



Textbook Analysis Of English Learning Materials In Enhancing Students' Reading Comprehension At Secondary School Level

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Abstract

Reading comprehension is an essential skill in English learning at the secondary school level because it supports students' ability to understand, analyze, and evaluate information contained in texts. Textbooks, as the primary learning resource, play a crucial role in shaping the quality of reading learning. This study aims to analyze English learning materials in textbooks and their contribution to the development of secondary school students' reading comprehension skills. This study used a qualitative approach with a literature study method through content analysis of relevant scientific articles published in the 2021–2025 period. The results showed that the reading materials in textbooks generally met curriculum requirements, had an adequate level of readability, and provided a variety of text types and exercises that supported the development of basic reading skills, such as identifying main ideas, understanding vocabulary, and finding detailed information. The main findings of this study revealed that most reading activities still focused on literal comprehension, so the development of inferential, evaluative, and critical thinking skills was not optimally accommodated. Some reading materials were still not contextualized to students' experiences and environments. This study contributes by identifying the strengths and weaknesses of reading materials in English textbooks and emphasizes the importance of integrating Higher Order Thinking Skills (HOTS)-based activities, the use of authentic texts, and more relevant contexts to improve the quality of reading instruction in secondary schools. These findings can serve as a reference for teachers, textbook developers, and curriculum designers in developing more effective reading instructional materials that meet the demands of 21st-century learning.

Keywords: Textbook Analysis, English Learning Materials, Reading Comprehension, Textbook Evaluation, Secondary School Students.

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INTRODUCTION

Reading comprehension is a language skill that plays a crucial role in English learning at the secondary school level. This skill not only relates to students' ability to recognize words or understand information contained in texts, but also encompasses the ability to interpret meaning, draw conclusions, analyze information, and critically evaluate the content of reading. In learning English as a Foreign Language (EFL), reading skills serve as the primary foundation for developing other language skills because most knowledge sources and learning materials are presented in written text (Andriyani, 2025).

Reading skills play a strategic role in English learning. Various studies have shown that the reading comprehension level of secondary school students in Indonesia remains relatively low. This problem cannot be viewed solely as a student's weakness in understanding texts, but rather requires an analysis of various factors that influence the learning process. A major contributing factor is the quality of the teaching materials used, particularly English textbooks (Dharmapatni, 2022). As the primary learning resource used continuously by teachers and students, textbooks directly influence the learning experience, the types of activities students engage in, and the skills developed during the learning process (Febriani & Ali Mohammed, 2022).

Theoretically, a quality textbook should not only present reading text but also provide activities that encourage students to develop various levels of reading comprehension. In practice, many textbooks still focus on literal comprehension, namely the ability to find information directly written in the text (Gunawan, 2022). Reading activities are often limited to answering factual questions such as who, when, where, and what happened (Hardewiyani et al., 2024). While this approach helps students understand the basic content of the text, it does not provide them with the opportunity to develop inferential, analytical, and evaluative skills that are essential indicators of higher-order reading skills.

This situation is a concern because the demands of 21st-century education require students to develop critical thinking, problem-solving, communication, and information literacy skills. Reading comprehension is no longer understood as a passive process of receiving information, but rather as an active process of constructing meaning and evaluating the information obtained. Textbooks that emphasize only literal comprehension have the potential to hinder the achievement of broader learning objectives. The quality of textbooks needs to be evaluated not only based on the completeness of the material but also on their ability to develop higher-order thinking skills (HOTS) (Huda, 2021).

Several previous studies have identified a gap between curriculum objectives and the

Commented [U1]: The introduction offers a solid background and explains the importance of reading comprehension and textbooks in education. However, it would be stronger if it explicitly stated the research gap and explained why this research/ study is necessary.





implementation of reading materials in English textbooks. While the readability of texts in textbooks generally aligns with students' abilities, the accompanying reading activities are still dominated by questions at the literal comprehension level and do not optimally develop inferential, analytical, and evaluative thinking skills. These findings suggest that the alignment of materials with curriculum standards does not automatically guarantee the effectiveness of textbooks in developing more complex reading comprehension skills. Although previous studies have provided insights into the readability of texts and the characteristics of reading questions in textbooks, most studies have focused on specific aspects in isolation, such as the readability level or the types of reading activities used. Previous research has not comprehensively analyzed.

The quality of the reading texts presented also requires critical analysis. Not all texts in textbooks provide meaningful reading experiences for students. Text that is too simple can limit the development of students' thinking skills, while text that is too complex can create difficulties in understanding and reduce learning motivation (Lasmita et al., 2023). Analysis of the level of readability, topic relevance, text authenticity, and suitability to student characteristics are important aspects in evaluating English textbooks.

The development of information technology and globalization requires students to be able to comprehend various types of texts encountered in real life. Some textbooks are still dominated by academic texts that do not reflect students' actual communication needs. As a result, students may be able to answer questions in the textbook but struggle to understand information from sources outside the learning context (Huda & Masfufah, 2021). This situation suggests the need for a comprehensive analysis of textbooks to assess the extent to which the material presented prepares students to face the challenges of modern literacy.

From a curriculum perspective, reading comprehension is a competency that must be continuously developed at the secondary school level. The Independent Curriculum emphasizes the importance of student-centered learning and encourages the development of critical thinking skills through meaningful activities. Textbooks should function not only as sources of information but also as a means to facilitate students' exploration, reflection, and analysis of the various issues presented in the reading texts (Huda & Masfufah, 2021). If textbooks are unable to accommodate these demands, evaluation and improvement are necessary to ensure optimal reading learning.

Previous research has examined the readability of texts, the suitability of materials to the curriculum, and the characteristics of reading activities in English textbooks, but most of these studies focused on specific aspects in isolation. Prior research has not provided a





comprehensive analysis of how English language learning materials in textbooks contribute to the development of students' reading comprehension, particularly in relation to the development of Higher Order Thinking Skills (HOTS), the relevance of reading contexts, and students' readiness to face the demands of 21st-century literacy. This gap indicates the need for further research to evaluate not only the quality of the reading texts presented, but also the effectiveness of the accompanying learning activities in supporting the development of students' reading skills as a whole. This research is important to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of English language learning materials in secondary school textbooks and to provide an empirical basis for improving teaching materials, learning practices, and curriculum development in the future.

Based on this description, analyzing English learning materials in textbooks is crucial. This study aims not only to identify the types of reading materials available in textbooks but also to evaluate the extent to which these materials can support the improvement of students' reading comprehension skills at the secondary school level. Through in-depth analysis, this study is expected to provide an overview of the strengths and weaknesses of the textbooks used and provide recommendations for teachers, textbook authors, and curriculum developers in improving the quality of English teaching materials to be more effective, relevant, and appropriate to the needs of 21st-century learning.

METHOD

This research employed a qualitative approach with a library research method. This approach was chosen because the research focused on analyzing and synthesizing previous research findings related to English language learning materials in textbooks and their role in improving students' reading comprehension skills at the secondary school level. Through the library research, researchers were able to gain a comprehensive understanding of the quality of reading materials, the level of text readability, the types of reading activities, and their alignment with the learning objectives stated in the curriculum (Creswell, 2021).

The research data was obtained from peer-reviewed scientific journal articles published between 2021 and 2025. The selected articles focused on English textbook analysis, reading comprehension skills, readability, reading comprehension questions, the development of higher-order thinking skills, and curriculum implementation in English language learning at the secondary school level.

Data collection was conducted through a literature search in various academic databases, such as Google Scholar, Garuda, DOAJ, and reputable educational journals. Keywords





used in the search process included English textbook analysis, reading comprehension, English learning materials, textbook evaluation, reading activities, and secondary school students. The inclusion criteria for this study included: (1) articles discussing English textbooks at the secondary school level; (2) articles published between 2021 and 2025; (3) articles available in full text; and (4) articles containing findings related to developing students' reading comprehension skills. Articles that were irrelevant to the research focus or had not undergone peer review were excluded from the study (Creswell, 2021).

Data analysis was conducted using content analysis techniques. The analysis process began by identifying articles that met the research criteria, then grouping the findings based on key themes, such as the material's suitability to the curriculum, the quality of the reading text, the level of readability, reading activities, and its contribution to improving reading comprehension skills (Creswell, 2021). Next, the data were evaluated and synthesized to identify patterns, similarities, and differences between studies. The results of the analysis are presented descriptively to provide a comprehensive overview of the effectiveness of English learning materials in textbooks in improving secondary school students' reading comprehension skills.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Analysis of Reading Material in English Textbooks

Based on an analysis of various English textbooks used at the secondary school level, reading material is found to be one of the most dominant components in each learning unit. Nearly all textbooks provide reading texts as the primary source for introducing vocabulary, language structure, and the context in which English is used. The text types presented include descriptive text, narrative text, recount text, procedural text, report text, and functional text, tailored to the learning outcomes at each educational level (Lasmita et al., 2023).

The reading material contained in textbooks generally aligns with curriculum requirements because it covers themes relevant to students' lives, such as family, school, the environment, technology, health, and culture. The choice of themes helps students connect existing knowledge with new information gained through reading (Lubis et al., 2025). The diversity of text types allows students to become familiar with various text structures and different communicative purposes (Nuri, 2024).

Readability of Reading Material

The analysis shows that most of the reading texts in textbooks have a readability level appropriate for the abilities of secondary school students. The sentence structures used are





relatively simple, with vocabulary that is within the students' range. Most texts in English textbooks are at a moderate readability level, allowing students to understand them with teacher assistance if necessary (Auliya et al., 2021).

Some texts are found to be quite difficult due to the use of academic vocabulary and complex sentence structures (Pido et al., 2022). This situation has the potential to present obstacles for students with low reading abilities. Teachers need to provide support strategies such as pre-reading activities, introducing new vocabulary, and pre-reading discussions to help students better understand the text.

Developing Reading Comprehension in Textbooks

Analysis shows that textbooks provide various activities aimed at developing students' reading comprehension skills. These activities include answering questions based on the text, determining the main idea, finding detailed information, identifying vocabulary meanings, summarizing the content of the reading, and completing information based on the text read.

However, the distribution of reading activities is still dominated by questions that measure literal comprehension. Most questions ask students to find information directly stated in the text. Conversely, questions that require inferential, analytical, and evaluative skills are still limited. Reading questions in textbooks focus more on basic understanding than higher-order thinking skills (Ramadani et al., 2026).

Developing Higher-Order Thinking Skills (HOTS)

Research results indicate that the application of Higher-Order Thinking Skills (HOTS) in reading comprehension activities is not yet optimal. Most exercises remain at the level of remembering and understanding based on Bloom's Taxonomy. Activities involving analysis, evaluation, and creation only appear in certain sections.

Higher-order thinking skills are crucial to help students interpret information, connect text content to their experiences, and critically evaluate the information they read. The lack of HOTS activities results in students becoming accustomed to seeking immediate answers rather than developing critical and reflective thinking skills (Syukur et al., 2025).

Contribution of Textbooks to Improving Reading Comprehension

The analysis shows that English textbooks make a positive contribution to the development of students' reading comprehension skills. Diverse reading materials, systematic





comprehension exercises, and curriculum-aligned text presentations help students improve their ability to comprehend written information in English.

The presence of a variety of text types provides opportunities for students to broaden their understanding, comprehend language structures, and improve their ability to interpret various forms of reading (Lubis et al., 2025). The effectiveness of textbooks in improving reading comprehension will be optimal if supported by activities that encourage critical thinking, the use of authentic texts, and the integration of a wider variety of reading strategies (Hardewiyani et al., 2024).

English textbooks at the secondary school level have supported the development of students' reading comprehension, but still require improvement, especially in the aspects of HOTS development, the use of authentic texts, and the provision of more challenging and communicative reading activities (Dharmapatni, 2022).

DISCUSSION

Research results show that the English language learning materials contained in secondary school textbooks significantly support the development of students' reading comprehension skills. Textbooks provide a variety of reading text types appropriate to students' developmental levels, such as descriptive, narrative, recount, procedural, and report texts. This diversity of text types provides students with opportunities to become familiar with different text structures, vocabulary, and language patterns, thereby expanding their reading skills (Dharmapatni, 2022). This finding is important because the ability to comprehend various text types is a key competency that students must master to support academic success and literacy skills in everyday life.

Analysis shows that most of the reading materials in textbooks are systematically structured through pre-reading, reading, and post-reading stages (Lubis et al., 2025). This structure aligns with the principles of effective reading learning because it helps students activate prior knowledge, build understanding of the text's content, and reflect on the information they have learned. The presence of structured exercises also provides students with opportunities to develop skills in finding detailed information, understanding vocabulary, identifying main ideas, and drawing simple conclusions. These findings indicate that textbooks remain a relevant and effective learning resource for building the foundation of students' reading skills.

This study found that most reading activities still focus on literal comprehension (Lubis et al., 2025). The questions presented generally ask students to find information explicitly stated





in the text, such as specific characters, places, times, or events. While these activities are important for building basic understanding, the dominance of literal questions can limit the development of students' higher-order thinking skills. Students are relatively rarely given opportunities to infer, analyze, evaluate, or reflect on the content of the reading (Dharmapatni, 2022). This finding is important because 21st-century reading skills require not only the ability to directly understand information but also the ability to interpret implied meanings, evaluate information, and connect it to real-life contexts.

The analysis showed that some reading texts in textbooks are still poorly contextualized to students' experiences and environments. Some materials use situations or cultures that are not closely related to students' daily lives, potentially reducing their interest and engagement in the reading process. According to Hardewiyani et al. (2024), using texts relevant to local culture, student experiences, and current issues can increase learning motivation and facilitate comprehension of reading content. This finding indicates that contextual relevance is an important factor that needs to be considered in developing English language learning materials.

In terms of vocabulary mastery, textbooks provide various exercises that help students understand new words in their context. However, some texts still contain vocabulary that is quite complex for some students. This situation highlights the importance of teachers' role in providing scaffolding through vocabulary explanations, the use of visual media, group discussions, and other reading strategies to help students comprehend texts more effectively (Hardewiyani et al., 2024). Thus, the success of textbook use depends not only on the quality of the material but also on the teacher's ability to facilitate the learning process.

The implications of this research for teaching and learning are significant. For teachers, the results indicate the need to develop additional activities that can foster critical thinking skills, such as group discussions, debates, project-based learning, problem-based learning, and reading-based reflective activities. Teachers also need to utilize more authentic and contextual supplementary reading sources to complement the material provided in textbooks. For textbook and curriculum developers, the results of this study indicate the need to improve the quality of reading activities, orienting them not only toward literal comprehension but also toward inferential, analytical, evaluative, and creative skills. Integrating 21st-century skills into reading materials is a crucial step in preparing students for the increasingly complex demands of education and the workplace.

Although textbooks have made a positive contribution to improving students' reading comprehension skills, this study also identified several limitations and challenges. The analysis focused on the content and characteristics of the textbook material without directly observing





its implementation in the classroom. Therefore, this study cannot comprehensively describe how teachers utilize textbooks or how students respond to the available materials. Furthermore, this study only analyzed a specific textbook, so the results cannot be generalized to all English textbooks used in secondary schools. Another challenge identified was the limited integration of HOTS activities, the use of authentic texts, and local contexts in the reading materials. These limitations open up opportunities for further research to conduct empirical studies in the classroom, evaluate the effectiveness of textbook use on student learning outcomes, and develop reading learning models that are more contextual, interactive, and oriented toward developing higher-order thinking skills.

The research results show that the English learning materials in textbooks have supported the development of students' reading comprehension skills, particularly in the aspects of literal comprehension and vocabulary mastery (Lubis et al., 2025). Improvements are still needed in the development of inferential, evaluative, and critical thinking skills. Textbook developers need to provide more activities that encourage analysis and reflection, while teachers need to complement the use of textbooks with more interactive and communicative learning strategies to optimally develop students' reading comprehension skills.

CONCLUSION

This research shows that English textbooks at the secondary school level play a significant role in supporting the development of students' reading comprehension skills. By providing a variety of curriculum-aligned reading texts and systematically structured reading activities, textbooks can help students develop basic reading skills, such as identifying detailed information, finding main ideas, understanding vocabulary, and summarizing texts. The readability of the material is generally appropriate for secondary school students, thus effectively supporting the learning process.

The primary contribution of this research lies in identifying the strengths and weaknesses of the reading comprehension materials contained in English textbooks. While textbooks are effective in developing basic reading skills, the study found that most reading activities still focus on literal comprehension and do not optimally develop higher-order thinking skills (HOTS), such as analysis, evaluation, inference, reflection, and problem-solving. Furthermore, some reading texts lack contextualization with students' experiences and life circumstances, potentially reducing their engagement in the reading process.

Important implications for various stakeholders. For teachers, the research findings emphasize the need to develop learning strategies that complement textbook activities through

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Suggestion:

1. Clearly state the contribution of the study
2. Discuss implications for teachers, curriculum developers, or future researchers (What has been written is merely a recommendation, not an implication)
3. Provide more focused directions for future research





critical discussions, project-based learning, the use of digital media, and collaborative learning techniques to enhance students' critical thinking skills. For textbook and curriculum developers, this research demonstrates the importance of providing more authentic, contextualized texts oriented toward developing 21st-century skills so that reading instruction focuses not only on understanding information but also on critical and reflective thinking skills. For schools, the findings can serve as a basis for enriching reading resources and creating a literacy environment that better supports the development of students' reading skills.

For further research, it is recommended to conduct empirical studies involving the direct implementation of textbooks in the classroom to measure their impact on improving students' reading comprehension. Future research could also examine the effectiveness of integrating HOTS activities, the use of authentic texts, and the use of digital technology in reading instruction. Furthermore, comparative research on various textbooks used in secondary schools could provide a more comprehensive picture of the quality of reading materials and their contribution to the development of students' literacy competencies in the 21st-century learning era.

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