNICITY IN PAULO COELHO'S THE ALCHEMIST
AND KHALED HOSSEINI'S THE KITE RUNNER**

Johnny Sugiono
INTRODUCING AMERICAN ENGLISH: A NECESSITY

Lusy Tunik Maharlisumii
A BETTER ATTITUDE TO TRANSLATION IN LANGUAGE PEDAGOGY

PROSPECTS	Volume 2	Nomor 1	Hal 1 - 47	Surabaya Mei 2013	ISSN 2302-6278
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EVALUATION OF "GOGO LOVES ENGLISH 1"

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ABSTRACT

Evaluation of "Gogo Loves English 1" which is used for primary students of grade one is intended to know whether the coursebook can be adopted or adapted by identifying the strengths and weaknesses. The result of the evaluation is that the whole package of "Gogo Loves English 1" can be adopted to use for primary students. However, the teachers should be creative in adding some activities.

Key words: *evaluation, coursebook, activity.*

INTRODUCTION

Most people believe that young children are better than older children or adult in learning a foreign language. Therefore, many primary schools in Indonesia teach English to their students. According to Brumfit, Moon, & Tongue (1994), some reasons for teaching English at primary level are: 1) that is the best time for children to learn English, 2) there is a need to teach children to an understanding of foreign cultures so that they grow up tolerant and sympathetic to others, 3) there is a need to connect communication to the understanding of new concepts, 4) there is a need for maximum learning time for English - the earlier children start the more time children get, and 5) there is an advantage of starting with early English instruction so that later English can be used as a medium of teaching.

As a consequence, lots of English coursebooks for primary students are available to fulfill these phenomena. Therefore, selecting an appropriate coursebook to be used for primary students is very important. Evaluation of a coursebook is necessary to examine whether the selected coursebook can be adopted or adapted.

The whole package of "Gogo Loves English 1" consists of student's book, workbook with CD, teacher's book, class CD

or cassette, picture card, video, and video book. However, this study focused on evaluation of the student's book, workbook and the teacher's book. The data of the student's book of "Gogo Loves English 1" are as follows: the writers: Ken Methold, Stanton Procter, Melanie Graham, Mary McIntosh, and Paul FitzGerald, editor: Christienne Blodget, publisher: Longman Asia ELT, Hong Kong, 2001, ISBN 962-00-5095-9, 73 pages. The data of the workbook of "Gogo Loves English 1" are as follows: the writer: John Potter, editor: Masako Hiraki, publisher: Longman Asia ELT, Hong Kong, 2001, ISBN 962-00-5101-7, 44 pages. The data of the teacher's book of "Gogo Loves English 1" are as follows: the writers: Stanton Procter & Melanie Graham, editor: Masako Hiraki, publisher: Longman Asia ELT, Hong Kong, 2001, ISBN 962-00-5107-6, 128 pages.

Evaluation of "Gogo Loves English 1" which is used for primary students of grade one is intended to know whether the book can be adopted or adapted by identifying the strengths and weaknesses. Halliwell (1992) states that identifying the potential strengths of a coursebook can become a starting point for looking at the strengths or weaknesses of a specific book. Cunningsworth (1995) also states that the reason for evaluation is to identify specific strengths and weaknesses in

a coursebook, so that optimum use can be made of its strong points, whilst its weaker parts can be strengthened through adaptation or by substituting material from other books.

METHODOLOGY

The contents of the coursebook consist of 12 units, unit 4, 8, and 12 are as review 1, 2, and 3. The book also gives culture 1 and 2, bonus 1, 2 and 3, and word list. Checklist for evaluation and selection proposed by Cunningsworth (1995) was used for evaluating the coursebook. The checklist for evaluation and selection consisted of 1) aim and approach, 2) design and organization, 3) language content, 4) skills, 5) topic, 6) methodology, 7) teacher's book, 8) practical consideration.

FINDINGS and DISCUSSION

Based on the checklist for evaluation and selection proposed by Cunningsworth (1995), the findings and discussion are elaborated as follows:

1. Aim and approach

The aim of "Gogo Loves English 1" as can be seen on the teacher's book page 9 is that the objective of "Gogo Loves English 1" is to help teachers familiarize young learners with English in a fun and secure environment. Language learning goals are achievable so that students get confidence in their English abilities. This aim of "Gogo Loves English 1" is very suitable for primary student of grade one. Brewster, Ellis, & Girard (2007) argue that the main concern of English teachers is the creation of as many ways as possible of providing their students an appetite to learn. In Japan, the aims of primary ELT are to motivate the student and to learn English for interest and fun. The objective of primary ELT in Indonesia is to motivate students to learn English in interesting and fun way. Paul (2000 : 27) also argues that

"What we really want is for all the children to become excited about getting better at English, rather than only playing

games. We want them to see learning English and having fun as one and the same thing."

It seems that "Gogo Loves English 1" applies behaviorist approach. Paul (2003) states that behaviorist approach focuses on the reinforcement of behavior through repetition and rewards. A lesson influenced by behaviorist approach usually contains some or all of the following five elements: 1) the teacher controls the students' behavior and the learning process, while the students respond to the teacher's directions and stimuli, and they tend to passively follow the teacher, 2) the teacher has a clear lesson plan and step-by-step syllabus, 3) English patterns are repeated through drills and choral repetition, 4) the students are protected from making errors, 5) success is strengthened by praise and rewards. For example: unit 1 consists of 9 sections, they are: 1) conversation - listen and look, 2) vocabulary - listen and say, 3) target - listen and say, 4) practice 1 - listen and number, 5) practice 2 - your turn! listen and answer, 6) song - listen and sing, 7) activity 1 - read and match, 8) activity 2 - point and say, 9) alphabet - 1) listen, point, and say and 2) listen and chant. It is very clear that some sections of unit 1 use repetition.

Richards & Rodgers (2001) state that Chomsky proposed that behaviorist approach was subject to the same laws of stimulus and response, reinforcement and association. Chomsky pointed out that such a learning theory could not become a model of how children learn language because much of human language use is not imitated behavior but is created anew underlying knowledge of abstract rules. Sentences are not learned by imitation and repetition but "generated" from the student's underlying "competence."

However, Paul (2003) says that teachers consider repetition drills as an essential part of a lesson. They believe that students need to repeat the same words and patterns over and over again, and in most cases this is true. Asia EFL students with little natural exposure to English outside the

classroom certainly need to repeat patterns many times.

2. Design and organization

The total course package of "Gogo Loves English 1" consists of student's book, workbook with CD, teacher's book, class CD or cassette, picture card, video, and video book. Pinter (2006) says that teachers should consider that all students have stronger and weaker aspects of their multiple intelligences and preferred learning styles. Therefore, teachers need to combine a variety of activities into English language classroom to ensure that every student's preferences are accommodated for at least some of the time. The availability of CD or cassette can be used to accommodate for the students with an auditory learning style. The availability of picture card can be used to accommodate for the students with a visual learning style. The activities in the student's book, for example: unit 1 in activity 2 - point and say, and in alphabet - 1) listen, point and say can be used to accommodate for the students with a kinesthetic learning style.

The syllabus of "Gogo Loves English 1" is as follows: unit 1 Hello!, unit 2 What's this?, unit 3 Can you sing?, unit 4 Review 1, unit 5 Who's she?, unit 6 What's his name?, unit 7 Is this a dog?, unit 8 Review 2, unit 9 What color is this?, unit 10 How old are you?, unit 11 What do you like?, unit 12 Review 3. It seems that "Gogo Loves English 1" applies step-by-step syllabus.

Paul (2003) states that some teachers claim that a course should have a clear step-by-step syllabus which is grammar based. A step-by-step syllabus is used because a) topic-based learning requires a too long time, while step-by-step learning uses time more efficiently, b) students require to understand English step-by-step, otherwise they will lose confidence and lack a sense of direction, c) students require to see the links between the various items of language they meet, so they can make active guesses about new words and patterns they meet, while topic-based learning does not focus students' attention on patterns and connections, d) topic-based

learning needs a lot of classroom space and is difficult to manage. On the other hand, other teachers claim that a course should have a topic-based syllabus which is based on topics. A topic-based syllabus is used because a) students require to see how what they are studying fits into their experience outside the English class, b) students should link one school subject with another subject to feel more relevant to life in general, c) step-by-step learning is convenient for the teacher but its validity is doubtful if the wide range of abilities and interests that may exist in a class is considered, d) students learn best in situations focused on the meaning rather than the form of the language.

Paul (2003) points out that there is no right or wrong way that applies in every teaching situation. If the students are studying in an ESL situation, it may be most appropriate to use a topic-based syllabus. However, most Asian students are studying in an EFL situation, therefore, the most effective approach is a step-by-step syllabus.

In this coursebook, the sequence of the content is reasonable because unit 1 is the easiest and simplest one, while unit 11 is the most difficult and complicated one. For example:

In unit 1, the children learn short dialogs as follows:

What's your name? I'm Tony.

What's your name? I'm Jenny.

In unit 11, the children learn more complex dialogs as follows:

What do you like, Tony? I like cheese.

What do you like, Jenny? I like cake.

Cunningsworth (1995 : 59) states that

"Sequencing refers to the order in which new items are taught, how the components fit with one another and how the range of language taught develops as learners progress through the course. Implicit in sequencing is the concept of progression, with the expectation that there will be a principled development from a beginning point to an end point."

The organization of the coursebook is cyclical meaning that a specific teaching point reappears in a different context. For example: the word "apple" appears in one section of unit 1, that is in alphabet - 1) listen, point and say. The word "apple" appears again in three sections of unit 2, that is in 1) conversation - listen and look, 2) practice 1 - listen and number, and 3) activity 1 - listen, say and circle. Another example is the word "book" appears in two sections of unit 2, that is in 1) vocabulary - listen and say, and 2) chant - listen and chant. The word "book" reappears in review 1 section 4 - read and circle. The organization of the coursebook which is cyclical is suitable for primary students. In those examples above, the vocabulary in the coursebook is cyclical. Cameron (2001) states that vocabulary requires to be met and recycled at intervals, in different activities, with new knowledge and new links developed each time the same words are met again. Nation (1990, in Cameron, 2003) argues that a new word requires to be met at least five or six times in a coursebook unit before it has any chance of being learnt. The emphasis is the need for words to reappear, not just in a unit, but across units or chapters, and across levels and years. For students who start language learning young, this is very important.

There are three reviews in the coursebook - unit 4 Review 1, unit 8 Review 2, and unit 12 Review 3. Unit 4 Review 1 is intended that the students can remember again unit 1 until unit 3 that they have learnt, unit 8 Review 2 is intended that the students can remember again unit 5 until unit 7 that they have learnt, and unit 12 Review 3 is intended that the students can remember again unit 9 until unit 11 that they have learnt. The existence of reviews is very helpful to the students for preparing the tests. However, it will be better if self-assessment is also available in the coursebook. Brewster, Ellis, & Girard (2007) argue that by completing self-assessment sheets, students can reflect on the content of learning, upon how they learn as well as to reflect on their own performance throughout a lesson and their contribution to the class. This in turn will help them

monitor their progress and maintain motivation, and highlight strong and weak points.

There are three main characters in the coursebook, they are Gogo, Tony, and Jenny. Gogo is a playful but lovable, magical creature from another world. Tony and Jenny are young children. These three main characters are suitable for primary students. Halliwell (1992) states that children enjoy imagination and fantasy. In the English language classroom, imagination and fantasy have a very constructive part to play. If the role of imagination in children's lives can be accepted, it can provide a very powerful stimulus for real language use. Besides that, the illustrations in "Gogo Loves English 1" are very colorful and attractive, and they are suitable for grade one primary students. The illustrations are very useful because they support the texts.

3. Language Content

Each unit contains target language. For example: the target language of unit 5 is a) Who's she? She's my mother, and b) Who's he? He's my father. Grammar about "he/she" is learnt in this unit. The number of target language and grammar in each unit that the grade one primary students have to learn are quite reasonable. Alphabet J, K, L are introduced in unit 5 by using nouns, J is for juice and jellyfish, K is for kangaroo and kite, L is for lion and lemon. There are also six new words in unit 5, they are: family, mother, father, sister, brother, friend. The alphabet and new words are suitable for primary students because concrete nouns are used in the coursebook. Cameron (2001) argues that young children studying a foreign language require very concrete vocabulary that connects with objects they can handle or see, while older students can master words and topics that are more abstract and remote from their experience.

Songs and chants are available in the coursebook. For example: unit 1 in song - listen and sing section, there is a song entitled "What's your name?". In alphabet - 2) listen and chant section, there is a chant entitled

"Hello!". Paul (2003) argues that songs can include feeling and rhythm to language practice that might help students remember things more easily, and draw students more deeply into a lesson. Most students love songs, and songs and chants are one aspect of the English class that most students study with feeling and take home with them. They store songs and chants in their heads, sing them after class, hum them on the way home, and sing them at home. Therefore, the existence of songs and chants is very important for the grade one primary students.

4. Skills

Four language skills - listening, speaking, reading, and writing are taught in the coursebook. The objective of the listening of "Gogo Loves English 1" is that the students can choose a picture while listening to words/ phrases/ target language. For example: unit 1 in practice - listen and number section, the teacher says "listen", plays the tape for number 1, and then pauses. After that, the teacher points to each picture with a questioning expression. Once the students identify the correct box, the teacher can continue for number 2 and so on. The objective of speaking is that the students can copy the model and ask/ answer simple questions. For example: unit 1 in target - listen and say section, the teacher asks the students to look at the first picture, and points to Gogo and then Tony. Then, the teacher gives model of the dialogs, and repeats with the second picture. After that, the teacher says "listen and repeat", and plays the tape while pausing after each expression. After listening and repeating, the teacher can ask the students to practice and perform the dialogs. The objective of reading is that the students can recognize the alphabet (upper and lower cases) and key words. For example: in alphabet - 1) listen, point and say section, the teacher gives model to the students how to read the alphabet A, B and C, and the words. The objective of writing is that the students can trace the alphabet (upper and lower cases)

and key words. For example: in workbook of "Gogo Loves English 1", unit 1 in 4) match and trace section, the students are asked to match the words and the pictures, then, they are asked to trace the alphabet a, b and c. It can be concluded that all four language skills are covered in "Gogo Loves English 1".

5. Topic

The topics of "Gogo Loves English 1" are as follows: 1) greetings and farewells, 2) identifying/asking about things in the classroom, 3) asking about ability, 4) identifying people and asking about family and friends, 5) identifying people by name and saying what they are or do, 6) identifying animals, 7) identifying colors, 8) talking about ages and birthday parties, and 9) talking about food and expressing likes and dislikes. Cunningsworth (1995) states that though a coursebook is mainly used for facilitating language learning, it cannot simply do that and no more, because language is used in real situations for real purposes. If a study of a language is only as an abstract system, the students will not be able to use it in the real world. As a result, a coursebook must present language as it is actually used and therefore the coursebook should contain topics of various kinds. It can be concluded that "Gogo Loves English 1" contains various kinds of topics which are useful for the primary students to use in real situations for real purposes.

6. Methodology

It seems that "Gogo Loves English 1" uses the Audio-Lingual Method based on behaviorist approach because some of the principles of the Audio-Lingual Method can be seen in the coursebook. They are elaborated as follows:

- a) The goal of using Audio-Lingual Method is that students are able to communicate in the target language (Larsen-Freeman, 2000). For example: the topic of unit 2 is identifying/

asking about things in the classroom. Although the objectives of unit 2 are not clearly stated, the objectives of unit 2 can be known from the content of unit 2. The objectives of unit 2 seem that a) students are able to ask things in the classroom, b) students are able to identify things in the classroom, and c) students are able to do a short conversation.

- b) The teacher directs and controls the language behavior of the students. The teacher is also responsible for giving a good model for imitation. On the other hand, the students are imitators of the teacher's model or the tapes, they follow the teacher's directions and respond as accurately and as rapidly as possible (Larsen-Freeman, 2000). For example: unit 2 in vocabulary - listen and say section. In using the book, the teacher says: "Listen, repeat". The teacher plays the tape and asks the students to repeat each word. Then, the teacher points to the picture of a table, and says: "Table. Repeat. Table." The students respond by saying "Table." After that, the teacher points to the other pictures at random, and asks the students to say the word.
- c) Grammar rules are not stated, but grammar rules are produced from the given examples (Larsen-Freeman, 2000). For example: unit 2 in activity 1 - listen, say and circle section, the students practice how to use article "a" and "an". In activity 1 - listen, say and circle section, the teacher asks the students to look at the pictures. The teacher says: "Look and repeat. Book." The students respond by saying "Book". Then, the teacher continues with the rest of the pictures. After that, the teacher says: "Listen and repeat. A book." The students respond by saying "A book". Then, the teacher continues with the rest of the pictures with a/an. Finally, the

teacher asks the students to circle the correct phrases.

- d) The emphasis in the Audio-Lingual Method is on the everyday speech. The level of complexity of the speech is graded, so that the students learn from the simple patterns to more complex patterns (Larsen-Freeman, 2000). For example: the topic of unit 1 is greetings and farewells, and the target language is the simple patterns - a) What's your name? I'm Tony, b) What's your name? I'm Jenny. On the other hand, the topic of unit 11 is talking about food and expressing likes and dislikes, and the target language is more complex patterns - a) What do you like, Tony? I like cheese, b) What do you like, Jenny? I like cake.

Although this coursebook mainly uses teaching-centered which means that the teacher controls and directs the students, there is still a room for the students to work in pairs. For example: unit 1 in activity 2 - point and say section, the teacher asks the students to work in pairs. It means that the coursebook tries to make a balance between teaching-centered and learning-centered.

7. Teacher's book

The syllabus containing unit, target language, function, grammar, alphabet, and key vocabulary is available in the teacher's book. Course objectives of four language skills - listening, speaking, reading and writing for each level are also available. The existence of the syllabus and course objectives is very helpful for the teachers, so they are guided to reach the goals. The teacher's book gives some tips for teaching to primary students. Some examples of tips for teachers are as follows: a) model what you want students to do or say, b) use humor, gestures and voice, physical characterizations, and lots of body language to enliven the lesson, c) use visual/aural aids as much as possible to help students' comprehension,

and so on. The teacher's book gives guidance for every section in each unit. Besides that, the teacher's book also provides extension activities and optional activities to enrich the teaching learning activities. Therefore, the existence of teacher's book is very helpful to the teachers, especially inexperienced teachers.

8. Practical consideration

The student's, workbook, and teacher's book of "Gogo Loves English 1" are quite strong and long-lasting. Besides that, their appearance is very colorful and attractive. However, the whole package of "Gogo Loves English 1" is rather difficult to obtain because it is not available in the bookstores in Indonesia. The whole package of "Gogo Loves English 1" can be bought through the agents selling import books. Since the whole package of "Gogo Loves English 1" is imported to Indonesia, the price is usually quite expensive. Besides that, not every school in Indonesia is equipped with video player and CD player, especially schools in the remote areas.

CONCLUSION

The result of the evaluation is that the whole package of "Gogo Loves English 1" can be adopted to use for primary students. However, the teachers should be creative in adding some activities, for example: the self-assessment. Although the whole package of "Gogo Loves English 1" can be adopted to use for primary students, the price becomes a problem for schools in Indonesia, especially schools in the remote areas. Another problem is that not every school in Indonesia is equipped with video player and CD player. Therefore, in using a coursebook, the price of the coursebook should also be taken into consideration.

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Sudono Noto Pradono, *Evaluation of "Gogo Loves English 1"*

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