



THE QUALITATIVE EVALUATION OF IRANIAN 1st GRADE HIGH SCHOOL ENGLISH TEXTBOOK

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Abstract

This study investigates around the content analysis of a English high school textbook and obeys descriptive analysis to find out different aspects of textbook, which serves as the material for students. This qualitative research circles around a library research that investigates the appearance of the textbook, titles and texts embedded in lessons, vocabulary items, grammar and syntax focus, pronunciation, function of language and cultural and also social aspects. Finally, researcher found out that the content of the textbook is not practical to the students' needs, which generally should elevate their language competency and off course, their performance in real situation as observed in class situation. Therefore, the hypothesis of the study proved considering the discussion provided in latest section.

Introduction

This study intends to evaluate Iranian English textbook at 1st year of high school qualitatively. Textbooks play a very crucial role in the process of language teaching and learning and actually are the core part of any curriculum; they are crucial to the teachers so one might assume they are researched, written, and published as unique contributions to advancing knowledge. They have an important influence in the instructional process [1]. Most published research on materials development has focused on materials evaluation [2]. One of the problems in materials evaluation that Tomlinson points out, is that most often it is the researcher's subjective views that determine what criteria are measured and valued in a course book. However, in recent years, efforts have been made to create objective instruments that can offer more reliable facts about the usefulness of materials. Another problem in materials evaluation is that research has mostly been concerned with pre-use evaluation which is speculative and often too time-consuming for teachers to use. It is not until recent years that efforts have been made to create instruments that enable pre-use, whilst-use and post-use evaluation. This indicates that materials evaluation should be considered an on-going process. Tomlinson claims that research on the value of developing materials in different ways, as well as research on the effects of different kinds of materials, is still needed [3].

ELT materials (textbooks) are believed to play a pivotal role in English classes. In recent years, however, there has been a lot of debate throughout ELT profession on their actual roles [4]. According to Hutchinson and Waters, textbook evaluation is basically a straightforward, analytical 'matching process: matching needs to available solutions' [5].

A textbook is an excellent tool for the performance of the material, an effective reference for learners, a tool or piece of equipment made for a particular purpose, a security device for opinions and activities, a useful manual for novice teachers, and an effective source for displaying the goals of language learning. Davison suggests that in the foreign language classrooms, the next most important component after the teacher is the textbook [6]. Textbooks present teachers within structural designs according to the latest research and teaching strategies. Teachers' use of textbooks is beneficial to students. Students benefit from detailed sequence of teaching procedures found in a textbook for presenting the subject matter. According to Razmjoo, many students who use textbooks



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“feel secure and have a sense of progress and achievement” [7]. As Zohrabi argues, “Materials, especially course books, need to be evaluated at every stage of the course in order to find their weaknesses and improve them.” [8]. As Tomlinson states, no textbook is perfect, since it can be used by different students in different circumstances. In evaluating a textbook, we need to know how it meets learners’ needs.

Hypotheses of the study

The objective of 1st year high school English textbook is not practical to students.

Significance and purpose of the study

Textbooks play a very crucial role in the process of language teaching and learning and actually are the core part of any curriculum; they are crucial to the teachers so one might assume they are researched, written, and published as unique contributions to advancing knowledge. They have an important influence in the instructional process [1]. Sheldon states, “textbooks represent the visible heart of any ELT program” [9]. Textbooks are an almost universal component of English language teaching. They are of great value and effect in the process of teaching and learning. Material development and evaluation is a relatively new trend in the field of language teaching. In practical sense, it includes the production, evaluation and adaptation of materials. Tomlinson [2] defines materials as “anything which can be used to facilitate the learning of a language.” Constant evaluation of textbooks to see if they are appropriate is of great importance. The significance of the proposed research is related to the fact that, by using a checklist, it has a particular potential to examine the strengths and weaknesses of any textbook and the findings can help teachers to replace or balance the effects of book’s shortcomings. It can also give directions for modifying 1st grade high school English book in the future. Hence, it is necessary to choose and define the relevant criteria by which the merits and demerits of the textbooks are going to be examined. The result of this study can be useful for the English language teachers and educators in Iran. Also, the study can help textbook designers to modify and change English textbooks in the future. Most teachers and principals of high schools believe that students’ success in English language depends on various factors. One of these factors may relate to the features and the quality of textbooks used in the process of English language teaching. The evaluation of the first year English textbook in Iranian public high schools is another significant issue to identify new ways of reforming its quality and ultimately the quality of teaching and learning English in educational system of Iran. This study also attempts to make suggestions in the field of text selection. This suggestion gives teachers a new and real insight into the ways by which they can help students

Materials and methods

Current study followed a library research method. Content analysis is a set of qualitative and quantitative methods for collecting and analyzing data from verbal, print or electronic communication with numerous applications in education research [10]. The very aim of this study is to evaluate and analyze Iranian English textbook at 1st grade of high school by content analysis of the book. The So-called textbook as the material, prepared by ministry of education in Iran and taught by teachers at the school. As the research method of content analysis is a kind of descriptive and evaluative one, this research consists of analyzing Iranian English textbook at 1st grade of high school on researcher’s side qualitatively. Iranian English textbook at 1st grade of high school as the material for students in high schools was written by Birjandi, et.al.,. The content of the book consisted of nine lessons, having authentic texts, dialogues, drills, readings, vocabularies, grammar and pictures. The researcher had to know how the textbook was used in class situation; so she tried to observe what happens in classroom when students receive the materials from teachers. To this end, one of Anzali’s high schools in first grade class as a model selected to be observed. Each session, a lesson of the book was planned to be taught in the classroom by the school teacher; instructor's method to teach the material was often to read and translate the sentences for the students.



Evaluation Criteria

The present research was based on 13 criteria according to Zohrabi [8] which are as follows:

1. Explicit statement of the objectives in the introduction and their implementation in the material.
2. Good vocabulary explanation and practice.
3. Approaches educationally and socially acceptable to target community.
4. Periodic review and test sections.
5. Appropriate visual materials available.
6. Interesting topics and tasks.
7. Clear instructions.
8. Clear attractive layout, print easy to read.
9. Content clearly organized and graded.
10. Plenty of authentic language.
11. Good grammar presentation and practice.
12. Fluency practice in all four skills.
13. Encouraging learners to develop own learning strategies and to become independent in their learning.

Levels of textbook analysis

There are various approaches in the literature concerning the levels that ELT textbooks can be analyzed. Littlejohn conducted a three level analysis [11]. At the first level of analysis the focus is on the physical aspects of materials and how they appear as a complete set or book, at the second level the focus of analysis is on the actual role of learners in the classroom activities, whether language form or meaning is focused, forms of activities and classroom participation and finally the contents of the tasks. The third level examines the implications derived by evaluating the overall aims of the materials, content, task selection and sequencing, teachers' and learners' roles, demands of learner knowledge, effects, skills and abilities and the role of materials as a whole.

Results and conclusion

The researcher in this study used descriptive analysis to investigate and report different aspects of textbook such as; appearance of the book, different titles and texts, vocabulary, grammar and syntax, pronunciation, function of language and cultural and social aspects. Finally, research found out that the content of the textbook is not practical to the students' needs, which should elevate their language competency and off course, their performance in real situation as observed in class situation. So the hypothesis of the study is proved considering the following discussion as appeared in problems and solutions subtitle.

Problems and solutions

The total volume delivered and the allocation of time and lack of audio files for language. The biggest problem here is due to present books .First, an audio file is not necessarily the only one's native English speakers Mp3 format, with both British and American accents with different books should be available to students and teachers. This will allow the student is given the pleasure of speaking with a variety of devices for learning such as mobile phones by listening. Secondly, to provide quality of teach, extra hours are needed. It is better low workload and the quality of learning. Our educational system can include this program in curriculum of English education.



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1. The book, unlike language schools' books no color, no amazing pictures and no suitable illustration. For this reason, students are not willing to read it. Many of the images in the book is inappropriate and ridiculous it is better that they be corrected.
2. Reading is better than the original language texts is selected and if possible, include the contents of scientific, educational and moral issues.
3. Training courses can be varied to suit the final exam.
4. It marks the end of a book in Word list Phonetic signs and meaning of each word to be written in English in front of them.
5. On page 14 Speaking 3 seems better to be removed. As in the previous example, the speaking (2) precisely for this example can and could not have been better to avoid the duplication or use of the new instance.
6. In the second lesson, page 20, question 2 is ambiguous. A cat saw a dog. The cat climbed to the top of the tree. Where did the cat climb?
7. In page 43, Language Functions is accordance with profession parents, family in terms of population seems inappropriate.
8. Chapter 7 Page 82 Reading "Highways in The Sky" of the ancient science because scientific mystery bird has been discovered in recent years. It is better to be written for a Reading section by new discoveries about birds or scientific research.
9. The lesson 7 on page 86 "the use of that - clauses as a direct object" is very simple structure.
10. Figure 6 on pages 88 "vocabulary Review" are not related to the exercise seems better to have a clearer picture of which is specified to be replaced.
11. Lesson eight, page 96, in speaking practice 3 is identified active or passive forms or both should be answered.
12. 1st year of high school's English Textbook consist of 9 lessons of 3 hours and in schools 2 hours a week, it is better to limited to 8 lesson, because the majority of teachers in all the books useful to have problems and have to have all the speed and of poor quality book.
13. Pronunciation and vocabulary- Word lists of each lesson in the English textbook is placed at the end of each chapter. Better is set the meaning of each word and phonetic signs of each word in front of them to familiarize students with the form and the correct pronunciation of each word. In other words, use monolingual dictionary.

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