

Research Article

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Outcome-Based Education EFL Learning Materials for Junior High School

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Abstract

Background/purpose. Indonesia's secondary English curriculum has adopted Outcome-Based Education (OBE) to foster communicative competence and real-world language use. However, questions remain regarding the extent to which current instructional materials reflect this pedagogical shift and meet students' actual learning needs. This study aims to investigate how well EFL learning resources adhere to OBE principles and to explore students' specific needs and preferences.

Materials/methods. A qualitative descriptive design was employed, using data from classroom observations, teacher interviews, and document analysis of the existing textbooks.

Results. The findings indicate that while current materials articulate general learning outcomes, they often fail to integrate all four language skills equitably and lack performance-based assessments. Teachers reported limited flexibility in adapting the materials to meet diverse student needs. Furthermore, the study found that interactive, visually engaging, contextually relevant materials have a positive impact on students. These elements are missing from existing resources, highlighting a disconnect between curriculum goals and classroom realities.

Conclusion. The study concludes that current English learning materials require substantial revision to fully embody OBE principles. It underscores the need for collaborative efforts to develop outcome-oriented, student-centered materials. The study implies for material developers, policymakers, and teacher educators working to enhance English instruction in EFL contexts.

1. Introduction

Junior high school English as a Foreign Language (EFL) instruction in Indonesia remains fraught with difficulties in addressing students' diverse learning needs and lack of interest (Hanifa et al., 2024; Nitiasih et al., 2024). Despite the existence of nationally mandated competency standards, actual classroom implementation frequently overlooks student-centered considerations. Prior studies have shown that instructional decisions are often based primarily on the curriculum and syllabus, with insufficient attention to students' preferences, learning styles, and needs (Choppin et al., 2022; Triastuti et al., 2022).

The relevance of this study is further underscored by Indonesia's latest national curriculum, known as *Kurikulum Merdeka*. The curriculum places strong emphasis on competency development, character education, essential content, and instructional flexibility. Central to this curriculum is the concept of learning outcomes, which aligns with the foundational views of Outcome-Based Education (hereinafter, OBE). OBE presents a promising alternative, emphasizing the accomplishment of clearly defined and measurable learning outcomes in empowering students (Dano, 2024; Kaliannan & Chandran, 2012). It is an effective pedagogical approach that aligns instructional practices (Hamidi et al., 2024; Hoang Yen et al., 2023). Nonetheless, its application within EFL classrooms remains limited. Existing instructional materials at the junior high school level are often not aligned with OBE principles. There is a mismatch between the textbook's objectives and its classroom implementation.

Research highlights the importance of accommodating students' needs in English teaching and learning for junior high school students (Padmadewi et al., 2022; Putri et al., 2024). The students have varied learning preferences in the design of instructional materials. However, current EFL materials in Indonesia often fail to reflect such diversity, contributing to a persistent gap between students' expectations and available resources. Materials must be meaningfully modified to address different needs and resources (Hanifa et al., 2024; Hornay et al., 2024; Marwa et al., 2021). This misalignment may undermine efforts to achieve meaningful and effective learning outcomes.

Previous studies have underscored the need for a needs analysis in OBE-based material development. Needs analysis can shape the materials needed to achieve and complete learning outcomes (Wu et al., 2023). Additionally, a needs analysis can be used to consider the curriculum and students' characteristics when developing the learning materials. (Artini et al., 2018; Pramerta et al., 2025). However, such studies often focus on specific skills and do not integrate a comprehensive OBE perspective due to challenges in its implementation (Damat et al., 2021; Katawazai, 2021; Mufanti et al., 2024).

This study addresses these gaps by proposing an integrative approach that combines a rigorous needs analysis with OBE views to develop EFL instructional materials for junior high school students. The aim is to design materials that are not only responsive to students' specific preferences and contexts but also oriented toward achieving observable, measurable learning outcomes.

Preliminary observations suggest that the widely used textbook English for *Nusantara* continues to rely on genre theory, which emphasizes text types and discourse structures. While such an approach offers valuable insights into language use, it tends to emphasize textual analysis and comprehension over active performance and application. This pedagogical orientation may limit students' opportunities to demonstrate their learning in ways consistent with OBE principles, which prioritize student-centered activities and the production of meaningful language use (Tengberg et al., 2022; Tsai, 2012).

Therefore, this study is guided by the following research question:

1. To what extent do the instructional materials currently used with seventh-grade students meet the expectations of outcome-based learning?

2. What are the specific learning needs and preferences of junior high school students in Indonesia with regard to EFL materials?.

2. Literature Review

2.1. English Language Instruction

English language instruction has undergone an important shift away from conventional methods to more communicative and technology-based methods (Kianinezhad, 2023; Zhang, 2022). Then, a key component of the Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) approach is interaction. It allows students to use language in real-life contexts during classroom interaction (Al-Buraiki, 2025). Additionally, by providing students with a wide range of resources and interactive activities, technology has improved their learning experience (Alias & Razak, 2025; Santosa et al., 2022; Tuma, 2021).

The technology integration in English language instruction also includes using visual aids to enhance student motivation and understanding. Visual media such as videos and images can increase students' interest in English learning (Romero & Bobkina, 2021; Senen et al., 2021). This indicates that effective English language instruction requires an approach that utilizes various media to accommodate students' various learning needs. Students can learn the language while studying meaningful content, thereby increasing motivation and engagement (Cayubit, 2022).

However, challenges remain in ensuring that students maximize the benefits of English language instruction. Differences in learning styles, cultural backgrounds, and language proficiency levels require tailored approaches to meet students' needs. Effective English language instruction and materials require a flexible, adaptive approach that utilizes technology and student-centered teaching methods (Bhardwaj et al., 2025). The integration of various teaching strategies, including the use of visual media and content-based approaches, can enhance student engagement and learning outcomes.

2.2. English Language Teaching in an EFL Context

Teaching English in an EFL context presents challenges in terms of limited exposure to the target language inside or outside the classroom. The students need exposure for the sake of using English communicatively during the teaching and learning process. In this regard, CLT approaches have been meaningfully implemented to address these challenges by encouraging the use of English in everyday interactions in the classroom (Adem & Berkessa, 2022).

Teachers need to understand and implement effective EFL teaching strategies. Additionally, factors such as students' self-confidence, learning strategies, and learning styles also influence the effectiveness of EFL teaching practice. Understanding students' learning preferences can help teachers design more effective learning activities (Shorey et al., 2021). Teaching English in an EFL context requires an approach and materials that account for the limitations of the learning environment and students' characteristics.

The development of English learning materials for secondary school students must consider the students' needs. It can significantly affect student learning outcomes. Relevant and contextual materials can increase student engagement and motivation in learning English (Lu et al., 2022). However, challenges remain in ensuring that learning materials align with their needs. Differences in language proficiency levels, interests, and learning styles require a flexible approach to material development. Therefore, to achieve the learning objectives, the students' learning needs must be met.

2.3. Outcome-Based Education (OBE)

There is promise for OBE in the global educational landscape (Katawazai, 2021). It is a teaching approach that emphasizes reaching particular learning objectives (Spady, 1994). In the ELT context, OBE emphasizes the importance of designing curricula, teaching, and assessment that are corresponded with expected learning outcomes. Implementing OBE in English language teaching can help students develop the language competencies necessary for effective communication. This approach encourages teachers to design learning activities that are outcome-oriented and relevant to students' needs.

However, implementing OBE requires teachers' effort to sustainably reform instruction. To attain the intended learning outcomes, teachers must comprehend the OBE tenets and know how to implement them in English language instruction. Additionally, assessment in OBE must be designed to accurately measure learning outcomes. Formative and summative assessments aligned with learning outcomes can provide useful feedback for students and teachers. Therefore, OBE provides a precise framework for planning and carrying out outcome-driven English instruction.

3. Methodology

A qualitative descriptive method was used to investigate the alignment between existing EFL teaching materials and the principles of OBE at the junior high school level in Indonesia. The design was selected to allow for an investigation in terms of English teachers' perspectives, textbook content, and instructional practices (Creswell & Poth, 2017).

The study was done at a public junior high school in Indonesia that has adopted the *Kurikulum Merdeka* framework. Participants were purposefully selected. Combining convenience and purposive sampling enables the researcher to choose participants who are both available to the researcher and who align with the research objectives (Setia, 2016). The participants consisted of three English teachers teaching seventh-grade students. Three classes, each taught by one of the teachers, were selected for classroom observation. The selection of participants used purposive sampling to ensure that participants had been EFL teachers for at least 3 years. Experience teaching under the *Kurikulum Merdeka*, and willingness to participate in interviews and classroom observations. Additionally, the teachers and their school were conveniently located, which reduced travel expenses, and they were open to participating in the research (Cohen et al., 2002).

Semi-structured interviews with the three English teachers were conducted to gain insights into their perceptions of students' learning needs, the suitability of current textbooks, and their understanding of OBE principles. Interview protocols were adapted from Creswell and Guetterman (2018) and focused on open-ended questions to elicit detailed responses. Then, a document analysis was conducted on the main textbook (English for *Nusantara*) and the supplementary materials currently in use. The analysis focused on whether the materials reflect OBE principles, including clear learning outcomes, performance-based tasks, and assessment rubrics (Richards, 2001). Furthermore, classroom observations were conducted in three different seventh-grade classes. An observation protocol was developed to document teacher-student interactions, instructional strategies, the use of textbook materials, and the alignment of classroom activities with OBE elements (Allen et al., 2013). Observations were non-participatory, and each class was observed for two 80-minute sessions.

Thematic analysis was used to examine all qualitative data following Braun and Clarke's (2014) six-step framework. Interview transcripts, observation notes, and textbook content were coded to identify patterns related to the representation of learning outcomes, student-centered learning practices, and the extent to which instructional materials support performance-based assessment.

Triangulation of data sources (interview, observation, and document analysis) was used to enhance validity and trustworthiness (Meydan & Akkaş, 2024).

4. Results

The need to develop OBE learning materials for EFL JHS students was derived from document analysis of existing materials, interviews with English teachers, and observations of their use. Moreover, document analysis was used to identify the existing materials used in the learning process. The interview was used to identify the problems teachers face when using the existing materials. Then, observation was used to see the use of existing materials in the teaching-learning process.

4.1. Results of Document Analysis

Table 1. Existing Learning Material Analysis using OBE Dimension

Thematic Category	Key Findings
Macro and Micro Skills	The materials include listening, speaking, reading, and writing, but these skills are taught separately rather than integrated. Micro skills mostly focus on vocabulary and grammar. Some listening sections lack audio and are only transcripts, so students can see them without listening. Then, several reading sections provide questions without supporting texts.
Topic Relevance	Most topics align with curriculum objectives, students' level, and needs. However, some units are less adaptable to students' real-life contexts.
Learning Activities	Learning activities support monologues, conversations, retellings, picture descriptions, and writing tasks. However, they mainly develop receptive skills (listening and reading) rather than productive skills (speaking and writing). It shows that opportunities for creativity and critical thinking are limited.
Assessment System	Assessments rely on objective tests (fill-in-the-blank, matching, true-false, multiple choice). There are self-assessment parts, but they are minimal. Then, teachers reported the need for more comprehensive and varied assessment methods.

4.2. Results of the Interview

During the interview, the selected teachers were asked for their opinions on the English learning materials in the textbook they use at school. The questions mainly cover the book's context, material availability, learning activities, the assessment system, and students' proficiency. The teacher said, "The book is based on the curriculum set." This response provides context for the book, which is already curriculum-based. Then, another teacher supported, "The materials already support the objective, but need to be deepened. The design and characters in the book attract students' attention."

Based on the interview results, it was found that some learning materials are inaccessible, the listening activity is biased toward the reading activity, and that an activity to support students' creativity should be added to the English materials. The teachers reported, "A number of exercises should be added, and students need to improve more on speaking and writing (production) skills." Another teacher added, "The book needs more comprehensive exercises".

The teachers also said that they do not use the existing learning materials as the main sources; they use other printed books ("Bright" from *Erlangga* Publisher), students' worksheets, and internet resources. That condition occurred because, according to the teachers, the government-provided materials offered limited exercises and interesting activities for the students. In addition, a teacher stated, "The existing book does not comprehensively cover the English skills."

This response was supported by another English teacher who stated, "Listening activity is biased with reading activity. Also, activities that support students' creativity should be added." Regarding the assessment system, it was noted that an objective test is mostly used in the ELT classroom. However, a teacher requested, "The number of exercises should be added." In terms of students' proficiency, it was found from the three teachers about the students' existing condition. The first teacher said, "Students are mostly good at reading." However, the other two teachers have different responses. A teacher reported, "Students need more improvement in speaking and writing." And another one informed, "Students also lack vocabulary mastery."

4.3. Results of Observation

Classroom observations revealed several recurring patterns in how teachers utilize the English for *Nusantara* textbook and supplementary resources. Across all three observations, teachers largely followed the textbook structure but frequently supplemented activities with materials from other sources, such as student worksheets and self-created exercises, indicating limitations in the textbook's content and functionality.

Table 2. Results of Observation

Observation	Results
I	At the beginning, the teacher greeted the students. Then the teacher introduced the meeting topic. After that, the teacher asked the students about their experiences in introducing themselves. The teacher asked two students for examples. Then, the teacher gave feedback and reviewed the examples. The students retold the information given by their friends. Then the teacher informed the students of the meeting's objectives. The teacher then asked the students to fill in the boxes on page 15. The teacher suggested that the students consult the other source (<i>LKS Intan Pariwara</i>). Then, the teacher discussed what information is commonly given when introducing oneself. Next, the teacher moved to the listening section on page 16, but because she could not find the audio, she asked the students to read the passage. Then, the students should fill in the boxes with the information already mentioned in the passage. After that, the teacher moved to <i>LKS Intan Pariwara</i> page 28 activity 2 to fill a word web about self-introduction and asked the students to fill the web. Then the teacher moved again to English for <i>the Nusantara</i> book, page 18, Speaking section. The students were asked to first fill the boxes with their identity (worksheet 1.3), then arrange it into a short paragraph in worksheet 1.4. After that, the students were asked to perform the introduction in front of the class; they were allowed to bring the book. After each performance, the teacher asked some questions to the performer. Not all students got a chance to perform. At the end, the teacher said she would send a video introducing the class WhatsApp Group, and the students had to watch it before the next class. The teacher opened a question and answer session to close the class, but no student asked a question. The teacher informed the topic for the next meeting.

Observation	Results
II	To start the class, the teacher greeted the students. Then, the teacher checked the present list. Next, the teacher reviewed the previous meeting by asking the students to reopen the page they had learned (page 33 on hobbies). After that, the teacher asked the students to read aloud a short text on page 36 about hobbies. Then, the teacher asked the students to find a pronoun in the text. After that, the teacher asked the students to open the book to page 38 for the pronoun exercise (Worksheet 1.18) to complete the sentences (fill in the blanks with the correct pronoun). The students have done it at home, so they just had the discussion in class. After that, the teacher discussed the homework given last week about identifying pronouns. The students wrote the answers one by one until ten on the whiteboard. Then, the teacher asked the students to check their friend's homework. Next, the teacher wrote each student's score on the score list. In the middle of the study, the teacher conducted a game "Miming and Guessing a Hobby" (page 39). Some students imagined a hobby and asked their friends to guess. After the game session, the teacher continued the lesson with the next unit (Unit 3, page 40) on physical features and personality traits. The teacher guided the students to observe a picture (Picture 1.2) and asked questions about each character's physical features. Then the teacher asked the students to list words for physical features and personality traits. The teacher recommended that the students consult the word box at the end of the chapter, but they failed to filter it to find words related to physical features and personal traits. In ten minutes, the teacher asked the students to write down their words on the whiteboard. At the end, the teacher asked the students to find more words related to physical features and personality traits at home.
III	At first, the teacher greeted the students, and then checked their present list. After that, the teacher reviews previous materials about pronouns by asking questions. To strengthen students' understanding, the teacher asked them to write a sentence using a pronoun they knew. After that, the teacher conducted a game. It was a kind of talking stick game in which the student who got the stick (in this case, a board maker) should make a sentence using the word and pronoun that they chose. The students seemed happy and enthusiastic about following the game. After the game, the teacher asked the students to make a group of five. The students were a bit busy finding their group and seat. After they were in their group, the teacher explained the task. The task was for the students to take ten random sentences from the teacher and identify whether each sentence contains a subject pronoun, an object pronoun, a possessive adjective, or a possessive pronoun. The sentences received were not complete yet; they should complete them first before they can identify them. The students discussed each sentence in groups and sometimes asked for the teacher's assistance. After 15 minutes, the students should finish the task. Each group that finishes the task should say 'Bingo' and then collect the task. To finish the class, the teacher asked the students to conclude the lesson by raising their hands and to do so orally. From the observation, the teacher did not use the English for <i>Nusantara</i> book at all in this meeting. As confirmed, this lesson objective was to do an exercise on pronouns, and the book did not have any exercises, so the teacher taught it herself.

5. Discussion

The findings from the document analysis, interviews, and observations reveal several critical issues in the existing English learning materials used in Indonesian junior high schools. The triangulation of data from document analysis, interviews, and observations highlights consistent findings. Although the textbook is curriculum-based and contextually appropriate, it provides insufficient coverage of language skills, includes overly repetitive exercises, and has listening sections that overlap with other skills. Teachers confirmed these limitations by noting the lack of comprehensive practice. Furthermore, the observations also showed their reliance on supplementary materials. This indicates that there is a mismatch between the textbook's intended design and its practical implementation in the classroom. These findings emphasize the need for more balanced, skill-integrated, and performance-driven learning materials that align with the OBE approach.

One key issue identified is the lack of access to listening materials. Teachers reported that some listening materials were difficult to access, limiting students' opportunities to engage with authentic spoken English. The use of media is one of the main factors contributing to the process of teaching and learning (Budasi et al., 2020). Moreover, the presence of audio transcripts in listening activities reduces the necessity for students to actually listen, as they can simply read the text instead. This contradicts best practices in language acquisition, which emphasize the importance of developing listening skills through active auditory engagement. Listening to as many English videos as possible can facilitate students' learning (Santosa, 2020).

The document analysis confirmed that the existing textbook predominantly focuses on listening and reading, while speaking and writing skills are underrepresented. This imbalance does not align with integrated skills development. The integration can improve students' English language skills and encourage more active participation to express meaning in the classroom (Artini & Nitiasih, 2017; Loi & Hong, 2025; Richards & Rodgers, 2014). The lack of speaking and writing exercises hinders students from developing communicative competence and from expressing their voices and feelings, leading them to make errors in language use, which is crucial for real-world English use (Piscayanti et al., 2023; Ramendra et al., 2023; Ratminingsih et al., 2022).

Teachers also reported that the existing textbook lacks a variety of exercises and assessments, leading them to supplement it with materials from other sources. The absence of performance-based assessments, such as oral presentations, dialogues, and process-based writing tasks, contradicts OBE principles, which emphasize measuring learning by students' ability to apply and demonstrate it in practical scenarios (Ratminingsih et al., 2017; Spady, 1994). Without performance-based tasks, students may struggle to develop real communicative competence in English. The importance of meaningful activities and performance assessment in improving students' learning engagement and achievement (Kusuma et al., 2021; Putra et al., 2021).

While the topics in English for *Nusantara* generally align with *Kurikulum Merdeka*, some outdated content was identified, such as references to online learning during the pandemic. Given that textbooks should reflect current educational and social contexts, they must be continuously updated to remain relevant. It is important to facilitate the students with interesting content and meaning construction based on real-life experience (Suarcaya & Prasasti, 2023; Utami, 2022). Furthermore, providing differentiated learning options allows students to engage with topics that align with their interests and their levels, fostering a more student-centered learning experience.

The development of OBE-aligned learning materials equips students with the required skills and competencies (Akramy, 2021; Rahayu et al., 2021). It is necessary to ensure equal emphasis on

English skills, provide accessible, well-structured listening materials that promote active auditory engagement, integrate performance-based assessments to enhance communicative competence, and offer updated, contextually relevant content that supports meaningful learning experiences. Therefore, OBE-based learning materials can better prepare students for real-world language use, promote autonomous learning, and support the objectives of the curriculum.

However, the findings also highlight limitations in the existing English textbooks. The imbalance among the four skills, lack of varied exercises, and performance-based assessment hinder students' ability to develop proficiency. Furthermore, outdated content and the inaccessibility of listening materials further underscore the need for a more student-centered, flexible, and outcome-oriented approach. It shows that the OBE implementations still face challenges (Karanjakwut, 2024; Katawazai, 2021; Sarfraz et al., 2023).

The findings suggest that in this learning environment, students mainly engage with language skills separately rather than in an integrated manner. This leads students to learn with the focus on receptive activities, while opportunities for productive use of English remain limited. As a result, students' learning often centers on completing structured exercises and objective tests, which may enhance vocabulary and grammar recall but provide fewer chances for creative or communicative expression. Then, classroom observations further illustrate how students adapt to these conditions. They often follow teacher-led textbook tasks but are also guided to use supplementary resources. In practice, students learn by combining individual tasks, such as reading passages and filling worksheets, with interactive activities like games, retelling, or group discussions introduced by teachers. These strategies show that students are not passive recipients of the textbook content. Their learning emerges through a combination of structured input, peer interaction, and teacher improvisation to address the lack of comprehensive skill integration. As a result, it can create a more student-centered learning environment. Thus, it is clear that revisions to the existing English learning materials are necessary to align with the curriculum.

6. Conclusion

This study investigated the alignment of currently used instructional materials for seventh-grade students with the principles of OBE. The findings reveal that existing materials, such as the English for *Nusantara* textbook, partially meet OBE expectations for learning objectives but fall short in critical areas, including skill integration, formative assessment, and student-centered learning. Most notably, the materials emphasize receptive skills (reading and listening) while underrepresenting productive skills (speaking and writing), which are central to communicative competence and real-world application.

In response to the second research question, data from classroom observations, teacher interviews, and document analysis suggest that students prefer interactive, contextually relevant, and visually engaging materials. They show greater motivation when tasks involve authentic communication, multimedia input (especially for listening), and performance-based assessment rather than rote memorization or isolated grammar drills. These preferences point to a clear gap between what students need to succeed in outcome-based learning environments and what is currently offered.

7. Suggestion

Although the study offers valuable insights for meeting the students' needs, its scope and lack of student perspectives limit its applicability and generalizability. Future studies could include surveys, student interviews, a larger sample, and broader contexts across diverse regions to strengthen generalizability. At last, these findings underscore the urgency of revisiting EFL learning materials that are aligned with OBE frameworks. Effective materials should balance English skills, include active,

measurable outcomes, and reflect students' preferences for practical, engaging, and meaningful English learning experiences.

Declarations

Author Contributions. All authors have read and approved the published version of the article.

Conflicts of Interest. The authors declare no conflict of interest.

Ethical Approval. The school granted permission to conduct the research.

Data Availability Statement. The data supporting this study's findings are available from the corresponding author upon reasonable request.

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