



Students' Learning Perception in Using the English for Nusantara Textbook at SMP Ibnu Sina

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Article Info	Abstract
Received: 2026-06-19 Revised: 2026-06-24 Accepted: 2026-06-30 Keywords: <i>English for Nusantara; students' perception; English language teaching</i> DOI: 10.24256/ideas.v14i1.12057 Corresponding Author: Nanda Nurlaila nandanurlaila02@gmail.com Pendidikan Bahasa Inggris, STKIP Muhammadiyah Aceh Barat Daya, Aceh	<i>This study explored students' perceptions of the use of the English for Nusantara textbook at Junior High School Ibnu Sina. Employing a qualitative approach, data were collected through semi-structured interviews with 12 eighth-grade students and analyzed using thematic analysis with the support of NVivo 12 software. The findings revealed four major themes, included students' overall perceptions of the textbook, textbook design and learning activities, textbook support for learning English, and challenges encountered while using the textbook. Overall, most students expressed positive impression, describing the textbook as interesting, engaging, and helpful for learning English. The visual illustrations and task-based activities in textbook enhanced students' motivation and classroom engagement. Furthermore, students perceived that the textbook supported their vocabulary development, helped them understand English materials more easily, and encouraged them to practice speaking and writing through contextual learning activities. Nevertheless, students also reported several challenges, including unfamiliar vocabulary, the need for teacher guidance, and some illustrations that were perceived as unclear or less supportive. These findings suggest that while English for Nusantara effectively supports the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum through communicative and contextual learning, teachers continue to play a crucial role in providing scaffolding and adapting instruction to accommodate students' diverse learning needs.</i>

1. Introduction

English language education at the junior high school level constitutes one of the primary pillars of the Merdeka Curriculum, which has been changed from the 2013 Curriculum since 2022. This curriculum aims to establish a more flexible, innovative, and learner-centered educational ecosystem. It specifically emphasizes the development of contextual learning materials rooted in local cultural richness and relevant to students' daily lives across diverse regions. Consequently, it is expected to enhance students' interest and engagement in foreign language learning (Nusantara, 2022).

To achieve these educational goals, appropriate instructional materials are required to support the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum in English language classrooms. Textbooks remain one of the most influential instructional resources in English language teaching because they provide learning objectives, language input, classroom activities, and assessment tasks that guide both teachers and students throughout the learning process. Within the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum, textbooks are expected to facilitate meaningful learning experiences that promote students' communicative competence, critical thinking, and learner autonomy (Richards, 2017; Damayanti & Mukarto, 2024).

In response to these curriculum demands, the Ministry of Education developed the English for Nusantara textbook as the primary English textbook for Phase D students under the Merdeka Curriculum (Nusantara, 2022). English for Nusantara textbook was developed to support the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum by providing learner-centered and communicative learning experiences. It incorporates a variety of task types that encourage students to actively use English through interaction, collaboration, and meaningful classroom activities, reflecting the principles of task-based language learning (Damayanti & Mukarto, 2024). In addition, the textbook has been found to align with the objectives of the Merdeka Curriculum by presenting relevant learning materials, integrating language skills, and offering activities that support students' language development and classroom engagement (Febraningrum & Suroso, 2023). Nevertheless, the shift from traditional grammar-oriented instruction to a more communicative and contextual approach may require students to adapt their learning habits, resulting in different perceptions of the same textbook.

In the context of teaching materials, students' perceptions play a significant role in shaping their engagement, motivation, and overall learning experience. Students' perceptions refer to their opinions, attitudes, and evaluations regarding the ease of use, attractiveness, relevance, and usefulness of textbooks in facilitating English language learning. Textbooks that are perceived as engaging, comprehensible, and relevant to students' learning needs are more likely to promote active participation and meaningful learning. In contrast, textbooks that are considered difficult, uninteresting, or lacking contextual relevance may reduce students' motivation and limit their engagement in the learning process. Therefore, examining students' perceptions is essential for evaluating the quality, relevance, and effectiveness of textbooks in supporting English language learning (Howard & Whitmore, 2020; Pasaribu, 2022).

Previous studies have shown that students' perceptions of English textbooks are not always uniform, as their evaluations are influenced by the relevance, organization, and presentation of the learning materials. Students generally perceived English textbooks positively because they supported classroom learning, facilitated understanding of the material, and encouraged participation in learning activities (Azizah & Qamariah, 2025). Similarly, students responded favorably to English textbooks incorporating local content, as they considered the materials more meaningful, relatable, and easier to understand (Alexon et al., 2024). These findings suggest that students' perceptions of a textbook are shaped not only by its instructional content but also by its relevance to learners' needs and learning contexts.

Internal factors such as initial English proficiency, motivation, and learning styles also shape students' perceptions of teaching materials (Richards, 2017). Students with high basic proficiency tend to perceive the book positively, as they can follow project and authentic text demands. Conversely, students with low English literacy risk viewing the book as too difficult, triggering learning anxiety. Additionally, external factors like teacher guidance and supporting media availability mediate students' experiences when using the book.

Recent studies have emphasized that textbook evaluation should not rely solely on the judgments of teachers and experts but should also incorporate students' perspectives, as learners are the primary users of instructional materials. Students' evaluations provide valuable insights into the relevance, practicality, and effectiveness of textbooks in supporting the learning process, making their perspectives an essential component of textbook evaluation (Kadwa & Alshenqeeti, 2020). When students' perceptions are overlooked, there is a greater risk of a mismatch between the design of teaching materials and learners' actual needs, making it more challenging for teachers to implement appropriate instructional support and differentiated learning strategies. Therefore, research that specifically and comprehensively documents students' experiences and evaluations is required.

However, there has been no previous research which explored the students' perception at Junior High School in Aceh, notably Southwest Aceh, in using English for Nusantara textbook. Junior High School Ibnu Sina in Southwest Aceh is one of the schools that has implemented English for Nusantara textbook. Therefore, the researcher selected Junior High School Ibnu Sina in Southwest Aceh and conducted descriptive qualitative research to determine students' perceptions at Junior High School Ibnu Sina in using the English for Nusantara textbook.

The purpose of the study was to explore the students at Junior High School Ibnu Sina perception in using the English for Nusantara textbook during the learning process. Specifically, this research was conducted to answer the following question:

1. How do students at Junior High School Ibnu Sina in Southwest Aceh perceived their learning experience in using the English for Nusantara textbook?

2. Method

This study used a qualitative approach with a semi-structured interview method. Qualitative research is an approach for exploring and understanding the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Similarly, qualitative research involves the systematic collection, organization, and interpretation of non-numerical data, such as interviews, observations, and documents, to understand individuals' experiences, meanings, and social phenomena within their natural contexts (Aspers & Corte, 2019).

Semi-structured interviews are characterized by the use of predetermined open-ended questions that allow flexibility during the interview process. Semi-structured interviews are commonly used because they enable researchers to obtain detailed and in-depth information while maintaining a clear interview framework (Kallio et al., 2016). The interview was conducted at Junior High School Ibnu Sina, with 12 eighth-grade students serving as the participants of the study. The participants were selected using purposive sampling based on several inclusion criteria: (1) students who actively participated in English learning activities using the English for Nusantara textbook, compared to seventh-grade students who were still adapting to the textbook and learning environment while ninth-grade students focused on preparing for graduation examinations and other academic assessments, (2) students who had used the textbook for at least one semester, and (3) students who were willing to participate voluntarily in the interview process.

Before the interview, the researcher conducted a literature study to compile themes and questions. Previous studies have highlighted various strengths of the English for Nusantara textbook. Rijali & Nor (2025) reported that the textbook generally aligns with the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR) A2 level, indicating that its language content and learning activities are appropriate for junior high school students. Likewise, previous studies also found that the English for Nusantara textbook integrates

character education values across the six dimensions of the Pancasila Student Profile, although the representation of some dimensions is less prominent than others (Fadilla Zulfia Sari & Sayid Ma'rifatulloh, 2024). These findings support the view that the textbook promotes character education while also indicating areas for further refinement.

The data were analyzed following Braun and Clarke's six-phase thematic analysis framework: (1) Familiarization – Repeated reading of interview transcripts to immerse in students' perceptions of the English for Nusantara textbook; (2) Initial coding – Line-by-line coding relevant to students' experiences in using English for Nusantara textbook, such as positive impression, neutral impression, negative impression, pictures and illustrations increased engagement, tasks in nusantara textbook increased motivation, new vocabulary was learned from the book, nusantara textbook supported understanding and speaking skill, writing skill was improved, difficult words and unclear materials, teacher support comprehension is needed, and unclear or less supportive pictures; (3) Theme development – Grouping similar codes into potential themes that reflected students' perceptions, namely Students' overall perception of the Nusantara textbook, Nusantara textbook design and activities, Nusantara textbook support for learning English, and Challenges in using the Nusantara textbook; (4) Theme refinement – Themes were reviewed against the complete interview dataset to ensure consistency and relevance, with adjustments made where discrepancies were found; (5) defining and naming themes; (6) Reporting – Presenting the final themes and supporting them with representative excerpts from the interview data to address the research objectives regarding students' perceptions of using the English for Nusantara textbook.

NVivo 12 software was used to facilitate data organization, coding, and theme development throughout the analysis process. Since the interviews were conducted in Indonesian language, the interview transcripts and selected quotations were translated into English for reporting purposes while preserving the original meanings of the participants' responses.

3. Result

The analysis generated four major themes and eleven sub-themes representing students' perceptions of the English for Nusantara textbook.

Table 1. Students' Interview Process

Name of student	Duration (minutes)	Amount of words
Student 1	04:44	646
Student 2	08:10	1115
Student 3	07:01	758
Student 4	07:09	894
Student 5	06:00	670
Student 6	06:34	696
Student 7	05:18	815
Student 8	03:58	495
Student 9	05:22	620
Student 10	07:35	932
Student 11	06:40	870
Student 12	04:09	581
Total	01:12:40	9092

Table 1 presents the duration of each interview and the number of words obtained from the interview transcripts. To explore students' perceptions on the use of the English for Nusantara textbook at Junior High School Ibnu Sina, the interview data collected from the participants were carefully examined through a qualitative analysis process. All interviews were conducted at Junior High School Ibnu Sina. The students' responses were then categorized into several main themes and related sub-themes based on recurring patterns in their answers. The analysis of interviews involving 12 students resulted in four main themes, there are students' overall perception of Nusantara textbook, Nusantara textbook design and activities, Nusantara textbook support for learning English, and challenges in using Nusantara textbook.

In this study, n refers to the number of coded references identified through thematic analysis using NVivo 12 (Table 2). This value does not refer to the number of participants, but rather to the frequency with which meaningful excerpts were coded under each theme or sub-theme. Since one participant may contribute more than one coded excerpt, the total number of references may exceed the total number of participants.

Table 2. Presentation of the main themes

Themes (n = references)	Subthemes (n = references)	Description
Students' overall perception of Nusantara textbook (44)	Positive impression (n=39)	Students expressed favorable views toward the textbook, stating that it was interesting, useful, easy and encouraged them to learn English.
	Neutral impression (n=3)	Students indicated that the textbook was acceptable, but it did not strongly capture their interest or motivation.
	Negative impression (n=2)	Students reported unfavorable views of the textbook, describing it as boring, difficult, or less engaging.
Nusantara textbook design and activities (21)	Pictures and illustrations increased engagement (n=12)	Students stated that the pictures and illustrations made the lessons more attractive and easier to understand.
	Tasks in Nusantara textbook increased motivation (n=9)	Students explained that the tasks and exercises helped them practice vocabulary and writing in a more enjoyable way.
Nusantara textbook support for learning English (38)	New vocabulary was learned from the book (n=16)	Students stated that the textbook introduced them to new words and helped them expand their vocabulary.
	Nusantara textbook supported understanding and speaking skill (n=11)	Students explained that the reading texts assisted them in understanding English materials more clearly.

	Writing skill was improved (n=11)	Students reported that the textbook helped them practice writing sentences and short texts in English.
Challenges in using Nusantara textbook (42)	Difficult words and unclear materials (n=23)	Students reported difficulty in understanding unfamiliar vocabulary and unclear explanations in the textbook.
	Teacher support comprehension is needed (n=6)	Students stated that teacher explanation and guidance were important in helping them understand the textbook content.
	Unclear or less supportive pictures (n=13)	Students stated that some pictures or illustrations were not clear enough, so they did not fully help them understand the material.

Following the presentation of the table of themes, a concept map is provided to illustrate the relationships among the four main themes identified from the qualitative analysis (Figure 1). The concept map offers a visual representation of how students' perceptions of the English for Nusantara textbook are organized into interconnected aspects, including their overall perceptions, the textbook's design and learning activities, its role in supporting English learning, and the challenges experienced during its use. By presenting these themes in a structured visual format, the concept map helps clarify the connections between the findings and provides a comprehensive overview of the students' experiences before each theme is discussed in detail in the following sections.

Figure 1. Concept map of main themes

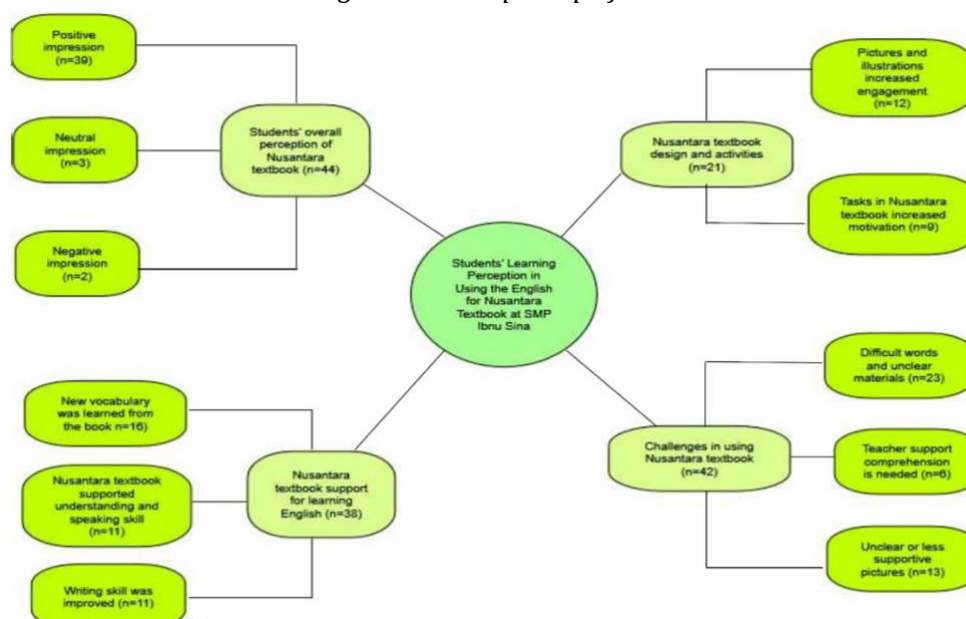


Figure 1 showed that the thematic analysis identified four main themes and several related subthemes reflecting students' perceptions of the English for Nusantara textbook. These themes emerged from recurring patterns in the interview data and represent various aspects of students' learning experiences. The following sections provide a detailed discussion of each theme, supported by representative interview excerpts and relevant literature.

4. Discussion

Based on the objective of the study that aims to find out how students perception at Junior High School Ibnu Sina in using the English for Nusantara textbook in learning English, there are four major themes emerged that explain students' perceptions of the English for Nusantara textbook. These themes represent students' experiences of the textbook from different perspectives, including their overall perceptions, opinions on its design and activities, its support for English learning, and the challenges they encountered. The discussion below compares these findings with previous research to better understand the role of the textbook in supporting English language learning.

4.1 Students' Overall Perception of the English for Nusantara Textbook

The findings revealed that most students had a positive impression of the English for Nusantara textbook. They described the textbook as interesting, useful, easy to understand, and motivating for learning English. For example, one student stated, "In my opinion, the English for Nusantara book is interesting because it covers many topics related to everyday life. That makes me enthusiastic about learning." (Student 5, 00:00:25), while another participant explained, "In my opinion, the English for Nusantara book is great because the material relates to everyday life. The language is quite simple, and there are plenty of examples that are easy for me to understand." (Student 8, 00:00:18). These findings suggest that students perceived the textbook positively because the content was closely related to everyday life, presented in simple language and included clear examples to help them understand English lessons.

This finding reflects the concept proposed by Richards (2017), who argues that effective language teaching materials should be relevant to learners' needs, provide meaningful language input, and facilitate active engagement throughout the learning process. When instructional materials are perceived as understandable and connected to students' real-life experiences, they are more likely to support positive learning experiences and increase learners' motivation. This result is also consistent with Azizah & Qamariah (2025), who found that students perceived English textbooks positively because they facilitated learning and encouraged active participation in the classroom. Similarly, previous studies also reported that relevant and meaningful learning materials enhanced students' interest and engagement in English learning (Alexon et al., 2024).

However, a few students expressed neutral impression, stating that although the textbook was acceptable for learning English, it did not significantly increase their interest or motivation. One participant commented, "Sometimes it's easy, sometimes it's hard." (Student 1, Timestamp 00:01:32). This finding suggests that students perceived the difficulty level of the textbook content to vary across different topics, with some being easier to understand than others, supporting the argument of Kadwa & Alshenqeeti (2020) that students' perspectives are essential in evaluating the effectiveness of textbooks.

In contrast, only two references reflected negative impressions of the textbook. These students considered the textbook less engaging or difficult to follow. As one student remarked, "There are several parts that I find difficult to understand." (Student 6, 00:04:02). This finding suggests that some sections of the textbook were difficult to

understand, indicating that additional clarification from the teacher was required for certain learning materials or explanations. It aligns with Fadilla Zulfia Sari & Sayid Ma'rifatulloh (2024), who found that the English for Nusantara textbook integrates character education values across its learning materials and activities, although some values are represented more prominently than others. This suggests that, while the textbook provides meaningful learning experiences, additional teacher support remains essential for students who encounter learning difficulties.

4.2 Nusantara Textbook Design and Activities

The findings showed that in English for Nusantara textbook, pictures and illustrations increased students' engagement during English learning. Most participants explained that the visual elements made the learning materials more attractive and easier to understand. For example, one student stated, "It makes me excited to learn because the layout includes images, so it doesn't get boring." (Student 5, 00:00:31), while another participant explained, "In terms of the visuals, it might be easier, as the images make it clearer and easier to understand." (Student 4, 00:06:40). These responses indicate that visual elements help attract students' attention and support their understanding of the lesson.

This finding supports the view that visual elements are essential components of effective instructional materials because they facilitate students' comprehension and increase classroom engagement. Suchana (2023) explains that meaningful illustrations help learners focus their attention, understand learning content more easily, and create more enjoyable learning experiences. This finding is consistent with Febraningrum & Suroso (2023) and (Suchana, 2023), who reported that attractive visual materials improve students' engagement and comprehension.

The findings also showed that tasks in Nusantara textbook increased motivation to learn English. Participants explained that the exercises encouraged them to practice vocabulary and writing in a more enjoyable way. One student stated, "Because the book contains several questions that sparked my interest and enthusiasm for learning English." (Student 2, 00:01:40). This suggests that meaningful classroom activities motivate students to participate more actively in learning.

Task-based learning activities encourage students to actively use language to accomplish meaningful learning goals. Damayanti & Mukarto (2024) explain that the English for Nusantara textbook was intentionally designed to provide communicative tasks that support students' participation and language development throughout the learning process. Similar findings were reported by Damayanti & Mukarto (2024) and Sholeh et al. (2021), who found that task-based activities encourage students' motivation and active language use.

4.3 Nusantara Textbook Support for Learning English

Participants perceived that new vocabulary was learned from the book. Most of them stated that they learned new words through reading passages, dialogues, and vocabulary activities. One student stated, "This book has had a significant impact on my English skills, as it has enabled me to learn a great deal about the language and acquire new vocabulary." (Student 4, 00:03:10), while another participant explained, "After using that book, I gained a much larger vocabulary than before.

In my opinion, it was really helpful." (Student 5, 00:03:54). These findings support previous studies indicating that contextual learning materials facilitate vocabulary acquisition (Wang & Lee, 2021). According to Wang & Lee (2021), vocabulary learning becomes more effective when new words are introduced through meaningful contexts and

supported by reading activities. Contextual exposure enables students to understand vocabulary more naturally and improves their comprehension of English texts.

Students also perceived that the Nusantara textbook supported understanding and speaking skill. One student stated, "If there's a speaking component, I also try practicing with a friend to become more fluent." (Student 7, 00:02:42), while another participant explained, "I also try to practice the dialogues or example sentences found in the book so that my English skills improve as well." (Student 6, 00:03:00). Although these findings represent students' perceptions rather than objective evidence of speaking refinement, they indicate that communicative activities encouraged students to use English more actively (Damayanti & Mukarto, 2024). This finding is in line with Sholeh et al. (2021), who explain that task-based learning encourages students to develop speaking skills through authentic interaction and meaningful communication during classroom activities.

The findings further indicated that students perceived that writing skill was helped through English for Nusantara textbook. One student stated, "As for writing, I am now able to construct simple sentences to a certain extent." (Student 8, 00:03:18), while another participant explained, "On top of that, I have gained a better understanding of how to construct English sentences correctly. Although I am not yet very fluent, I feel more confident about writing and speaking." (Student 7, 00:03:16). These findings are in line with previous studies showing that contextual writing activities contribute to students' writing development (Jubhari et al., 2023).

4.4 Challenges in Using the English for Nusantara Textbook

Despite the positive perceptions, participants also identified several challenges in using the textbook. The findings revealed that difficult vocabulary and limited explanations were the main challenges experienced by students when using the English for Nusantara textbook. Several participants reported that some words, instructions, and reading materials were difficult to understand without additional support. One student stated, "There may be some material that I feel is lacking, so I might not fully grasp those parts. Also, there is some vocabulary that might be difficult to understand." (Student 4, 00:02:31), while another participant explained, "There are some rather long sections of text, and I find that a bit challenging. It's not that the material itself is too difficult, but rather that the explanations are still somewhat brief." (Student 8, 00:03:21). These findings suggest that some learning materials exceeded students' English proficiency and required additional guidance, which is consistent with Fadilla Zulfia Sari & Sayid Ma'rifatulloh (2024).

Another challenge identified in this study was the need for teacher support during the learning process. Participants explained that teachers' explanations helped them understand unfamiliar vocabulary, instructions, and learning activities more effectively. One student stated, "So, there needs to be some additional explanation from the teacher. That makes it a bit easier to understand." (Student 5, 00:04:52), while another participant explained, "We also still need further explanation from the teacher to understand it better." (Student 12, 00:03:29). This finding supports Gan (2021), who emphasized that teacher guidance plays an important role in improving students' learning and classroom engagement.

Participants also pointed out that some illustrations in the textbook were unclear and did not always support their understanding of the materials. One student stated, "One of the shortcomings of the English for Nusantara book is that the illustrations are sometimes unclear." (Student 1, 00:04:26), while another participant explained, "As for the images, some of them are sometimes difficult to see clearly and appear blurry." (Student 11, 00:06:19). Although visuals generally increased students' engagement, these responses indicate that the quality of illustrations should be improved to better support learning. This

finding is in line with Wong & Adesope (2021), who reported that clear and well-designed visual materials enhance students' comprehension and learning outcomes.

5. Conclusion

This study provides empirical evidence regarding students' perceptions of the English for Nusantara textbook implemented under the Merdeka Curriculum at Junior High School Ibnu Sina. The findings demonstrate that students generally held positive impression of the textbook, indicating that it successfully supports English learning through contextual content, engaging visual design, and meaningful learning activities. The textbook was perceived as helpful in enriching students' vocabulary, facilitating their understanding of English materials, and supporting their confidence in practicing productive language skills, particularly speaking and writing.

However, students also perceived several challenges, including unfamiliar vocabulary, unclear explanations, and less supportive illustrations. These findings indicate that while the textbook provides meaningful learning opportunities, effective teacher guidance remains essential to help students overcome these challenges. These findings indicate that the textbook aligns with the communicative and student-centered principles of the Merdeka Curriculum.

Despite these positive impression, several challenges were identified. Some students experienced difficulties in understanding unfamiliar vocabulary and learning instructions, required teacher guidance to complete learning activities, and considered some illustrations less effective in supporting comprehension. These findings highlight that the effectiveness of a textbook depends not only on its content and design but also on the teacher's role in facilitating learning and providing appropriate instructional support. Therefore, teachers are encouraged to complement the textbook with additional explanations and adaptive teaching strategies to address students' diverse learning needs.

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