Textbook evaluation: Analyses of ELT materials

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The selection of an ELT textbook often signals an important administrative and educational decision in which there is considerable professional, financial, or even political investment. A thorough evaluation, therefore, would enable the managerial and teaching staff of a specific institution or organization to discriminate between all of the available textbooks on the market. Moreover, it would provide for a sense of familiarity with a book’s content thus assisting educators in identifying the particular strengths and weaknesses in textbooks already in use. This would go a long way in ultimately assisting teachers with making optimum use of a book’s strong points and recognizing the shortcomings of certain exercises, tasks, and entire texts. The book is strongly recommended for authors, program designers, syllabus developers and language teachers and all who are interested in applied linguistics as a field of inquiry.

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TEXTBOOK EVALUATION

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Preface

Text-book evaluation has been an emerging field of study in applied linguistics and curriculum study in the recent years. Particularly, it has caught the attention of many Iranian researchers and has recently been the focus of numerous theses and dissertations across the nation in Iranian universities. The authors of the present book subscribe to the idea that text-book evaluation studies can accrue geometrically- multiplied benefits to L2 pedagogy as a scientific and pragmatic-oriented field of enquiry for a multitude of reasons, a touch on the most salient ones will be made in the following lines:

Text-book development and preparation is a time-consuming and technically complicated task which might be beyond many practitioners’ available resources and expertise. Moreover, different groups of learners have differential needs and purposes which are almost impossible to cater for with one single text-book. Therefore, it becomes mandatory for the majority of language teachers and practitioners to check the extent the content of the available materials is compatible with their learners’ needs. This compatibility checking of the available materials is also referred to as text-book evaluation by some scholars in the related literature of the field.

Any text-book- if developed scientifically in such a way that the most agreed-upon principles and the most rigorous and recent findings from the related fields of study such as applied linguistics and psychology are taken into account in the selection, grading, and sequencing of the materials content- can hopefully enhance and accelerate L2 learning.

For diverse reasons, practicing teachers might not have the opportunity to keep themselves abreast of the status qua SLA findings and be fully aware of the prevailing dominant theories of learning and linguistics. In many instances as it is the case in Iran, and maybe other similar countries, the employer institutes and
organizations, particularly in the public sector are not able or might be unwilling to provide in-service education to update their employed teachers’ professional knowledge and expertise because they believe that it is actually in vein. Most often, they claim that the teachers who enjoy a non-competitive secure life-long salary in the public high schools under the Ministry of Education usually lack the necessary motivation to keenly participate in the in-service educational programs, and even if they do, the old habits of teaching they are so used to are so deeply entrenched in their minds that can easily nullify any act of reforming. Since text-books are considered the heart of any language syllabuses, they have the potentiality of reforming the teachers’ mentality and practice of teaching.

Furthermore, in many contexts, the assigned text-books might be the sole primary source of linguistic data for learners to build up their linguistic competences. Therefore, utmost care should be exercised for the teaching materials to be adequately comprehensive, informative, and self-sufficient to support the achievement of the target objectives set by the program designers.

Insufficient motivation or lack of it in language learners can render any program a miserable failure. Aesthetic values and fine arts employed in the graphic design and layout of the materials, attractive topics and authentic pictures on high-quality papers accompanied by multi-media software can help to generate appeal in the materials to tackle the hypo-motivation syndrome in some learners. Aesthetic value criterion has been one of the most frequent touch stones to which various text-book evaluation researchers have pointed in their analyses.

The present book includes six articles, three of which, focus on the evaluation of the Iranian EFL text-book series which have been prescribed by the Ministry of Education for all public high schools across the nation. The target population of stake holders is estimated to be about ten millions in number. Considering the magnitude of the target population who use this book series as their daily staple, any supposed betterment in the books, as a possible result of
the criticisms and suggestions made by the researchers, can culminate into large benefits to the nation if holistically viewed. Three other text-evaluation articles in the present edition have focused on two internationally published ELT text-books. The raison d’être for their inclusion was to provide the readers with extra samples so that a cross-comparison of the books with reference to the criteria around which the different evaluation studies revolve could become possible.

Lastly, the book is strongly recommended for authors, program designers, syllabus developers and language teachers and all who are interested in applied linguistics as a field of inquiry.

Ali Jahangard
Critical Evaluation of Iranian High School English Textbooks: Vocabulary at the Heart of the Scrutiny
**Introduction**

Textbooks are one of the most prominent components of any language teaching program. They should be therefore, designed, developed and chosen carefully to be tailored to the needs of the learners. Cunningsworth (1995) points out that choosing a coursework is a challenging task which is not an all-night one-shot decision, and needs the investment of budget, time and energy on the side of both curriculum developers and syllabus designers. Hence, the current textbooks which are used in teaching curricula need to be evaluated according to certain criteria to improve their effectiveness. Although a rich body of research can be found in the literature in the field regarding the evaluation of Iranian high school English textbooks, little research can be found in the literature which scrutinizes the materials in the books with regard to criterial features of the study especially with regard to vocabulary learning strategies. The present study was designed to fill the research gap felt in this regard.

**Review of the Related Literature**

**Theoretical Framework of the Study**

**Textbook Evaluation**

There has been a great amount of literature review on textbook evaluation which emphasizes its importance in material development. Sheldon (1988) offers several reasons for textbook evaluation. He suggests that the selection of an ELT textbook often signals an important administrative and educational decision in which there is considerable professional, financial or even political investment (as cited in Jahangard, 2008). Williams (1983) maintains that, “any textbook should be used judiciously, since it cannot cater equally to the requirements of every classroom setting” (p. 251). Cunningsworth (1995) discusses the reasons for materials evaluation as follows:
Reasons for material evaluation activities are many and varied. The intention to adopt new course books is a major and frequent reason for evaluation. Another reason is to identify particular strengths and weaknesses in course books already in use, so that optimum use can be made of their strong points, whilst their weaker areas can be strengthened through adaptation or by substituting material from other books (p. 14).

Ellis (1997) distinguishes two types of predictive and retrospective material evaluation and argues that teachers should perform empirical, impressionistic evaluation of the course books during the course.

**Strategies, Learning Strategies and Vocabulary Learning Strategies**

As Oxford (1990) elaborates, the word strategy comes from the ancient Greek term “strategia” meaning generalship or the art of war (p. 6). The word bears the concepts of conscious manipulation, movement toward a goal, planning and competition. Several attempts have been made to construct an operational definition of learning strategies. O’Malley and Chamot (1990, p. 1) define learning strategies as “The special thoughts or behaviors that individuals use to help them comprehend, learn or retain new information”. In another attempt (Gu, 2005, as cited in Griffiths, 2008) defines learning strategies as “any activities chosen by learners for the purpose of regulating their own language learning” (p. 87). Thus, it becomes evident that strategies are activities which are chosen consciously and used purposefully. Oxford (1990) argues that language learning strategies have some basic features including communicative competence as the main goal, new roles for the teachers, problem orientation and action basis and some others.

Nation (2001) argues that vocabulary learning strategies are a sub-division of language learning strategies which in turn are a sub-classification of general learning strategies.
There are different taxonomies of vocabulary learning strategies in the literature. Schmitt (2000) puts vocabulary learning strategies in five categories. Determination strategies (DET) are useful when facing the discovery of a new word's meaning without recourse to another person's expertise. Social strategies (SOC) use interaction for the purpose of learning, like negotiating vocabulary knowledge with other people. Memory strategies or mnemonics (MEM) are used when knowledge in hand, is related to the background knowledge in the memory to learn the vocabulary. Cognitive strategies (COG) are the manipulation and transformation of the target language by the learner. Metacognitive strategies (MET) are the decisions that the learners take to plan, monitor and evaluate their learning.

Nation (2001) identifies four stages in using strategies in vocabulary learning. Planning in strategies involve deciding on where to focus attention, how to focus the attention, and how often to give attention to the item. Different types of planning strategies include choosing word, choosing different aspects of word knowledge, choosing appropriate strategies and planning repetition. Sources in strategies means finding information about the item which involves analyzing the word, using context, consulting a reference source in L1 or L2. Nation calls the final stage as processes, by which he means establishing knowledge of the word which includes noticing, retrieving and generating.

**Previous Research Findings**

Regarding Iranian high school EFL text books, Jahangard (2007) conducted a rather comprehensive evaluation, but the major focus of the study was not on the vocabulary learning strategies. He argued that there were two types of problems in the explanation and use of the new vocabulary in the series. One was concerned with the lack of correspondence between the different senses of the word in the *New Words* section and the senses which were used in the
reading comprehensions. The other type was attributable to the poor contextualization of the new vocabulary in the New Words sections.

In a similar but detailed study, Soodmand Afshar (2007) evaluated Interchange Series (third edition) with a special focus on vocabulary learning strategies. He concluded that although the Interchange series enjoyed a great number of advantages, they did not equip the learners with enough vocabulary knowledge and avoided dealing emphatically with, as well as training learners on the use of major vocabulary learning strategies such as dictionary use, keeping vocabulary notebooks and repetition strategies which have been found to be of paramount importance in second/foreign language vocabulary acquisition.

To the best of the researchers’ knowledge, no study has been conducted focusing on vocabulary learning strategies in Iranian high school EFL textbooks. Thus, the researchers decided to weigh Iranian high school English textbooks against the twenty criterial features taken from various checklists whose results are then matched with descriptive statistics gained from a twenty-item five-digit Likert-scale questionnaire completed by fourteen male and female Iranian high school English teachers evaluating the books against the same criterial features which are presented in 3.4 (Instruments section) later.

**Methodology**

**Participants**

Based on convenient sampling, the researchers chose 14 Iranian high school EFL teachers teaching in local high schools. There were seven female teachers, with teaching experiences ranging from one to fifteen years, three with MA degrees and the other four with BA degrees in English. The age of the female teachers ranged from twenty to forty. There were also seven male teachers, with teaching experiences ranging from one to twenty years, four with
MA degrees and the other three with BA degrees in English. The age of the male teachers ranged from twenty to thirty. The particulars of the subjects of the study are summarized in Table 1 below.

Table 1.1

*Particulars of the Subjects of the Study*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subjects</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Mean age</th>
<th>Mean experience</th>
<th>BA Degree</th>
<th>MA degree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>29.57</td>
<td>9.85</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>30.14</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Materials**

The researchers scrutinized, based on criterial features, the three Iranian high school English textbooks mentioned below:


**Instruments**

In order to evaluate the textbooks, the researchers scrutinized the textbooks against the criterial features drawn from Soodmand Afshar (2007), which are, in turn, based on major evaluation checklists like those of Sheldon (1984,1985), Coleman (1985), Low (1987), Skierso (1991), Chambers (1997), Ellis (1997), Hemsely (1997).

The following criteria were used to evaluate the textbooks:
1. Is the layout (physical format) of the Iranian high school English textbooks clear, attractive and easy to read?
2. Do the materials represent minority groups?
3. Are the instructions for exercises clear and do they provide contextual clues?
4. Is the content of the books clearly graded from easy to difficult?
5. Do the books provide enough practice in all four skills (listening, speaking, reading, and writing)?
6. Are different components of language (grammar, vocabulary and pronunciation) well incorporated into the books?
7. Do the books provide the learners with plenty of authentic language?
8. Do the exercises meet the learners' real life needs?
9. Do the exercises correspond to what has been taught by the course material?
10. Are Teachers' books available and does they offer prescribed programs of how to teach the materials?
11. Are there enough visual materials (photographs, charts, diagrams) in the Iranian high school EFL books?
12. Is a vocabulary list/index included at the end or throughout the Iranian high school EFL books?
13. Do the Iranian high school English books give hints to the learners to use major vocabulary learning strategies (use of a dictionary, repetition of words, guessing the meaning from context, etc)?
14. Do the Iranian high school English textbooks explicitly focus on vocabulary learning strategies and emphasize the use of them?
15. Is the number of vocabulary items in each lesson enough?
16. Are the vocabulary items in the passages contextualized?
17. Are the topics of the readings and tasks interesting?
18. Are power relations between the characters in the lessons of equal rank?
19. Do the Iranian high school English textbooks develop learners’ socio-pragmatic and strategic competencies?

20. Is Grammar practiced and presented well and systematically in the lessons?

For the purpose of triangulation, a five-digit questionnaire with twenty items on Likert scale from 1=strongly disagree to 5=strongly agree was handed to fourteen high school EFL teachers. Items of the questionnaire were based on an open-ended questionnaire which was filled out by six high school EFL teachers (other than the subjects of the study) to elicit the trends, patterns and ideas to develop the Likert scale questionnaire. Items were also based on the evaluation checklist to ensure the validity of the researchers’ evaluation.

**Procedure**

Based on the evaluation criteria, the researcher scrutinized the three Iranian high school EFL textbooks and reported on the items of evaluation criteria. For the purposes of validity, the researchers’ subjective scrutiny was triangulated with a five-digit twenty-item Likert scale questionnaire which was filled out by fourteen Iranian high school EFL teachers. Then the results of the evaluation and those of the questionnaire were compared and reported.

**Data Analysis**

Data collected through the questionnaire were analyzed using descriptive statistics (Mean and Standard deviation of each item). Then these descriptive statistics were compared to the descriptions of evaluation criteria as done by the researcher.

**Results**

The teachers’ answers to the items in the questionnaire are summarized in Table 2 below using descriptive statistics.

Table 1.2
Descriptive Statistics for Teachers’ Evaluations of the Textbooks Based On the Questionnaire

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of the question</th>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Number of the respondents</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Standard deviation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>The layout (physical format) of the Iranian high school English textbooks is clear, attractive and easy to read.</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1.06</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>The materials represent minority groups and are not culturally biased or specific.</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>2.07</td>
<td>0.83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>The instructions for exercises are clear and provide contextual clues.</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>2.64</td>
<td>0.98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>The content of the books is clearly graded from easy to difficult.</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>2.78</td>
<td>1.23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>The books provide enough practice in all four skills (listening, speaking, reading, and writing)</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>1.57</td>
<td>3.09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Different components of language (grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation) are well</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>2.92</td>
<td>0.97</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
# TEXTBOOK EVALUATION

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Score</th>
<th>Value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>The books provide the learners with plenty of authentic language</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>1.57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>0.81</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>The exercises meet the learners' real life needs.</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>1.35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>3.74</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>The exercises correspond to what has been taught by the course material.</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>3.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>1.11</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Teacher’s books are available and offer prescribed programs of how to teach the materials.</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>1.57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>3.74</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>There are enough visual materials (photographs, charts, diagrams) in the Iranian high school EFL books.</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>1.03</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>A vocabulary list/index is included at the end or throughout the Iranian high school EFL books.</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>4.07</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>1.4</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>The Iranian high school English books give hints to the learners to use major vocabulary learning strategies (use of a dictionary, repetition of words, guessing the</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>2.14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>1.12</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
meaning from context,…).

<p>| | | | | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
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<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>The Iranian high school English textbooks explicitly focus on vocabulary learning strategies and emphasize the use of them.</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>2.14</td>
<td><strong>1.12</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>The number of vocabulary items in each lesson is enough.</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>3.14</td>
<td><strong>0.48</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>The vocabulary items in the passages have been contextualized.</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>2.61</td>
<td><strong>0.47</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>The topics of the readings and tasks are interesting.</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>2.21</td>
<td><strong>0.93</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>Power relations between the characters in the lessons are of equal rank.</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>2.71</td>
<td><strong>3.74</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>The Iranian high school English textbooks develop learners’ socio-pragmatic and strategic competencies.</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>1.71</td>
<td><strong>1.08</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>Grammar is practiced and presented well and systematically in the lessons.</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>3.14</td>
<td><strong>1.12</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
In the next section, the researchers’ scrutiny of the high school English textbooks is presented in details. Attempts will be made to compare and contrast the researchers’ scrutiny with those of the teachers to shed more light on the issue and to triangulate the data for validation purposes.

1. Is the layout (physical format) of the Iranian high school EFL textbooks clear, attractive and easy to read?

The paper used in the textbooks has a very low quality. The textbooks lack colorful illustrations and the blank space for writing the answers to the exercises is insufficient. Book Three is also provided with the addition of blue ink. It seems that this problem is due to the shortage of fund. However, the orthography of the books is clear and easy for students to read. The relatively low mean of the teachers’ response to this item (M=2) provides good support in this regard.

2. Do the materials represent minority groups? Are they culturally biased?

It is not clear whether the books adhere to the American or the British culture. Names of the persons used to introduce the characters are mostly Iranian names. Illustrations are well suited to the Iranian culture. Thus, the authors have done their best to develop materials which are suitable for Iranian culture and it seems that the target cultures are neglected. However, the reading sections sometimes represent some stories which take other cultures into account. For example in Book one, the reading entitled “Learn a Foreign Language” provides students with some information about Spanish culture by introducing the word “Bullfight”. Descriptive statistics of the teachers’ evaluation (M=2.07, SD=0.83) corroborates the researchers’ scrutiny of this question.
3. Are the instructions for exercises clear and do they provide contextual clues?

Based on the researchers’ teaching experience, most of the instructions in the books are clear for the students and they know what they are required to do. Even if they do not understand the instructions, they are provided with examples in the books, which guide them to do the exercises. Because the instructions of the end-of-the-term achievement tests are in Persian, it might have been better to have the instructions for some exercises in the book in the native language of the learners. However, there is a discrepancy between the researchers’ scrutiny and the teachers’ evaluation of this item. The mean of teachers’ evaluation for this item is low (M=2.64).

4. Is the content of the books clearly graded from easy to difficult?

The researcher thinks that the content of Books One and Two are well graded from easy to difficult. Grammar points, reading comprehensions and vocabulary items are well suited to the cognitive development of the learners. There seems to be a small problem that the background knowledge of the learners cannot be activated with the materials. Even in the reading comprehensions, there is not even a single pre-task to prepare the learners’ minds. Also reading comprehensions in Book three seem to be very difficult in the first three lessons. The researchers’ personal experience is that the first three readings in the Book Three (i.e. “TV or no TV?”, “The value of Education”, “Memory”) are the most problematic readings for the learners. Sentences in these three readings are too long and complex so that the students have to bear a high cognitive load. Data provided in Table 2 with regard to this item also shows that the researchers’ scrutiny is to a great extent in line with the evaluation of the teachers in this regard.
5. Do the books provide enough practice in all four skills (listening, speaking, reading, and writing)?

The researchers’ impression is that the main concern of the authors is to make learners able to read autonomously without using their first language. Therefore, a great proportion of the books is devoted to reading skills and reading comprehensions. Although the recorded tapes are provided to practice listening in the classroom, there is not enough attention to this part on the side of the teachers and this problem might be due to the lack of time. There is a section at the end of each lesson named “Language Functions”. Although this section is presented in conversation pattern, it does not provide the students with enough practice to speak autonomously in a natural way. Thus, speaking and writing are the two skills which seem to have been forgotten to be incorporated into the books, hence giving primacy to the reading skills. The teachers’ relatively low mean for this item in the questionnaire also shows that different skills are not well incorporated into the books.

6. Are different components of language (grammar, vocabulary and pronunciation) well incorporated into the books?

Vocabulary and grammar are well emphasized and well incorporated into the books. Each lesson provides students with grammar rules and practice exercises which are based on those rules and some vocabulary items and the related exercises to practice them. The problem with vocabulary sections is that vocabulary items are not well contextualized in the books, especially in the “New Words” section. In this section, vocabulary items are presented in single sentences and learners are required to understand them and answer the questions that follow. It is clear that single sentences cannot provide rich contexts for vocabulary items. Finally, there is a pronunciation practice at the end of each
lesson which focuses on segmentals in the first two books. Suprasegmentals (e.g., stress, intonation, etc) are presented in Book Three. The relatively high mean of teachers’ answers to this question in the questionnaire (M= 2.92) also shows that different components of language are relatively well incorporated into the books.

7. Do the books provide the learners with plenty of authentic language?

Nunan (1999) defines authentic materials as spoken or written language data that have been produced in the course of genuine communication, and not specifically written for purposes of language teaching. On the basis of this definition, reading comprehensions in books which are manipulated to represent the grammar rules in the lessons are not authentic. In the similar vein “Language Function” sections are not authentic, as long as they are manipulated to include different functions. These functions lack natural pauses, hesitations and other features of natural speech. It might be better to include some sections of different magazines, manuals, timetables to add to the authenticity of the materials. The teachers’ reported mean for this item in the questionnaire is relatively low (M=1.57) which provides strong support for the researchers’ evaluation in this respect.

8. Do the exercises meet the learners' real life needs?

As discussed above, the aim of the books is to develop the reading proficiency of the learners. When learners enter universities in Iran, they are expected to read in English and understand autonomously. Although this need for the learners has been considered by the authors, all the three books are not well designed so that they develop all reading skills in the learners. Skimming, scanning, intensive and extensive reading skills which are the most important aspects of reading skills are not explicitly practiced in the books. Teachers’
response to this item in the questionnaire (M= 1.35) strongly supports this problem.

9. Do the exercises correspond to what has been taught by the course material?

The content validity of the exercises seems to be relatively high. Grammar exercises include different kinds of transformations; fill-in-the-blank and others of the ilk. Reading comprehension exercises include open-ended comprehension questions, True/False statements and multiple choice items. Exercises which are related to vocabulary items include match the pairs, synonyms and antonyms, fill-in-the-blanks and multiple choice items. However, in Book one, while passive voice is included in the eighth lesson, some exercises in the first four lessons are based on the passive voice and learners do not know what they are required to do and cannot understand the structures. It is also understood from the relatively high mean (M=3.5) of this item on the questionnaire that exercises proportionately correspond to what has been taught by the course material.

10. Are Teachers’ books available and do they offer prescribed programs of how to teach the materials?

To the best of the researchers’ knowledge the teacher’s guides are not available for high school English teachers. However, in the first book, a two page introduction is dedicated to some general guidelines for the teachers. Although this introduction clarifies the aims of the books; it fails to elaborate on the step-by-step procedures of teaching different sections in the lessons. There seems to be some discrepancies among the teachers’ ideas in this regard (SD=3.74) which may show the uncertainty of teachers with regard to the availability of the “Teacher’s books”.

27
11. Are there enough visual materials (photographs, charts, diagrams) in the Iranian high school EFL books?

Visual materials can be defined as the facilities that can be employed by teachers and learners to enhance language learning in the classroom (Jahangard, 2007). These books only provide some black and white illustrations for exercises. The first two books do not include any charts or diagrams. But, the first lesson in the third book contains a timetable for school program and students are required to make sentences based on this timetable. Therefore, in all the three books there exists only one chart. Also the native-tape-recordings of the materials are available for teachers. Teachers are usually not eager to use these tapes due to the low quality of the tapes and lack of time in their schedules.

12. Is a vocabulary list/index included at the end or throughout the Iranian high school EFL books?

At the end of each lesson, in all three books there is a part entitled “Vocabulary” which lists the new vocabulary items in that lesson. There is also "Word list" at the end of each book which contains all the new vocabulary items throughout the book. The high mean of the teachers’ evaluation for question number 12 in the questionnaire provides strong support for the researchers’ scrutiny in this regard.

13. Do the Iranian high school English books give hints to the learners to use major vocabulary learning strategies (use of a dictionary, repetition of words, guessing the meaning from the context, etc)?

Throughout all the three books, there is not a single tip, instruction or hint to guide the learners to use vocabulary learning strategies. Teachers usually encourage the students to learn the vocabulary index at the end of each lesson by means of a dictionary or providing synonyms and antonyms. However, the Pre-
University Book, which is not the main focus of this study, provides instructions and hints in each lesson for learners to use vocabulary learning strategies.

14. Do the Iranian high school English textbooks explicitly focus on vocabulary learning strategies and emphasize their use?

The results of the scrutiny for the vocabulary learning strategies in the books are rather disappointing. Although there is not any specific instruction on how to learn vocabulary, in some exercises in different parts of the books, learners are required to learn the meaning by doing these exercises. These exercises include filling in the blanks with the appropriate word and finding the synonym/antonym of the underlined word and answering the questions which are accompanied by some relevant illustrations.

Based on Soodmand Afshar, (2007) the major vocabulary learning strategies seem to include dictionary use, keeping vocabulary notebooks and repetition strategies. The books do not provide any explicit practice in this regard. Interestingly, descriptive statistics for questions numbers 13 and 14 which focus on vocabulary learning strategies are identical (M=2.14, SD=1.12).

15. Is the number of vocabulary items in each lesson enough?

Gu (2003) argues that if the items in a word list are not very difficult, 100 or even more items can be studied one at a time. The number of new vocabulary items in the "Vocabulary" section at the end of each lesson ranges from forty to seventy items. It seems that considering the difficulty level of vocabulary items, the number of the items is enough in the lessons and in some lessons it exceeds fifty items. The teachers’ evaluation also corroborates the researchers’ scrutiny in this regard.

16. Are the vocabulary items in the passages contextualized?
Nation (2001) distinguishes between decontextualization and contextualization in language learning. According to him, decontextualization occurs when learners pay attention to language items as part of language rather than as part of a message. In contrast, contextualization occurs when the learners need to acquire language items as part of the messages instead of language systems. Considering this contrast, the only context which is provided for students to guess the meaning of new vocabulary items from the whole message is the provision of some relevant illustrations. In the open-ended questionnaire which was meant to validate the Likert scale questionnaire, all the six teachers reported that the vocabulary items were not contextualized in the books. Descriptive statistics for this item also prove the researchers’ objective scrutiny. (SD=0.47 and M= 2.61). The low SD shows that nearly all teachers unanimously agreed upon this topic.

17. Are the topics of the readings and tasks interesting?

The majority of the topics of the readings are not updated and attractive. Some topics regarding information technology, sports and some factual and anecdotal topics might be more attractive to the students. Teachers’ evaluation for this item provides good support for this problem. (M=2.21, SD=0.93).

18. Are power relations between the characters in the lessons of equal rank?

Fairclough (1995) defines CDA as follows:

By critical discourse analysis, I mean discourse analysis which aims to systematically explore often opaque relationships of causality and determination between (a) discursive practices, events and texts, and (b) wider social and cultural structures, relations and processes; to investigate how such practices, events and texts arise out of and are ideologically shaped by relations of power and struggles over power; and to explore how the opacity of these relationships
between discourse and society is itself a factor securing power and hegemony (pp. 132-133).

According to this definition by Fairclough, there seems to be equality of power between the characters in the language function (dialogues) of the three books. The most common relations which can be found in the books are of “friend to friend” and “classmate to classmate” nature. However, there is a discrepancy between the researchers’ scrutiny and the descriptive statistics for this item. This discrepancy might be due to the unfamiliarity of some of the teachers in the study with the notion of critical discourse analysis.

19. Do the Iranian high school EFL textbooks develop learners’ socio-pragmatic and strategic competencies?

The researcher’s overall impression is that these three books fail to develop all kinds of competencies in the learners. As mentioned earlier, the learners in this study do not make much use of vocabulary learning strategies and thus they do not develop much strategic competence and autonomy. Descriptive statistics for this item on the questionnaire is relatively lower than all other items which shows the negligence of incorporation of socio-pragmatic and strategic competencies into Iranian high school EFL textbooks.

20. Is Grammar practiced and presented well and systematically in the lessons?

Grammar drills in the books which are mostly based on the Audio-Lingual method include substitution, repetition and transformation drills. Learners are required to practice the rules orally in “Speaking” exercises and in written form in “Writing” exercises. Oral drills occupy the lion’s share of the exercises in the books. The aim of these drills is to develop automaticity and to some extent oral proficiency in the learners. The mean for this item in the questionnaire is
relatively higher than those for other items (M=3.14) which indicates that presentation and practice of the grammar is rather systematic in the books.

As it can be understood from the above Table, the results of the researchers’ scrutiny overlap with those of the questionnaire. It seems that the teachers are not satisfied with the books and they have some negative attitudes toward the books.

**Discussion and Conclusion**

This article tried to analyze the materials and vocabulary learning strategies presented in the textbooks designed for Iranian high school students according to evaluation checklists. As it can be inferred from the results section, the books have some positive features like the inclusion of vocabulary indexes, and correspondence of the exercises to the content of the books which should not be neglected. However, the books seem to suffer from a number of disadvantages. Based on the researchers’ scrutiny and the results of the survey it can be understood that the textbooks lack enough practice in different vocabulary learning strategies. Dictionary use, keeping vocabulary notebooks and repetition strategies are known as major vocabulary learning strategies and they are found to be the most important in vocabulary acquisition. Nation (2005) asserts that vocabulary learning strategies need to be studied and practiced with feedback so much so that the learners are able to use them with confidence and ease. Jahangard (2007) argued that some of the vocabularies are not well explained and practiced in the books. In their overall evaluation, Azizifar et al. (2010) also found that “Book Two does not present a quite balanced rate of entry of vocabulary” (p.42) and believe that on the whole, the books introduce the structure properly, but the introduction of vocabulary and expressions has some inadequacies. This might be a threat to English language teaching in Iranian high schools. Material developers in the ministry of education should think twice
about revising books. The general evaluation also suggests that there are some problems in the layout, authenticity of materials, and relevance to the needs of the learners and so on. They should not wait for the textbooks to be revised. They can change the taste of their classes with other suitable materials from different sources. Teachers also should not neglect vocabulary learning strategies. They should teach the major strategies to the students and make students conscious about these strategies. Finally, students should practice the major vocabulary learning strategies and use them while studying the books.

Implications of the Study

This study investigated the different kinds of vocabulary learning strategies and Iranian high school EFL teachers' attitudes toward the distribution of these strategies in Iranian high school English textbooks. Therefore, it might be considered a significant endeavor in promoting Iranian high school materials and textbooks. The results can also be beneficial for students and teachers in managing their strategies in the process of vocabulary learning. Teachers can teach vocabulary learning strategies that best fit their classrooms. Students can be aware of vocabulary learning strategies so that this awareness can facilitate their long journey in the mastery of EFL. The study can also give insights to material developers in the ministry of education regarding the vocabulary learning in the hope that existing difficulties in the field might be eased. The textbooks can also be revised in a way that students can gain a better vocabulary competence through studying the books. Moreover, the study evaluated some other criteria in the textbooks and may provide some information about different aspects of the high school EFL textbooks.
References


Chapter 2

An In-depth Evaluation of Interchange Series (3rd Edition)
Introduction

McDonough and Shaw (2003) believe that there are some situations that we need to evaluate materials. In the first situation the teachers might be given the choice to adopt or develop their materials and in the second the teachers are just consumers of other peoples’ products. In both of these situations some degree of evaluation is needed. In EFL contexts it can be argued that the teacher and the textbook are the two most important and immediate cultural links between the student’s native culture and the target foreign culture. If the influential roles of the teacher and the textbook are accepted, then the way the textbook portrays the role of various people in the target society and the way they use language to express their intentions directly affect EFL students’ choices of language when communicating with native speakers. Therefore, the materials and textbooks of each period in the history of ELT reflect the principles and ideas of a teaching method which were fashionable in that time. But as Kumaravadivelu (2006) mentions, we are living in a ‘postmethod’ condition where no single and unique method guarantees success in all language classrooms and for all learners. Whether the teacher should have the freedom to select the materials for evaluation and adaptation or not still remains controversial. One thing is clear, however, and that is evaluation is usually done and no one denies its necessity. Along the lines of arguments presented so far, the main thrust of the present research is to carry out an evaluation on a series of ELT materials namely, Interchange 3rd edition.

Interchange 3rd Edition, the newest revision of New Interchange, is written by Richards, Hull and Proctor in 2006 and is claimed to be communicative and task-based. The authors also state that the textbooks include high-interest topics, focus on both fluency, and a multi-skills syllabus integrating themes, structures, functions, vocabulary, and pronunciation. They believe that
the underlying philosophy of the course is best learned when used for meaningful communication. However, since the publication of the Interchange (3rd edition) in 2006, there has been no research to show to what degree such claims could be valid.

**Objectives of the Study**

The present study aims at exploring and evaluating the Interchange series, to show to what extent the real application of communicative and task-based approaches are applied in the materials of the text book mentioned. The results of the evaluation is hoped to benefit English teachers in many of language institutes in that it might give them insight into the course book they use and how they can exploit it better. As mentioned earlier since the publication of interchange (3rd edition) in 2006, there has been no research to show to what degree such claims could be valid. As Riazi (2001) states textbooks are the second effective factor in every classroom after the teacher. As such, the study seeks answers to the following questions with reference to Interchange 3rd edition series:

**RQ1:** What are the pedagogic values of the newest version of Interchange series?

**RQ2:** How are the newly developed and widely used the Interchange books (3rd edition) in line with the objectives set for them?

**RQ3:** What are the strengths and weaknesses of the Interchange series (3rd edition)?

**Methodology**

**Participants**

The participants of the study were four raters who were asked to complete the evaluative checklists. The raters of the study were ELT experts who had
taught the textbooks under analysis, Interchange (3rd edition), for at least one year each. Their teaching experience ranged from 4 to 10 years.

**Instrument**

To conduct the evaluation, Littlejohn’s (1998) checklist was used to be completed by the four raters. Appending the check list seems redundant as ample description about each part will ensue in the results part. Each checklist consisted of two parts. The first part -Task Analysis Sheets (TAS) - examines the activities and tasks in one typical unit of each textbook. These Task Analysis Sheets include three sections. For each activity one Task Analysis Sheet was allocated. Here, the raters were asked to tick the items which were present in the task. In each subsection the raters may have ticked one or more items. For instance, in case of subsection ‘Mental Operation’, a task may involve the learner in both retrieving information from his/her long term memory and decoding semantic meaning. As we mentioned the tasks of just two units of each textbook were examined for two reasons. One was that all units include the same parts and tasks in a uniform sequence, i.e. all the units are in the same format. The other reason is about practical considerations. If the researcher wanted to provide a TAS (Task Analysis Sheets) for all activities in the four textbooks the checklists would be too long and exhausting to be rated by the participants. Littlejohn himself mentions that to do evaluation at this stage 10 to 15 percent of the textbook is sufficient to be analyzed. In the second part of the checklists –’Design’- a numerical scale of 0 to 4 points was provided. This part consists of nine sections of Design part in Littlejohn’s framework, namely:

I. Aims and objectives (including 7 evaluative questions)
II. Principles of selection (including 7 evaluative questions)
III. Principles of sequencing (including 7 evaluative questions)
IV. Subject matter and focus of subject matter (including 7 evaluative questions)
Data Analysis Procedure

Through performing a page-by-page analysis of evaluative checklists, already checked by the experts, frequency counts and percentage indexes were reported for individual features which were listed in the task analysis sheets. For the second part, design, as well first a general percentage indexes were reported for the seven subcategories introduced in the previous part and then the percentage index of each question was reported as well. The following part of the analysis contains the result of the interviews. The results are presented both in the form of frequencies and percentage indices.

Results

Results of the Evaluations

Results of the evaluations are presented in tables and a graph below. In each of these tables and graphs the ultimate results for the Interchange series for both of the evaluations are given together to be easily compared. In each section of the evaluations the interpretation of the results are followed by some discussions. The main focus of these discussions is to evaluate the textbook according to the scores given by the raters. Although the resulted scores and percentages given can be evidently interpreted by the wise reader, the researchers will state their own interpretations of the results regarding the strengths and weaknesses of the textbook. The results of the evaluations are presented in two
Results of Task Analysis

As mentioned earlier, in Littlejohn’s materials evaluation framework the learning tasks presented in the materials are considered the building blocks of any set of materials. As such, the analysis of tasks from different aspects is very important in order to find out the overall value of the materials. The results of the analysis of tasks are presented in tables below. As mentioned before, task analysis sheets were composed of three sections, each addressing a question about a major aspect of the tasks. In this section the results for each of these questions are presented together with their interpretations. Before enumerating the results, it should be mentioned that in order to examine the reliability of the results for ‘Task Analysis Sheet’ part, the Cronbach’s Alpha reliability was calculated using the SPSS software to determine both the inter and intra-rater reliability of the results (i.e. the degree of agreement between evaluators’ ratings of the thirty seven subsections mentioned above with two weeks intervals). The Alpha reliability for evaluators’ ratings, on Interchange was calculated and the results showed very high reliability indices. The resulted index was 0.96 for inter-rater reliability, and 0.947, 0.999, 0.987, 0.969 for intra-rater reliabilities for all the raters.

WHAT IS THE LEARNER EXPECTED TO DO?

This question analyzes the demands which the tasks have on the learners. In other words, how the learner is supposed to accomplish the task. This question examines three specific aspects of a task.
**Turn-Take**

Turn-take refers to the kind of participation which the learner should have when accomplishing the learning task. As Table 1 shows the Interchange in its tasks mostly expect the learners to «respond» (81.34%). «Initiation» receives the next greatest percentage in Interchange textbooks, with 13.99%. Also the percentage of tasks which do not require learners to initiate or respond is the least with 5.05%. These results show that the Interchange 3rd Edition tasks more often encourage students to use the language and more importantly they more often require them to express themselves than to be a listener. Research shows that when the students get more opportunities to express themselves in L2 they are more likely to learn it more successfully. Therefore, Interchange seems to be quiet successful in this regard. Also, the fact that the textbooks include less tasks (if we let ourselves to call them tasks at all) which do not require the learners to initiate or respond (i.e. «Not required»), shows that the Interchange caters for more involvement of the learners in the classroom events. However, we should not ignore the fact that the majority of tasks in Interchange 3rd Edition require learners to «respond» and a much smaller proportion require students to «initiate» using the language. This is not satisfactory if we desire to have an active class.

Table 1

*Frequency and percentage → turn take (average scores)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>frequency</th>
<th>percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Initiate</td>
<td>220</td>
<td>13.99%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>respond</td>
<td>1312</td>
<td>81.34%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not required</td>
<td>82</td>
<td>5.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>total</td>
<td>1614</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Focus

This part of task analysis examines the tasks by asking «where the learner is to concentrate his/her attention» when participating in learning tasks presented by the textbook. The nature of the task may necessitate attention to the ‘language system’ (the rules or the form of the language), the ‘meaning’ (the message of the language being used), or the ‘meaning-system relationship’ (the relationship between language form and its meaning). Results of the task analyses in this part, Table 2, shows that for the Interchange 3rd Edition the activities which draw on ‘meaning’ are about 65.47% of the total proportion. Activities which have language form as their focus, on the other hand, are about equal to the tasks which draw students’ attention to form-meaning relationship (17.40% and 17.07% respectively). These results show that the tasks in the Interchange third Edition focus on grammatical structures or other points related to form marginally more than the amount they focus on form-meaning relationships. Instead, the Interchange tries to draw on meaning as the basis for the learning. This could be a sign of success for the selected textbooks, since one major objective of the book has been developing a communicative competence which is achieved via enhancing ‘comprehension’ of the language, and comprehending the language necessitates attention to meaning. It is worth mentioning that the activities with focus on both the form and meaning are not that frequent in the selected textbook, which is a drawback for Interchange Third Edition.

Table 2
Frequency and Percentage → Focus

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Focus</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Language system (rules or form)</td>
<td>258</td>
<td>17.40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meaning</td>
<td>971</td>
<td>65.47%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meaning/system relationship</td>
<td>253</td>
<td>17.07%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Mental Operation

When participating in a language learning task, the learner may be directed to go through different mental operations either to comprehend the language or to produce language. A wide range of mental operations are probable when a learner wants to comprehend or produce language. In this part of task analysis, 10 items of mental operations as shown in Table 3 were included. As shown in Table 3, Interchange contains all the ten mental operations in its tasks, although there are differences regarding the proportions of each mental operation.

Table 3

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mental Operation</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Retrieve from long-term memory</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>3.17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Build text</td>
<td>360</td>
<td>14.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Draw on prior knowledge</td>
<td>288</td>
<td>11.33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relate sounds to objects</td>
<td>165</td>
<td>6.48%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Compare</td>
<td>376</td>
<td>8.33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Decode semantic meanings</td>
<td>359</td>
<td>14.17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Select information</td>
<td>431</td>
<td>17.01%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Repeat with expansion</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>2.69%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deduce language rule</td>
<td>192</td>
<td>7.59%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Apply language rule</td>
<td>377</td>
<td>14.48%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>2529</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The mental operation ‘retrieve from long term memory’ is so low for Interchange 3rd Edition (3.17%). This shows that the Interchange does not require students to recall linguistic or non-linguistic items from previous units. These items may be grammatical rules which the student has encountered in previous units, etc.

The tasks which require students to ‘build text’ (i.e. to produce a piece of language which is original and longer than a sentence response) are more frequent than the previously discussed mental operation (14.2%). This shows that Interchange Series encourage the learners more often to produce meaningful language of their own. ‘Draw on their prior knowledge’ (both linguistic and non-linguistic) has relatively less percentage (11.33%) than in the ‘build text’ (14.2%). This implies that the Interchange tries to relate the new teaching points to the previous ones in the unit and also to the points which they have been learned in prior units. Tasks which require students to relate sounds to objects constitute only 6.48% of the activities in Interchange 3rd Edition. This implies that the activities which use auditory and visual channels for giving input to learners are not that frequent in the Interchange textbooks. This may be a disadvantage of the textbook since making use of all sensory channels in learning involves the students more actively in participating and also enhances the variety and consequently the motivation of the students.

The proportion of tasks requiring learners to ‘compare’ language samples based on their form or meaning is a bit more than the tasks which involved “relating sounds to objects” (8.33%). The objective of tasks which involve comparison is to enable students to notice differences between two sets of language samples including sounds, words, phrases, sentences, etc. in order to learn about their form (structure or pronunciation) and/or their function. The percentage of the tasks that require learners to ‘deduce semantic meaning’ is relatively higher in the Interchange (14.17%) in comparison to other mental
operations involved for the tasks. This mental operation involves students in understanding the ‘surface’ or ‘propositional’ meaning of a text or in simpler words what the text wants to say directly. The mental operation ‘select information’ is a mental process which is drawn upon when the students are required to reply to reading comprehension questions whose answers are located in the passage. The proportion of this mental operation is the highest among all the mental operations within the task analysis sheets (17.01%). This may originate from the fact that each unit in the selected textbook is provided with an authentic reading passages which are followed by reading comprehension questions, but the percentage could go a step further by including exercises which asks students to express their ideas and general understanding. The mental operation ‘repeat with expansion’ composes only 2.69% percent of the mental operations in Interchange Third Edition. This shows that tasks that give learners frames to produce language according to those frames are not so popular in this text book since the number is the least among the other mental operations.

Tasks which involve students in ‘deducing language rule’ compose 7.59% of the mental operations in Interchange Third Edition. This result may well imply that the textbooks surprisingly do not apply an inductive approach toward teaching grammatical structures and other teaching points, or if it applies this is not that obvious within its tasks structure. The percentage of learning tasks that require students to ‘apply language rules’ is 14.87% in Interchange Third Edition. Activities which involve this mental operation include mainly the grammar exercises, which are presented in two Grammar Focus parts in each unit. Although this type of activities is not without pedagogical value, they don’t seem to provide a meaningful context for the students, since they only let the learners do some grammatical transformations on single unrelated sentences.
Who with?

This question examines another aspect of a task under analysis dealing with the kind of interaction which the learners and the teacher when participating in the learning task. Options in this regard are (a) ‘learner to class’ in which one specified student is supposed to give his/her or reports to the others in class, (b) ‘learners individually simultaneously’, in which each individual student performed the required task but not in collaboration with other learners, and (c) ‘learners in pairs/groups’, in which the learners are required to interact with each other in pairs or larger groups in order to do the task. As Table 4 shows, only 1.64% of the activities in the Interchange require an individual student to answer or report to the class. The percentage of tasks requiring students to work individually without collaboration is high, dominating in the selected textbook (49.52%). Tasks which involve students in pair or group work make up 48.82% of the tasks in Interchange 3rd Edition which is almost the same as the percentage we have for those tasks that involve learners individually. This shows that the authors of the selected textbook have given importance to pair/group work in their book. Although this percentage could be much more than that of ‘learners individually simultaneously’, since the importance of group working is known to all.

Table 4

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Language system (rules or form)</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>1.64%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meaning</td>
<td>842</td>
<td>49.52%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meaning/system relationship</td>
<td>830</td>
<td>48.82%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>1700</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
With What Content?

This question relates to another important aspect of a task in a textbook, namely, the type of input given to the learners as the departure point for them to do the task, the kind of output which is expected from them by the task, the source of the input given to them and the nature of the contents which function as the building blocks of the task. Results of the evaluations for this part are also presented in tables. It is worth mentioning that variety in these aspects of the tasks is a favorable factor, since it prevents monotony and lets the learners with different learning styles and preferences to be active in the class.

Input to the learners

The input offered to the learners in the textbook tasks may be

- Graphic (pictures, illustrations, diagrams, etc.),
- Oral words/phrases/sentences,
- Oral extended discourse,
- Written words/phrases/sentences,
- Written extended discourse,
- Sounds/music.

As Table 5 shows, in general, the percentages of tasks’ input in Interchange textbooks are not distributed so evenly. This shows that the selected textbook does not have variety in presenting different types of input to the learners. The ‘written words/phrases/sentences’ have the first and dominating rank in the distribution, other types of input have percentages which are not comparable to the written input.

The dominance of written input to the learners, especially words and sentences which are shorter than extended discourse (60.22%) implies that oral and visual inputs should receive more attention in our teaching materials. This could be achieved through developing audio or audiovisual materials which accompany
the student’s book. Also the relatively low percentage of graphic input (15.07%) shows that we need more illustrative pictures, diagrams, photos, etc. in our textbooks as sources for providing a visual context for the learners and also to make the textbook more attractive.

The results show that ‘written words/phrases’ and ‘written extended discourse’ are at both ends of the continuum with 60.22% and 2.52% respectively. This shows that written input, being the dominant source of input, focuses on sentential level and not the supra sentential level.

Table 5

*Frequency and Percentage → Input to Learners*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Input to Learners</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Graphic</td>
<td>311</td>
<td>15.07%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oral words/ phrases</td>
<td>257</td>
<td>12.45%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oral extended discourse</td>
<td>137</td>
<td>6.64%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Written words/ phrases</td>
<td>1242</td>
<td>60.22%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Written extended discourse</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>2.52%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sounds/ music</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>2061</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Expected Output from Learners**

The output which is expected from learners in tasks can be either written or spoken. On the other hand it could be short in the form of words, phrases or sentences or it can be extended as when the student is supposed to write a paragraph or give a description orally. Table 6 shows that the most frequent type of output expected from learners in the selected textbooks is oral words, phrases or sentences (59.97%). This striking difference shows the emphasis of the book on communicative skills which urge students to produce oral words or sentences. The expected written words, phrases or sentences in the Interchange constitute
TEXTBOOK EVALUATION

32.57% of expected output from the learners while this percentage is only 6.07% for written extended discourse and even less, namely, 1.32% for oral extended discourse. It is clear that the book expects the learners to focus more on written or spoken structures which are in the form of words, phrases or sentences rather than extended output as when the student is supposed to write a paragraph or give a description orally.

Results also imply that the Interchange Series encourage students more to speak. Although one major aim of the textbook has been mentioned as achieving communicative skills, yet this does not imply that we cannot achieve this goal via drawing on other skills. The percentage of tasks which require learners to produce oral extended discourse is 1.32%. This shows a total lack of activities which allow students to express their meaningful ideas in this textbook.

Table 6

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Frequency and Percentage→ Expected Output from Learners</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Frequency</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oral words/ phrases</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oral extended discourse</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Written words/ phrases</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Written extended discourse</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source

The issue of the source of the content of the lessons and their activities is very important. This issue relates to such questions as who is to specify the topic and content of the written or spoken texts used in the class activities: the teacher, the learners or the materials themselves? As table 7 shows, the textbook, demonstrates little share of tasks and activities which direct learners or the teachers to participate in providing the content and selecting the topic of content.
as source of input to classmates (6.17% and 4.42% respectively). In contrast, for the majority of activities, the textbook specifies its own texts as the source of content (82.39%). The percentages show that the textbook does not provide opportunities for the learners or even the teachers to decide on the content of the tasks while the low percentages of tasks which use the learners themselves as the source of content necessitate more attention to giving an active role to the students in this regard.

Table 7

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Materials</td>
<td>1342</td>
<td>89.39%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>4.42%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learner(s)</td>
<td>93</td>
<td>6.17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>1502</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Nature

This aspect of tasks is related to the type of content which is the focus of the learning activity. The content which the learners and the teacher are required to work with may be an expository reading passage (i.e. ‘fact’), a comment about one grammatical rule (i.e. metalinguistic knowledge), a tale told by one of the students (i.e. ‘fiction’), etc. Table 8 shows that the proportions of the nature types of the content of tasks are distributed evenly in the Interchange. This could be interpreted as a sign of more variety in the text. Tasks which have personal opinions and ideas of the learners as their focus have the first rank in the selected textbook (35.29%). Those which have factual texts as their pivot have 29.13% proportion. There is a shortage of tasks whose content can be categorized under ‘fiction’ (e.g. personal accounts, tales. etc.) in the textbook and are only 6.51% of the total proportion of the tasks. The attractiveness of fictions both in the form of
stories or personal accounts and memoirs which the learners may bring into the classroom suggest that we should incorporate them in such popular materials.

The percentage of activities which involve ‘personal information’ of the learners, i.e. those which draw on learners’ prior world knowledge is higher in Interchange (10.46%), the corresponding figure for ‘metalinguistic knowledge’ is equal to 18.8%. This shows that the Interchange tries to motivate students by encouraging them to add information of their own to those presented in the textbook itself.

Table 8

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Personal opinion</td>
<td>328</td>
<td>35.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fact</td>
<td>262</td>
<td>28.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fiction</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>6.45%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal information</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>10.06%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Metalinguistic knowledge</td>
<td>173</td>
<td>18.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>914</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Results of Design**

The ‘design’ of a textbook in Littlejohn’s materials evaluation framework refers to the «thinking underlying the material». In other words, when we evaluate the design of a course book, we want to know to what degree the materials developers succeeded in achieving instructional goals, selecting and sequencing the contents appropriately, selecting appropriate themes (i.e. subject matter), devising useful teaching/learning activities, providing for active class participation, and defining appropriate roles for the teacher, learners, and the
materials themselves. In this part the results of the evaluations done by the raters/evaluators on ‘design’ matters are presented.

The results of design for the Interchange 3rd Edition are summarized in table Figure 1. The Figure presents the scores given by the raters to the questions about each subsection of the design. These subsections include: (I) Aims and objectives, (II) Principles of selection, (III) Principles of sequencing, (IV) subject matter and focus of subject matter, (V) Types of teaching/learning activities,(VI) Participation,(VII) Classroom roles of teachers and learners, (VIII) Learner roles in learning, and (IX) Role of the materials as a whole.

![Figure 1. Design.](image)

**Aims and Objectives**

In this part the selected textbook obtained 66.51 percent of the optimum score (74.5 out of the total of 112). This shows that the evaluators believed that Interchange 3rd Edition is not that much successful in preparing the students to become communicatively competent.
Principles of Selection

Interchange Third Edition scored 64.58 percent of the optimum score on this aspect. This suggests that the evaluators believed that the developers of the selected textbook need to select the textbook’s content, its genre and lesson themes, more suitably if it is to be considered as a book which is along with the new principles of teaching and learning.

Principles of Sequencing

The mean score regarding appropriate sequencing of units is 70.62 out of 100. This shows that the textbook needs further attention on this important aspect which relates to sequencing the content of the materials in a way that the teaching points are interrelated and arranged on the basis of difficulty.

Subject Matter and the Focus of Subject Matter

In this part the Interchange 3rd Edition achieves a relatively higher proportion than the previously discussed sections (75% of the optimum score). This is one of the highest scores for the textbook among all subsections and shows that the evaluators find the topics of the texts (i.e., the themes of the units) and the activities related to them fairly interesting, effectively motivating and intellectually engaging.

Types of Teaching/Learning Activities

The fifth subsection of the design again shows the ascending movement in comparison to the previous part with the mean score of 80.42% of the optimum score. This evaluative aspect is closely related to the ‘Task Analysis’ part of the evaluation. The scores show that the Interchange series are considered to be somehow successful in offering appropriate tasks.
PARTICIPATION

The selected textbook scored the highest among all the subsections, namely 84.37 percent of the optimum score based on evaluators’ judgments. This suggests that the Interchange series are considered successful in catering for all three modes of class participation, namely, ‘learner to class and teacher’, ‘learner individually simultaneously’, and ‘learners in pairs/groups simultaneously’.

CLASSROOM ROLES OF TEACHERS AND LEARNERS

The seventh evaluative subsection questions whether the textbook appoints appropriate class roles to the teacher and the learners, and also whether the textbook activities are devised flexibly enough to allow for teachers’ differences in teaching styles and preferences. In this section the selected textbook obtained relatively the same proportion as ‘Types of teaching/learning activities, (82.02% and 80.42% out of the optimum score respectively). This shows that the evaluators rate the Interchange series as relatively more successful in assigning active roles to the learners in learning and participating in classroom events and a managing and supervising role to the teacher.

LEARNER ROLES IN LEARNING

The selected textbook scored relatively the same as the first subsection, namely, ‘Aims and objectives’ (64.06 percent of the optimum score based on evaluators judgments). This sudden fall among the 3 or 4 previously discussed subsections shows that the Interchange series are not that much successful in enabling the students to deduce language rules for themselves or in involving students in classroom decision-making which are both reflected in the most recent approaches to language teaching and learning.
Role of the Materials as a Whole

The Interchange 3rd Edition achieved 81.87% out of 100. This shows that the evaluators all agree that the Table of Content, at the beginning of the book, is a helpful means of access into the content of the book. It also shows that the plan of the book, the division of the book into sections, and its graphic illustrations are satisfactory enough. Moreover it shows that the selected textbook is supported with ample appendices.

Discussion and Conclusion

Question one: What are the pedagogic values of the newest version of Interchange series?

The pedagogic values of the textbook understudy are as follow:
– The results of the study show that the Interchange 3rd Edition’s tasks more often encourage the students to use the language. Moreover, these tasks require them to express themselves than to be a listener. Also, the fact that the textbook includes less tasks which do not require the learners to initiate or respond (i.e. «Not required»), shows that the Interchange caters for more involvement of the learners in the classroom events.

– The study also shows that the tasks in the Interchange third Edition focus on grammatical structures or other points related to form marginally more than the amount they focus on form-meaning relationships. Instead, the Interchange 3rd Edition tries to draw on meaning as the basis for the learning task. This could be one sign of success for the selected textbook, since one major objective of the book has been developing a communicative competence which is achieved via
enhancing ‘comprehension’ of the language, and comprehending the language necessitates attention to meaning.

– This study shows that the Interchange does not require students to recall linguistic or non-linguistic items from previous units. These items may be grammatical rules which the student has encountered in previous units, etc. These kinds of tasks help students feel continuity in the textbook and also help them review the items which they have learned before. The series, however, is not benefiting so much from this type of mental operation and this may lead to students not having sense of continuity.

– Based on the results of the study it is revealed that the Series encourage the learners more often to produce meaningful language of their own. This kind of tasks enable students to express their ideas or feelings via the foreign language and in this regard these activities are both motivating in that they offer opportunities to express themselves and demanding, as the learner should draw on all his/her linguistic and world knowledge to produce a piece of meaningful discourse.

– It is also revealed that the Interchange tries to relate the new teaching points to the previous ones in the unit and also to the points which they have learned in prior units. This characteristic gives the textbook more consistency and continuity. Furthermore, it helps the students associate the new information to the old information in their minds.

– The study also shows that the activities which use auditory and visual channels for giving input to learners are not that frequent in the Interchange textbooks. This may be a disadvantage of the textbook since making use of all sensory
channels in learning involves the students more actively in participating and also enhances the variety and consequently the motivation of the students.

– Regarding ‘selecting information’ the textbook has a high proportion. This may originate from the fact that each unit in the selected textbook is provided with an authentic reading passages which are followed by reading comprehension questions.

– This study may well imply that the textbook surprisingly does not apply an inductive approach toward teaching grammatical structures and other teaching points, or if it applies this is not that obvious within its task structure.

– Tasks which involve students in pair or group work have the same proportion for those tasks that involve learners individually. This shows that the authors of the selected textbook have given importance to pair/group work in their book.

– Based on the results of the study the ‘written words/phrases/sentences’ have the first and dominating rank in the distribution, other types of input have percentages which are not comparable to the written input. The dominance of written input to the learners implies that oral and visual inputs should receive more attention in our teaching materials.

– The results also show that the emphasis of the book is on communicative skills, especially at the level of words or sentences. The expected written words, phrases or sentences in the Interchange 3rd Edition is also higher than the other types of the output. It is clear that the book expects the learners to focus more on written or spoken structures which are in the form of words, phrases or sentences rather
than extended output as when the student is supposed to write a paragraph or
give a description orally.

– The resulted proportions also suggest that the textbook does not provide
opportunities for the learners or even the teachers to decide on the content of the
tasks. In contrast, for the majority of activities, the textbook specifies its own
texts as the source of content.

– The raters believe that the tasks which have personal opinions and ideas of the
learners as their focus have the first rank in the Interchange Series. Those which
have factual texts as their pivot have less proportion. There is a shortage of the
tasks whose content can be categorized under ‘fiction’ (e.g. personal accounts,
tales. etc.) in the textbook.

– The results of the ‘Design’ also reveal that the topics of the texts (i.e., the
themes of the units) and the related activities are fairly interesting, effectively
motivating and intellectually engaging.

– The Interchange series are also considered to somehow successful in offering
appropriate tasks which direct the learners through the process of learning, guide
the teachers to manage a learning class, and ultimately to approach toward the
instructional goals set for them.

– Finally the present study shows that the Table of Content, at the beginning of
the book, is a helpful means of access into the content of the book. It also shows
that the plan of the book, the division of the book into sections, and its graphic
illustrations are satisfactory enough. Moreover it shows that the selected textbook
is supported with ample appendices.
**Question two:** How are the newly developed and widely used the Interchange books (3rd edition) in line with the objectives set for them?

The main goal set for the textbook based on what the authors bring in the preface is to improve the learners’ speaking ability and help them be communicatively competent. As mentioned and as depicted in the charts and graphs, the books may not be that much successful in preparing the students for being communicatively competent.

**Question three:** What are the strengths and weaknesses of the Interchange series (3rd edition)?

The results show that the Interchange 3rd edition has the following weaknesses:

– The fact that the majority of tasks in require learners to «respond» and a much smaller proportion require students to «initiate» using the language. This is not satisfactory if we desire to have an active learner-centered class.

– Activities which focus on both the form and meaning are not that frequent in the selected textbook.

– Interchange does not require students to recall linguistic or non-linguistic items from previous units. Hence, it lacks the tasks which help students feel continuity in the textbook.

– Activities which use auditory and visual channels for giving input to learners are not proportional.
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– Those tasks that give learners frames to produce language according to those frames are not so popular in this textbook.

– The selected textbook surprisingly does not apply an inductive approach toward teaching grammatical structures and other teaching points, or if it applies this is not that obvious within its task structure. Thus, the discovery-learning activities of this type are ignored.

– The supra-sentential level for both the input and the output is ignored.

– Learners or the teacher do not participate in providing the content and selecting the topic of content as source of input to classmates. The strengths of Interchange are as follow:

  – Tasks more often encourage students to use the language and more importantly they require them to express themselves than to be a listener.

  – The Interchange 3rd Edition tries to draw on meaning as the basis for the learning task. This could be one sign of success for the selected textbook, since one major objective of the book has been developing a communicative competence which is achieved via enhancing ‘comprehension’ of the language.

  – The authors of the selected textbook have given importance to pair/group work in their book.
References


A Selected Bibliography


Chapter 3

Evaluation of EFL Materials Taught at Iranian Public High Schools
TEXTBOOK EVALUATION

Introduction

The researcher has been teaching English for more than 8 years throughout which time his mind has almost always been occupied with the question, “Why does the TEFL curriculum in Iranian public high schools meet neither the expectations of the learners/teachers nor those of the specialists who were involved in the developing of the curriculum?” This apparent lack of success can be attributed to a plethora of factors involved in the various stages of curriculum planning.

According to Johnson (1989, pp.1-23) the following stages are involved in the process of curriculum development:
1. Policy determination
2. Means/ends specification (syllabus design)
3. Program implementation
4. Classroom implementation

The writer of the paper will examine the materials, among others, which are in fact the realization of the process of syllabus design subsumed under the heading of means/ends specification quoted above and will exclude other factors because it is beyond the scope of the current paper to include them.

Literature Review

Sheldon (1988) has offered several reasons for textbook evaluation. He suggests that the selection of an ELT textbook often signals an important administrative and educational decision in which there is considerable professional, financial, or even political investment. A thorough evaluation, therefore, would enable the managerial and teaching staff of a specific institution or organization to discriminate between all of the available textbooks on the market. Moreover, it would provide for a sense of familiarity with a book's content thus assisting educators in identifying the particular strengths and
TEXTBOOK EVALUATION

weaknesses in textbooks already in use. This would go a long way in ultimately assisting teachers with making optimum use of a book's strong points and recognizing the shortcomings of certain exercises, tasks, and entire texts.

If one accepts the value of textbooks in ELT then it must surely be with the qualification that they are of an acceptable level of quality, usefulness, and appropriateness for the context and people with whom they are being used.

While the literature on the subject of textbook evaluation is not particularly extensive, various writers have suggested ways of helping teachers to be more sophisticated in their evaluative approach, by presenting evaluation 'checklists' based on supposedly generalizable criteria that can be used by both teachers and students in many different situations. Although Sheldon (1988) suggests that no general list of criteria can ever really be applied to all teaching and learning contexts without considerable modification, most of these standardized evaluation checklists contain similar components that can be used as helpful starting points for ELT practitioners in a wide variety of situations. Preeminent theorists in the field of ELT textbook design and analysis such as Williams (1983), Sheldon (1988), Brown (1995), Cunningsworth (1995) and Harmer (1996) all agree, for instance, that evaluation checklists should have some criteria pertaining to the physical characteristics of textbooks such as layout, organizational, and logistical characteristics. Other important criteria that should be incorporated are those that assess a textbook's methodology, aims, and approaches and the degree to which a set of materials is not only teachable but also fits the needs of the individual teacher's approach as well as the organization's overall curriculum. Moreover, criteria should analyze the specific language, functions, grammar, and skills content that are covered by a particular textbook as well as the relevance of linguistic items to the prevailing socio-cultural environment.
Finally, textbook evaluations should include criteria that pertain to representation of cultural and gender components in addition to the extent to which the linguistic items, subjects, content, and topics match up to students' personalities, backgrounds, needs, and interests as well as those of the teacher and/or institution. Cunningsworth (1995) and Ellis (1997) have suggested that there are three different types of material evaluation. They argue that the most common form is probably the ‘predictive’ or ‘pre-use’ evaluation that is designed to examine the future or potential performance of a textbook. The other types of textbook evaluation are the ‘in-use’ evaluation designed to examine material that is currently being used and the ‘retrospective’ or ‘post-use’ (reflective) evaluation of a textbook that has been used in any respective institution. This particular paper can be classified as the ‘retrospective’ type of evaluation in which an attempt is made to check the characteristics of the textbooks under study against a collection of criteria proposed by various researchers.

Methodology

Here I would like to document the materials that were used and the procedures that were followed to support the intent of this study.

Materials

I browsed about 10 checklists proposed by different authors and selected 13 features which were common to most of these checklists to do the evaluation. The following 10 EFL/ESL textbook evaluation schemes were consulted to evaluate the 4 EFL textbooks under study.
The List of 10 Textbook-evaluation Checklists:

TEXTBOOK EVALUATION

After a close examination of the checklists, these criteria were found to be almost common to all the schemes proposed by the above mentioned materials:

- Are objectives explicitly laid out in an introduction, and implemented in the material?
- Good vocabulary explanation and practice
- Approaches educationally and socially acceptable to target community
- Periodic review and test sections
- Appropriate visual materials available
- Interesting topics and tasks
- Clear instructions
- Clear attractive layout, print easy to read
- Content clearly organized and graded
- Plenty of authentic language
- Good grammar presentation and practice
- Fluency practice in all four skills
- Encourage learners to develop own learning strategies and to become independent in their learning

The Textbooks under Study

TEXTBOOK EVALUATION

Procedure

I scrutinized the four EFL textbooks against each one of the features in the checklist one by one. The results of the scrutiny of all the four textbooks on every feature are combined under common headings to save space and time.

Results

Are Objectives Explicitly Laid Out in an Introduction, and Implemented in the Material?

At the beginning of book 1 there is an introduction that attempts to clarify the intended teaching objectives. However, there is a state of indeterminacy as to the goals toward which the teachers and the learners are to set out. The ultimate goals of the curriculum are not clarified. The authors of the book do not clearly specify the final objectives of the curriculum in vivid words so that the stakeholders know what they are expected to have learnt at the end of the program (long term objectives). Likewise, the short term objectives remain unspecified in the introduction. We do not know what the learners should be able to do to demonstrate that they have achieved the intended objectives at the end of each course e.g. at the end of each year in the educational program.

‘Introduction section’ is totally omitted from books 2 and 3, probably on the grounds that it is included in book 1. The authors might have assumed that if a teacher teaches book 2 or 3, he/she must definitely be aware of the contents of book 1. There is an introduction section in book 4 which is totally different from that of book 1 in terms of the objectives that it specifies as the goals of the lessons and the course.

Part (A) of the Introduction is concerned with why the section “New Words” is included in the book and how it must be instructed by the teachers. It reads, “The purpose of this section is to familiarize learners with the new vocabulary in the Reading Comprehension section.” However, this is not
implemented in the books because the number of the new words introduced in
the New Words Section is considerably less than the number of the new words in
the Reading Comprehension section. The question that rises is how and where
those missing words are to be taught? For example, in book (B) 1, lesson (L) 1,
22 new words are introduced in the Reading Comprehension but only 10 of them
are included in the New Words Section. Likewise, in B2-L3, almost 24 new
words are introduced, whereas, only 12 of them are included in the New Words
Section. B3-L4 contains almost 43 new words in the Reading Comprehension
and only 11 of them are clarified and practiced in the New Words Section. The
New Words Section is totally excluded from B4 and nowhere in the introduction
have the authors explained why. Other parts of the Introduction related to
objectives specification mainly concern the activities and techniques that the
teachers should not do and is less concerned with what they should do.

In sum, the final goals of the EFL program as well as the behavioral
objectives which are aimed at by the curriculum designers are obscure and
remain to be delineated. This may have various ramifications across the different
phases of the curriculum i.e. classroom implementation and evaluation. Teachers
actually dissent as to what teaching methodology to be employed, which skills
and psycholinguistic abilities to emphasize and what to include in their exams.
Now, the nationwide exams which are administered by the officials for third
graders is playing the role of an agreement document among teachers which, in
turn, has its own negative effects known as the ‘washback effect’.

Consequently, teachers teach in a way that their students can pass the tests
which are administered at the final year of high school education and University
Entrance Examination rather than executing the actual curriculum worked out by
the academic specialists. In fact, there is now a hidden curriculum among
learners and teachers which determines what they must do in the classroom.
Except for the inconsistencies mentioned above there is an acceptable degree of concordance between the objectives set in the introduction of the books for each section of the lessons in the series and their implementation in the material.

**Good Vocabulary Explanation and Practice**

Two types of problem are observed in the explanation and use of the new vocabulary in the series. One is concerned with the lack of correspondence between the different senses of the word introduced in the New Words Sections and the senses which are used in the Reading Comprehensions. The other type is attributable to the poor contextualization of the new vocabulary in the New Words Sections.

At some points the New Words Section in B1 ignores the fact that a word might have several different senses. In some cases, the meaning for which a particular word is introduced in the New Words Section is not consistent with the meaning of the same word used in the Reading Comprehension, and this probably bewilders the students. For example, in B1-L1, the word “pay” is used as a part of the expression “pay attention to” in the Reading Comprehension whereas introduced as “pay for sth” in the New Words Section which are incompatible in meaning. In the same lesson the expression “grow up” is used in the Reading Comprehension meaning “to become older” and in New Words it is used as “to raise farm produce”. Likewise, in B1- L3, the word “find” is used with two different senses in the Reading Comprehension and the New Words Section: it is introduced in the New Words Section as follows: “Maryam can’t find her notebook.” whereas in the Reading Comprehension it is used in the following sentence: “She returned an hour later and found Newton standing by the fire.” ‘Find’ which is used in the New Words Section means ‘to get back after a search’ but in the Reading Comprehension it means ‘to come across’. As
you see the meanings in the Reading Comprehension and the New Words Section do not converge. The word “land” in L2 is used in the Reading Comprehension to mean “a country” and it is introduced in the New Words Section to mean “a farm or field”. Fortunately, this problem is limited to only B1 and L1-L3 and no such cases can be traced in the remainder of the book and nor in other books of the series. In addition, in B4, explanation of the new vocabulary as an independent section is omitted from the book and is integrated into the Reading Comprehension section.

Some of the new vocabularies which the authors might have assumed to be more significant in carrying the semantic load of the related sentence have been included in the margins of the Reading Comprehension passages with some synonyms or definitions. No specific place is designed to practice the new words in B4. It might be more useful to include some more vocabulary exercises in each lesson so that learners can integrate the new words into their mental lexicon.

The second type of problem is probably ‘poor contextualization of the new vocabulary’ in the New Words Sections of the series from B1 to B3. In B1, L2, three new words are introduced in a single sentence: “The cows are eating grass in the field.”

Likewise, in B2, L1, “There are a banana and a slice of cake on the plate.” or in the same lesson one encounters: “When she does the puzzle right, the man gives her a reward.” This problem recurs in B2, L3. Fortunately, these cases are restricted to the aforementioned cases and do not come up in other lessons. There are no such cases of poor contextualization in B3, and interestingly, a considerable improvement is observed in this book compared to B1 and B2 in this regard. However, the imbalance between the number of the new words included in the New Words Sections and those used in the Reading Comprehensions and other sections of the book becomes more substantial, e.g. in B3, L1, there are 56 new words included, but only 5 of them are explained in the
New Words Section. These imbalances persist throughout the book and the writer of the article hopes they will be eliminated in the later revisions of the book.

**Approaches Educationally and Socially Acceptable To Target Community**

According to White (1988, p.92) “A complete syllabus specification will include all five aspects: structure, function, situation, topic, skills. The difference between syllabuses will lie in the priority given to each of these aspects.”

It seems that the authors of the books have sequenced the linguistic content of the materials according to the structural complexity, starting from less complex structures to more demanding ones. Even the reading passages are selected or, probably manipulated, so that they reinforce a particular grammatical point included in the grammar section of the books. However, the question of how and in what order the structures must be arranged in a structural syllabus is a controversial issue. Hutchinson and Waters (1987, p. 88) pose the same question as writing, “what assumptions underlie the ordering in the structural syllabus? Does the verb ‘to be’ come first, because it is easier to learn? If so, in what sense? Structurally, it is the most complex verb in English. Does it come first because it is needed for later structures, for example the present continuous? Is it considered to be conceptually simpler? For many students, for example Indonesian students, it causes conceptual problems, since in Bahasa Indonesian it is frequently omitted. Alternatively, is the syllabus ordered according to usefulness? The verb ‘to be’ is more useful than, say, the present simple tense of the verb ‘to go’. If we are operating the criterion of usefulness, what context are we referring to? Do we mean usefulness in the outside world or usefulness in the classroom?”

Nevertheless, my personal experience in teaching these books shows that students learn ‘present perfect tense’ with less effort than ‘the passive structure’.
Moreover, they learn the ‘passive structure’ better if they are introduced the ‘present perfect’ earlier. Thus, I suggest that the ‘present perfect’ which is introduced in B1, L9, be transposed to L8 and the ‘passive’ be moved to L9.

Although the reading skill, among others, looks to be of first priority in the design of the books, a big share of the lessons is devoted to grammar drills and the various forms of grammatical exercises throughout B1, B2 and B3. Fortunately, this problem is rectified in B4 of the series. About 50% of the content of each lesson in B1 to B3 is occupied with grammatical drills. This allocation seems to be unjustified as far as the findings of research on SL reading is concerned. Researchers have noticed the need for extensive vocabulary for reading and that grammatical knowledge is called upon in advanced levels of reading proficiency for complex and embedded structures as a last resort. (See Alderson and Urquhart, 1984a; Singer, 1981). Also, Lewis (1993, p. 17) says that “vocabulary (or lexis) carries more of the meaning of a text than does the grammar”.

**Periodic Review and Test Sections**

At the beginning and the end of B1, 2, 3, there are review exercises. However, they are not enough. It seems better to include tests and review tests at the end of each one of the lessons. It is worth mentioning that the tests should be comparable and compatible with the format and the testing methods which will be employed in the mid-term and final exams. To compensate for this shortcoming of the textbooks teachers had developed supplementary workbooks for each one of the books. The final exams of this grade are designed, administered and corrected by state officials and the teachers play no direct roles in these processes. Therefore, despite many teachers’ will and standards of teaching, with their hands up, they had to surrender to the strong negative washback effect of the exams, and spend some time and energy of the class on
TEXTBOOK EVALUATION

answering questions and tests similar to those which are administered by the
officials of the Bureau of Education every year. In B4, surprisingly, there is no
review or quiz whatsoever.

Clear Attractive Layout, Print Easy To Read
Most often the paper of the books in the series is of low quality and in some
cases is more like papers which are used for daily newspapers. If this is due to
factors of economy or shortage of fund then how is it that for other books in the
curriculum other than English like biology, physics, etc. there is no such a
problem?

The books are acceptable regarding the clarity and orthographic beauty.
However, it would be more appealing if colorful pictures of real people and real
environment were used.

Appropriate Visual Materials Available

Visual materials can be defined as the facilities that can be employed by
teachers and learners to enhance language learning in classrooms. They may
range from simple hand-made realia, charts and pictures to electronic and digital
materials. For the series in question, there are VHS films and also the required
electronic hardware available at schools for teachers and learners.

However, the content of the films whose primary goal is assumed to help
the users promote their language skills and enhance learning processes is not
effectively addressed. For instance, all the films developed for book 2 of the
series, almost most of them, start with vocabulary teaching. A word, generally
speaking, may have various properties worthy of attention for a learner. These
can be, namely, phonological, semantic, syntactic and pragmatic properties. To
teach a word, means to provide information, implicitly or explicitly, on these
properties for the learners and also to provide opportunities for them to rehearse
the given words to store them in their minds. Or, at least, one or two of the mentioned lexical properties may be focused on, depending on the limitations one faces in terms of time and money. However, the vocabularies in the film episodes are introduced only in the orthographic form with no sounds or pictures accompanying. No attempt is made to clarify the meaning of the words which appear on the screen. The film producers could have designed pictures or maybe some other graphic materials to illustrate the intended meanings of the introduced words. They could also have provided the pronunciation of the words with some pauses between, to let the learners repeat the words orally. For this section of the film scripts to gain any practical value and use, wide changes are required to be made by the producers.

The second section in the film episodes seems to have been designed to help the learners improve their reading skills. They start with very brief scenes of two or more people with no clear verbal interactions, very similar to a pantomime, probably with the intention of motivating the learners to activate their related background world knowledge about the topic to be discussed in the reading passage of the books. There are some problems worthy of mention concerning these sections. First, the scenes are vague and obscure regarding the messages they are trying to communicate. The learners usually get confused in catching on to the meanings the scenes intend to convey. Consequently, different learners are lead to different interpretations of the scenes and therefore distracted from the main theme of the reading passages. Second, there is very little correspondence between the majority of the scenes which are shown and the lines the narrator or the actor in the film reads aloud, i.e., in the film something is shown which is not directly related to the lines of the passage which are read. This problem is most evident in the episode designed for Lesson 5, Book 2. Nevertheless, with a bit of creativity on the part of teachers, these sections can be used as a sort of pre-reading activity to motivate the learners to think of what is
going to be discussed in the related reading passages. Third, another source of difficulty is the relatively fast rate of speech of the narrator in reading aloud the reading comprehension passages. Due to the nature of written texts, it is more difficult to process them as fast as the texts produced in oral interactions. Written texts include more embedded sentences and more instances of subordination, which results in longer sentences than oral texts. Written texts are thought to have more information density per utterance than oral texts. Consequently, as a result of these factors plus some others not mentioned here, written discourse requires more mental effort and thus more time to be processed. A slower rate of speech and inclusion of short pauses between the phrases and sentences might be quite helpful in this case. At the same time, this can provide the opportunity for the learners to repeat the phrases and sentences they hear to improve their pronunciation.

The third section in the episodes starts with a dialogue which seems to have been produced to delineate the use of the new structural patterns in actual communication. The dialogues are usually acted out at a normal rate of speech by the actors who seem to be native speakers of English. Again, very fast rate of speech and lack of space for any kind of practice are the problems that are faced in this section. Despite of all these problems, the teachers who want to use them can modify the procession rate of the work by manually stopping the device and having the learners repeat the sentences spot-check their understanding. However, the practicality of these sections can possibly be enhanced if these modifications are built into them so that less experienced teachers and maybe the learners could make more effective use of them.

The last sections of the episodes are aimed at teaching the new phones included in the related lessons. The new sounds are introduced through a series of words having a particular sound segment in common. They are pronounced by the teacher in the film with an exaggerated emphasis on the new sound patterns
with the intention of making them conspicuous to the learners’ attention. However, no exercises are included. The producers could, at least, include some parts for the learners to repeat the new sounds.

On the whole, the film can possibly be improved in practicality and pedagogical value for classroom use if the above mentioned modifications are made to it.

**Interesting Topics and Tasks**

The topics of readings vary from factual to anecdotal ones and sometimes are funny stories. It is difficult to judge on behalf of the learners whether those are interesting for them or not and it needs research. Nevertheless, the majority of the topics are attractive to the learners in my EFL classes. However, it seems that it would be better if the topics are updated to become more congruent with the taste of the new generation which might be a bit different from that of the authors who designed the books at least ten years ago. Nowadays, learners’ needs are different from what they used to be and; hence it looks better to include texts more related to computer games, internet, and satellite programs. For instance, it is possible to take and adapt some of the texts, words and jargons which are currently used in the software such as the Windows and Linux. It is also possible to include adapted and simplified versions of quotations and sayings of scholars renowned for their wisdom and eloquence in line with higher culturally valued objectives of education such as trustworthiness, sacrifice, courage, punctuality, patience, honesty, etc. My personal experience shows that the meaning and content of the materials taught in English classes have strong and long lasting effects on the minds of the learners. This is a valuable opportunity if we want to educate them mentally and spiritually. I have observed that the story of Oliver Twist in B2 attracts the students more than the story of a monkey known as Washoe. We should bear in mind that as teachers, our professional and social
responsibility do not boil down to imparting a handful of factual information concerning the grammar or meaning of a series of words and sentences in our classes, rather we should care for the transfer of cultural values to the new generations.

**Clear Instructions**

Most of the instructions are clear and easy to understand for the learners in the books in the series. Even if the learners might not be familiar with the structures and the lexis used in the instructions, the models given for each group of exercises provide contextual clues for the learners as to what they are expected to do. However, some of the instructions are lacking in the required contextual information and in the meantime, are beyond many of the learners’ English language proficiency in terms of linguistic complexity. For instance, in B1, L4, the instruction reads: “Now look at the pictures in your book or the things around you and make some sentences like the ones in Speaking 1 and Speaking 3.” In addition, in the same book in L8 we encounter the same problem of complexity in the instruction that follows: “Write six sentences in the passive form. Three about what happened in the past and three about what will happen in the future.” This problem exists in B2, too. One possible solution might be to use the learners’ native language instead of the target language in the instructions, particularly for B1 and B2 where the learners are not able to understand such sentences.

**Content Clearly Organized and Graded**

Some of the Reading Comprehension texts tend to be more difficult for the learners to understand than others due to their structural complexity. In working with learners from different proficiency levels I realized that the learners misunderstood or did not comprehend some parts of the Reading Comprehension
texts not because they did not know the meaning of the new words included in them but simply because those sentences were too complex for them to parse. After I applied the Readability formula developed by Fog (as cited in Farhady et al., 1998, p.82), to my surprise, I found that there was a logical sequencing of the texts according to the obtained text difficulty. The obvious question to ask is how is it possible for two texts which are of roughly the same readability indices to be perceived as unequally difficult by the learners? There might be many possible factors which render a text difficult or easy to understand. Content of the passage, the background knowledge of the reader, rhetorical organization, information density, number of unfamiliar words, and length and complexity of the sentences in a text are all possible candidates to make a text difficult or easy to understand.

There are different versions of Fog’s formula which make use of factors such as number of syllables or words, length of sentences, or the syntactic complexity of sentences. If you utilize the one which is based on the number of words and sentences, you will find a logical sequencing of the reading materials in the book, but if you apply the formula which is sensitive to the number of sentences and number of complex sentences you will find a differential outcome. On the basis of the latter formula, - i.e. number of words ÷ number of sentences + (number of compound sentences ÷ number of sentences) × 40 - the text containing more compound and longer sentences will have greater readability indices indicating more text difficulty. Considering the fact that most of the unknown words in the texts are taught prior to teaching the Reading Comprehension texts in the books, therefore, it is quite plausible to conclude that the number of new words can play no major role in making the text difficult or easy to understand for the learners, rather it is the number of longer and more compound and complex sentences that probably determine the difficulty or easiness of the texts. Thus, the authors of the book should have used the
sentence-complexity-sensitive formula to sequence the Reading Comprehension texts in the series. However, to solve the problem two solutions are available: the first one is to ‘re-organize’ the texts according to the readability indices obtained from the sentence-complexity-sensitive formula. This solution needs more modifications and tuning of the texts because most of the Reading Comprehension texts have been selected according to the prominence of the particular grammatical structures which they had and the writers had intended to include them in the lessons. Moreover, it requires a close reconsideration of the new vocabulary that the transposed texts include. The second solution is to break long and complex sentences down into shorter and less complex ones. This solution has its own particular problems and challenges, too. In many cases it is not possible to break a compound sentence down into its constituent clauses and phrases and assemble them into simple sentences without spoiling the meaning of the original sentence. For example, in B2, L2, there are at least 8 compound sentences which are perceived as challenging to the learners. One of the sentences which is used at the very beginning of the text reads: “Did you know that the same side of the moon faces the earth all the time?” As you see it is not so easy to change this sentence into some simpler sentences which convey the same idea or range of meanings. Likewise, at the ending line of the same text you come across: “So now you know what people who lived before 1959 didn’t know.” At the first glance one might conclude that sentence simplification is the least troublesome solution, however, in practice, it proves most challenging. In sum, the former solution, however strenuous, feels more practical and easier to manage.

**Plenty of Authentic Language**

Authenticity is defined as follows by Johnson and Johnson (1999):
Texts are said to be authentic if they are genuine instances of language use as opposed to exemplars devised specially for language teaching purposes. The question of authenticity emerged as an important issue within communicative language teaching and in relation to notional/functional syllabuses, where emphasis was placed on ensuring that the classroom contained natural language behavior, with content identified as relevant to the learner through the process of needs analysis. There are various other reasons why authenticity may be regarded as important. One is that it presents learners with language exposure similar to that enjoyed by native speakers, including all the characteristics of natural language which may be necessary for the learner properly to interpret texts. In addition, there is motivational attraction for insisting on authentic texts, created as means of communicating content and not for some pedagogic purpose (p.24).

If we base our discussion on the definition of authenticity which is given above, and see it as the degree the materials concord with actual instances of language the learners will encounter in real situations, the materials can be considered as authentic. In fact, the learners’ main use of English language will be limited to reading texts and passages they come up with in academic contexts in future in case they continue their education in universities. In other cases, depending upon the learners’ personal needs, their application of their knowledge of English will be limited to other instances of language used in catalogues, manuals or magazines. In few cases, they might need to listen to English programs on satellites or other media in their everyday life and, in rare cases, to communicate verbally with a foreigner who speaks English. Considering the fact that the bulk of materials are devoted to reading activities, and some space is
given to dialogues to provide opportunities for the learners to practice verbal communication, the materials can, to certain extent, be regarded as authentic.

**Good Grammar Presentation and Practice**

Grammar drills occupy the lion’s share of each lesson and range from repetition, substitution to transformational ones. They are aimed at providing the learners with oral practice of the intended grammatical points. The oral drills are techniques which were mainly utilized in Audio-Lingual method and similar approaches to second language teaching for various pedagogical purposes one of which was automatization of the grammatical patterns. Automatization can be viewed from two perspectives: One is to develop the ability to give quick and in-time responses to particular verbal stimuli mainly in phatic communion. The second one is to develop the ability to process a given piece of information without awareness or attention, making relatively more use of long-term memory, for example, to produce a particular sentence according to the grammatical rules of a language. However, because the so called standard tests which are usually administered by the officials of the Ministry of Education are almost completely lacking in tests items measuring the productive ability of the learners, the teachers, for this or maybe some other reasons, usually skip the drills and replace them with the explicit explanation of the rules and formulas underlying the patterns at issue (strong negative washback effect). Frankly speaking, in regular English classes at high schools they are most often *disregarded* by the majority of the teachers.

**Fluency Practice in All Four Skills**

The books have devoted extravagant space of the lessons to materials which primarily aim at developing and enhancing the reading ability of the learners. Considering the idea that the main needs of the learners might be to
acquire an acceptable degree of mastery and skill in reading materials written in English, this allocation looks justified. However, neither in the introduction nor in the lessons has it been explicitly mentioned by the writers of the books how to treat listening comprehension and writing skills. It is totally left to the teachers to decide whether to practice it or not. There is no section in the lessons specifically designed to develop and enhance listening skills in the learners. However, the teachers can probably work on this skill through having the learners listen to the reading passages read aloud by the teachers or other learners in the classroom. To involve the learners actively and attentively to listen to the passages read aloud, the teacher can ask various comprehension questions at different points or at the end of the listening activity to check their understanding. Speaking skill is also taken into account though indirectly and as a marginal activity. There are certain questions at the end of each reading passage which require the learners to give oral answers.

The last and not the least is the writing skill. If we define the writing skill as the ability to communicate one’s thoughts and ideas to a particular person or group of addressees through the orthographic form of a language, it is possible to claim that it is somehow neglected in the series. Although, some exercises of the lessons are intended to enhance the writing skills of the learners, they are limited to a few isolated sentence production activities in a decontextualized and sterile milieu of communication. Nowhere in the book, are the learners assigned writing activities to the sense which was proposed above. The authors could have included writing activities in different formats varying from controlled to free writing according to the proficiency levels of the learner groups.
Encourage Learners to Develop Own Learning Strategies and to Become Independent in Their Learning

Regarding the components of the learner training in the series, the revised edition of book 4, characterizes the features of a good reader in the Introduction section as follows: “A good reader is the one who is active and has specific goals in mind before starting to read. She/he continuously checks his/her understanding of the text and the text itself against the predetermined goals.” [Translated from Persian]. The authors continue, “A good reader usually browses the whole text before starting to read and pays attention to the organization and structure of the text as well as other parts which are relevant and compatible to the goals of the reading. In the process of reading, he/she often tries to predict the incoming data in the text. She/he reads selectively, and continuously revises his decisions as to what to read with close attention, what to read quickly, what to read again, and what not to read and etc. [ibid. translated from Persian]

From the above quotation it is understood that the authors are attempting to familiarize the learners with cognitive and behavioral strategies or, at least, raise their consciousness about learning strategies. Moreover, throughout the lessons learners occasionally come up with certain vocabulary learning strategies such as building up semantic trees which relate different words from a common semantic field. It is worth mentioning that nowhere in the books 1-3 is there a part explicitly addressing the issue of strategy training whatsoever.

The writer of the paper believes that learner training is helpful and valuable in pushing our learners toward the intended goals, of both the learners themselves and the teachers, but, after all, there are a number of unresolved issues to do with the application of learner strategy research to learner training (see Ellis, 1994, p. 530-533). It is not clear whether the meta-cognitive and cognitive strategies which are unconsciously applied by the good language
learners are teachable in a conscious way. In the meantime, it is particularly vague whether strategies are sufficiently generalizable to be used with a range of learners who will themselves be affected by factors such as context, cognitive styles, and proficiency levels. Nor is there adequate evidence that strategy training leads to improvement in language learning outcomes. As McDonough (1995, pp. 172-3) points out, ‘although learning strategies and strategy training are very important elements in the teaching/learning process, great care has to be exercised in moving from a descriptive and taxonomic position to an interventionist one.’

In conclusion, regarding the above mentioned criteria, B4 is considered to be qualified in helping the learners to develop some of the learning strategies found in good language learners, although the whole idea of strategy training appears to be a thorny and a controversial issue. Books 1, 2 and 3 in the series need much revision in this regard.

Conclusion

EFL textbooks can play an important role in the success of language programs. In fact, they are the realization of the processes of means/ends specification in the curriculum planning. Sheldon (1988) suggests that "textbooks represent the visible heart of any ELT program" (p. 237). They provide the objectives of language learning; they function as a lesson plan and working agenda for teachers and learners. Cunningsworth (1995) argues that textbooks are an effective resource for self-directed learning, an effective resource for presentation material, a source of ideas and activities, a reference source for students, a syllabus where they reflect pre-determined learning objectives, and support for less experienced teachers who have yet to gain in confidence. He also contends that we should also ensure "that careful selection is made, and that the
materials selected closely reflect [the needs of the learners and] the aims, methods, and values of the teaching program." (p. 7).

One of the ways to amend and improve a curriculum is to improve the textbooks and the materials employed in the program. And this is not possible unless the consumers involved, systematically evaluate and assess them on the basis of some established criteria. The reports of these types of evaluations can be shared among teachers and the authors of the materials to gain more effective EFL textbooks. Moreover, as Cunningsworth (1995) and Ellis (1997) suggest, textbook evaluation helps teachers move beyond impressionistic assessments and it helps them to acquire useful, accurate, systematic, and contextual insights into the overall nature of textbook material.

The writer of the paper believes that the evaluation of the EFL materials currently taught at public high schools requires a deeper and more exhaustive analysis and scrutiny by a group of experienced teachers and that the viewpoints and the ideas of a single researcher might not be adequately reliable because however hard one tries, it is almost impossible to be unbiased and impartial in ones judgments.
References


TEXTBOOK EVALUATION


Chapter 4

A Critical Evaluation of Interchange Series (third edition): Focus on Vocabulary Strategies
**Introduction**

The selection of a course textbook for a specific educational program is a matter of paramount importance which needs the devotion of a great amount of time and energy on the part of educational policy makers, and curriculum designers as well as material developers. Sheldon (1988) asserts that “the selection of a course book signals an executive educational decision in which there is considerable professional, financial and even political investment” (p. 237). The increasing flow of ESL/EFL books into ELT markets further complicates the issue and makes the process of selection even more difficult.

Having been teaching and supervising “Interchange” series for about 5 years in a Cambridge Open Centre (IR056), the researcher decided to examine and evaluate them drawing mainly on the evaluation checklists proposed by Cunningworth (1984, 1995), Coleman (1985), Sheldon (1988), Skierso (1991), Hemsely (1997), and partly on his own experience and that of his colleagues as well as the opinions of the students who had successfully completed studying the series.

Interchange (third edition) is one of the world’s most successful English courses for adult and young adult learners at the beginning to intermediate levels. It is a four-level series that provides a thorough coverage of all the language skills (grammar, vocabulary, reading, writing, speaking, listening), with a particular emphasis on listening and speaking skills in American English.

Richards (2004) summarizes the major features of Interchange (third edition) as follows:

- An integrated multi-skills syllabus
- Contemporary, real-world topics
- Practical authentic conversational language
Grammar taught in communicative contexts
Natural listening exercises with a variety of accents
Maximum opportunities for guided speaking practice
Students-friendly and teacher-friendly design
Regular review activities
Fun to teach and use in the classroom

Before embarking on examining Richard’s “Interchange" series (third edition), the researcher would like to go through different sections of a typical unit in the series.

Each unit usually starts with a "Snapshot" which is a picture below which there are some figures or pieces of information. There are also some questions which are related to the picture. These questions are then personalized. Next, in each unit, you can find the "Conversation" section which is a dialogue recorded on an audio cassette. Below the dialogue which is typically a controlled speaking practice, there is a piece of listening which is a rather freer practice that is often the rest of the conversation followed by some general questions about the contents of the tape.

Following the first conversation, there is a “Grammar Focus” which is about a specific grammatical point e.g., past tense, modals, clauses with because, although, etc which is presented in the so-called inductive form consisting of about ten example sentences containing that specific structural point. These examples are followed by 2 or 3 short dialogues missing some words or expressions related to that specific grammatical point. This is a kind of controlled practice aimed at manipulating the grammatical point under discussion. After this piece of controlled practice on grammar in the “Grammar Focus” section, there is a “Pair Work” activity which is a freer model of the controlled practice above containing personalization.
In the "Listening" part of the units, the students are required to listen to the tape and do an assigned exercise or task such as completing a chart or checking the items the speakers are talking about. This listening section is followed by further practice usually in the form of guessing the major points of the conversation. "Word Power" section is perhaps one of the most systematically-presented sections in the book. In each unit, some new vocabulary items and idiomatic expressions are presented and the students are required to match these words with their related synonyms, or antonyms or to collocate them. After that, the students are required to write some sentences using the words and finally, they are required to use the words freely in pairs in a dialogue.

"Pronunciation Practice" is another section which has been incorporated into Interchange books. In each “Pronunciation” part, the pronunciation, stress or intonation patterns of certain expressions, phrases or structures are presented (e.g., in the form of exercises like “notice the pronunciation of 'have to' and 'ought to' in these sentences”). This presentation is then, usually followed by a pair work activity requiring the students to write some sentences using those presented pronunciation points which should then be practiced with a partner.

Unlike some of the modern course books written for communication purposes in which writing might be neglected, "writing" is not ignored in Interchange series. In each unit a daily topic is chosen and clarified so much as to establish a context for the topic. Interestingly enough, the topic is often started and introduced by the writer in about three or four sentences-a technique through which the problem of “getting started” which is perhaps one of the most difficult stages in writing is solved- and the students are required to develop it into a paragraph or passages.

The “Reading” part usually appears as the last section of the unit. The reading passage is preceded by some pre-reading questions aimed at activating
students' background knowledge about the passage. After the students read the passage, they are required to do some assigned tasks like answering open-ended questions. A “pair work” comes next in which the students are advised to personalize the questions.

There are two other parts in the series entitled "Discussion" and "Perspectives". The former is a kind of speaking activity which encourages the learners to talk, usually in groups, about a subject which is normally related to the broader topic of the unit. The latter is, in fact, a type of listening activity about daily topics and conversational clichés which can be considered a kind of complementary activity for the "listening" section.

**Literature Review**

**Major Types of ELT Materials Evaluation**

Hemsely (1997) drawing on the work of Chambers (1997), Ellis (1997) and Low (1987), identifies three kinds of ELT materials evaluation; an intuitive impressionistic approach, a formal prior-to-use evaluation, and a process approach. The impressionistic approach is an intuitive, informal approach based on “first impressions”, perhaps gathered simply by flicking through materials or by reading publicity blurb.

The second approach, widely advocated by Chambers (1997), is considered systematic, detailed, principled and comprehensive, involving the use of carefully developed procedures and checklist of criteria which are used to perform a step-by-step examination of the materials.

The third approach, advocated mainly by Ellis (1997) includes three sub-types: The "predictive" or pre-use evaluation, an "in-use" evaluation, and a "post-use retrospective" evaluation. These stages equate with the "input” and “throughput” stage of Sheldon’s (1987, p.5) tripartite schema, the third stage of which, “output”, refers to evaluation according to eventual learning outcomes.
Combining the second and third approaches above, a systematic, detailed and comprehensive post-use approach was followed to scrutinize “Interchange” series using the main criteria of the checklists below.

**Evaluation Checklists**

Any systematic evaluation will necessarily involve the use of formalized lists of criteria. There are many checklists proposed for the purposes of course book evaluation. None of these checklists alone are sufficient and effective. Efforts have been made in this study to combine the salient features or criteria of major checklists like those of Cunnigworth (1984, 1995), Sheldon (1988), Skierso (1991), Hemsely (1997) and Coleman (1985).

The researcher has added some of his own mainly based on his experience, as well as that of his colleagues. Therefore, the remainder of the present study focuses on the criteria used to evaluate the series adopted in a specific context, a private language school (a Cambridge Open Centre) offering general EFL conversation classes.

**Methodology**

The method of research followed in the present study includes materials and procedure. The materials used for the purpose of the study consist of various evaluation checklists and the four-volume Interchange series (third edition). Both qualitative and quantitative methods of evaluation will be used in the procedure section.

**Materials**

textbooks under evaluation included Interchange series (third edition) including Intro, Interchange 1, Interchange 2, and Interchange 3.

Having examined the above-mentioned materials evaluation checklists, the following criteria, which were almost common to all, were selected for the purposes of the study:

1. Are the lay-out and physical characteristics of the series interesting and attractive?

2. Are the materials too biased and culture-specific (i.e. include cultural norms of only one culture and exclude the others)?

3. Are review or progress tests included in the series?

4. Are the instructions for activities and exercises clear enough?

5. Is a glossary or a vocabulary list included at the end of the book or throughout the book?

6. Are the materials graded (i.e. move from the easiest to the most difficult one) and recycled (i.e. the materials in one unit are repeated in other units)?

7. Have all skills (e.g., listening, speaking, reading and writing) and components of language (e.g., grammar, vocabulary and pronunciation) been incorporated into the series?

8. Are the recordings for listening sections “authentic” and not artificial?

9. Do the materials correspond to the learners' needs and match their aims and objectives?

10. Do the design and content of the series suggest ease of use and encourage learner motivation?

11. Do the books develop learners' socio-pragmatic and strategic competencies?

12. Are teacher guides available? Are they helpful in achieving the objectives of the course?

13. Are power relations between the characters in the units of equal rank?
14. Are appropriate visual materials available for the series?
15. Are the topics and tasks in the series interesting and attractive?
16. Is grammar practiced and presented well and systematically in the units?
17. Are there enough vocabulary items in each unit and are they practiced well in the units?
18. Does the series encourage learners to develop their own vocabulary learning strategies and what vocabulary learning strategies are recommended in the series?

Procedure

The four-volume Interchange books (third edition) were weighed against the above-mentioned criteria by both the researcher scrutinizing the materials and twelve experienced EFL teachers through a Likert-type questionnaire. The results are presented separately in details.

The Results of the Researcher's Scrutiny

1. The layout /physical characteristics

The Interchange student books contain colour illustrations in every unit. The purpose of this task appears to be contextualization of the materials in the unit as well as creating interest in the students. The teacher’s book suggests that the teacher “ask students to look at the picture, think about it and read the caption”. The lay-out of each unit is well-presented with a colourful illustration, but the amount of blank space for writing listening gap-fill or fill-in-the chart exercises is insufficient. This is also the case with reading exercises.

2. Culture component

Like many international English conversation books that are written to promote the oral proficiency and communicative competence of various learners
TEXTBOOK EVALUATION

in different contexts, and are culturally related basically to either American or
English culture, Interchange is specifically bound to American culture though
there are some pieces or passages about the cultural habits and customs of other
nationalities e.g., Chinese, Japanese, etc. An interesting point about culture
inclusion in the materials in “Interchange” books is that culture is not isolated;
rather, it is projected and integrated into different sections of the units (e.g.,
dialogues, snapshots, readings, etc).

This is unlike what happens in some internationally famous books in
which culture is partly presented in the form of culture capsules in separate
sections called social scripts (as in Headway series), culture tips, etc.

3. The inclusion of review or progress tests

After every two units in Interchange series, there is a two-page review test
which goes through the points covered in the two preceding units. That is, thirty-
two review sections entitled "progress check" can be observed in the whole four-
volume series which consists of sixty four units.

4. Clarity of the presentation and instructions

The instructions for different types of activities are clearly expressed so
that the students know what they are required to do before and after each activity.

5. Inclusion of a vocabulary list or a glossary

There is a glossary at the end of the book and it proceeds unit by unit. The
problem with the glossary is that, it does not include the meaning and the
pronunciation of the words, especially the latter which is of crucial importance in
a conversation course. In teacher books, however, there are several mini-
glossaries in every unit which define and explain the meaning of unknown words
and idiomatic expressions.
6. The grading and sequencing of the materials

The researcher thinks there is a good grading in the series and the units could not be taught in almost any order. The lessons go ahead based on the cognitive principle of “moving from known to unknown”, building on students’ background knowledge. There appears to be a lot of recycling of lexis and grammar in Interchange series. The teacher books ask the teacher to constantly review and recycle new vocabulary items and grammatical points. This can be clearly observed in Intro, Teacher Book (TB), p. 21: "To regularly review vocabulary, make it part of your teaching routine, for example, start each class with a vocabulary game or warm-up activity"; as well as in Intro, TB, p. 50: "Students usually forget about 80% of new words after 24 hours. To help them remember more, recycle or review new vocabulary during next class". This emphasis upon reviewing and recycling seems to continue all over the series especially in teacher books. Regarding variety of the exercises, it should be mentioned that there is not much variety and the same sections in different units contain almost always the same type of exercises.

7. The inclusion of multi-skills and components in the materials

The author of the series rightly claims that “Interchange” is a “multi-skills” series. Thus, all four skills and also the components of language (i.e. grammar, vocabulary and pronunciation) are worked upon in every unit though oral skills (i.e. listening and speaking) receive more importance and attention. That is, there are at least two conversations and two listening sections in every unit but, only one reading passage, and only one writing section. The skills are presented in a reasonably integrated way and all four language skills in the books reinforce one another.
8. Authenticity of listening recordings

All dialogues in the book have been especially scripted, but claim to “incorporate hesitations, natural pauses" and other features of speech to familiarize the students with authentic listening materials. Although the dialogues contain natural-like pauses, they sometimes include questions and answers that are felt to be unnatural sounding;

What is your father’s job?
My father is a teacher.

But, mostly in real-life situations we say:
He is a teacher.

9. The correspondence of materials to the students' needs

The aims of the program are to develop the students’ oral proficiency. That is, the majority of the learners taking part in a conversation class seek to develop or improve their abilities in listening and speaking skills. Based on a survey which was done in the centre, the majority of the learners (up to 70 percent) who already had the chance of studying other conversation books like New Headway, New Streamline English, East-West, etc found “Interchange” (third edition) of great help in satisfying their needs.

10. User-friendliness of the design and content of the materials

This criterion suggested by Ellis and Ellis (1978) corresponds, to a great extent, to the lay-out, physical characteristics factor discussed earlier in the paper. As discussed above, the majority of the subjects who had the chance of being exposed to similar conversation courses before, believed that “Interchange”(third edition) created joy and pleasure and kept them motivated, because they could use the books easily, could understand the instructions well, and could use it with ease in real-life situations (e.g., talking with a tourist, etc).
11. The series' developing socio-pragmatic and strategic competencies

The writers of the series believe that "Interchange" is a multi-skill source for developing different learner competencies" (Richards, 2003). The series seems to have met its authors' claims to a great extent, although not completely. However, the exercises are sometimes too controlled to let the students develop helpful strategies for communication. After some dialogues, you cannot find enough free practice or personalization activities as is the case with the majority of the dialogues and listening activities.

12. Availability and the effectiveness of teacher guides

Interchange series includes fairly comprehensive teacher guides which are readily available in the market. The strategies and techniques suggested in the teacher guides for teaching various parts, components and skills are almost always identical, and the researcher feels that they could have suggested alternative approaches to presenting each unit, rather than repeating themselves. Some of the explanations and the techniques proposed in the Teachers Guides are too lengthy and boring to be put into practice. Cunningworth and Kusel (1991) provide a framework for evaluating teacher’s guides. It would be a good idea to examine the teacher guides of the Interchange in a separate work. However, this is beyond the scope of the study.

13. Power relations between the characters in the units

Fairclough following Halliday and earlier critical linguists like Kress, Fowler, etc presents the principles of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) as follows:

1. CDA addresses social problems.
2. Power relations are discursive ("power in discourse" and "power over discourse").

3. Discourse constitutes society and culture.

4. Discourse does ideological work.

5. Discourse is historical (i.e. understood in terms of changing context over time).

6. The link between text and society is mediated.

7. Discourse analysis is interpretive and explanatory.

8. Discourse is a form of social action.

The accepted theory and practice of CDA are evident in ELT textbooks. One may begin by asking if question of inequality and power are evident concerns of textbook writers, or if there is only the traditional concern with describing discourse.

This equality of power seems to have been observed, partly at least, in Interchange series. In Interchange 3 for instance, "friend-friend relation" is by far the most common relation portrayed. This demonstrates the influence of discourse analysis which places stress on conversation between social equals in cooperative exchanges (and little on supervisor-subordinate roles):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interviewer-interviewee</th>
<th>colleagues</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Customer-service provider</td>
<td>neighbours</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family members</td>
<td>wife-husband</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Of course, it must be mentioned that although the emphasis in conversation analysis has been on research of conversation between social equals, as Conley and O'Barr (1998) maintain, "there are few conversations in which status and power are not relevant … . Far from being the norm, relationships of true equality are so rare as to be treasured" (p.13).
14. The presentation of the skills and components in the materials

The author claims that the “Interchange” is a “multi-skill” series. Therefore all four skills and also the components are worked on from the very beginning, although oral skills (listening and speaking) receive more importance and attention (i.e. there are at least two dialogues and two listening sections in each unit, but only one reading passage, and one writing section). The skills are presented in a reasonably integrated way and all four language skills in the books reinforce one another. Grammar, vocabulary and pronunciation are also included in the series.

15. Availability of visual materials

Interchange series are accompanied by both audio-CDs and video CDs. The audio-CDs contain the recordings of the various sections of the student books. Almost all sections of the first book (Intro) are available on audio-CDs or cassettes. However, the audio-CD of the last book (Interchange 3) only contains the recordings of Listening, Conversation, Perspectives and Pronunciation sections. The VCDs of Interchange include interesting dialogues and topics which are usually built upon and expand the topics mentioned in the book. Each book contains an audio CD and a VCD.

16. Inclusion of interesting topics and tasks

The lion's share of the topics and tasks in Interchange series seems to be attractive to the students. They are also up-to-date and appeal to the tastes of the youth. The series includes topics such as fashion, sports, entertainment, music, clothes, food and eating habits, etc which are usually favored by the people in general, and the youth in particular.
17. Inclusion of enough vocabulary items

Since there is no clear-cut, agreed-upon criterion as to the number of new words needed for the learners of a specific level, the evaluation of this feature seems to be mostly subjective. The teachers who have been teaching the series for many years in the centre as well as the students who have successfully completed studying the series almost unanimously maintain that Interchange series does not equip the learners with enough vocabulary knowledge to cope with their vocabulary needs. So they have to study supplementary vocabulary books to obviate this shortcoming. The low mean of 2.31 for this criterion can be observed in teachers’ result section.

**Incorporation of various vocabulary learning strategies**

Vocabulary learning strategies can be considered a sub-category of language learning strategies in second language acquisition which are in turn a sub-classification of learning strategies. Several attempts have been made to define vocabulary learning strategies. Schmitt (1997) basing his definition upon Rubin’s (1987) understanding of learning as “the process by which information is obtained, stored, retrieved, and used” (P. 29), maintains that “vocabulary learning strategies could be any which affect this rather broadly-defined process” (P. 203).

Schmitt (1997), drawing upon Oxford’s (1990) classification and making a distinction between Discovery (i.e. those strategies that are used to discover the meaning of new words when encountered for the first time) and Consolidation (those strategies that consolidate the meaning when encountered again) dimension, organized his final taxonomy of vocabulary learning strategies around 5 major groups, namely Memory (MEM), Cognitive (COG), metacognitive (MET), Social (SOC) and Determination (DET) strategies, as well as 58 individual strategies as shown below in Table1:
Table 1

Schmitt's (1997) Taxonomy of Vocabulary Learning Strategies

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strategy Group</th>
<th>Strategies for the discovery of a new word’s meaning</th>
<th>Strategies for consolidating a word once it has been encountered</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>DET</td>
<td>Analyze part of speech</td>
<td>DET</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DET</td>
<td>Analyze affixes and roots</td>
<td>DET</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DET</td>
<td>Check of L1 cognate</td>
<td>SOC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DET</td>
<td>Analyze any available picture or gestures</td>
<td>SOC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DET</td>
<td>Guess from textual context</td>
<td>SOC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DET</td>
<td>Bilingual dictionary</td>
<td>SOC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DET</td>
<td>Monolingual dictionary</td>
<td>SOC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SOC</td>
<td>Study and practice meaning in a group</td>
<td>MEM</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SOC</td>
<td>Teacher checks students’ flash cards or word lists for accuracy</td>
<td>MEM</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SOC</td>
<td>Interact with native-speakers</td>
<td>MEM</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MEM</td>
<td>Study word with a pictorial representation of its meaning</td>
<td>MEM</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MEM</td>
<td>Image word’s meaning</td>
<td>MEM</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MEM</td>
<td>Connect word to a personal experience</td>
<td>MEM</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MEM</td>
<td>Associate the word with its</td>
<td>MEM</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Gu and Johnson (1996) classified second language vocabulary learning strategies into seven broad categories: (1) metacognitive regulation (including...
selective attention and self-initiating strategies); (2) guessing strategies; (3) skillful use of dictionaries or dictionary strategies; (4) note-taking strategies; (5) memory strategies including: a) rehearsal strategies (e.g. using word lists, oral repetition, visual repetition); and b) encoding strategies (consisting of association, imagery, visual, semantic, contextual encoding as well as using word-structure or analyzing a word in terms of prefixes, roots and suffixes); (6) activation strategies (i.e. those strategies through which learners actually use new words in various contexts and; (7) beliefs about vocabulary learning (pp. 650-651).

Nation (2001), in a more recent attempt, divides strategies into three general classes: planning, sources and processes (Table 2 below). Through this classification, Nation separates the aspects of vocabulary knowledge (i.e., knowledge about words) from the sources of vocabulary knowledge (e.g. consulting bilingual or monolingual reference sources using context, etc) and from learning processes through which vocabulary knowledge is established.

Table 2

Nation’s Taxonomy of Vocabulary Learning Strategies (2001: 218)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>General class of strategies</th>
<th>Types of strategies</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Planning: choosing what to focus on and when to focus on it</td>
<td>Choosing word</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Choosing the aspects of word knowledge</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Choosing strategies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Planning repetition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sources: finding information about words</td>
<td>Analyzing the word</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Using context</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Consulting a reference source in L1 or L2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Processes: establishing knowledge</td>
<td>Noticing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Retrieving</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Thus, the aim of this section is to see how vocabulary learning strategies—especially those the researcher would like to call, based on vast literature review, the “major” strategies including dictionary use, keeping vocabulary notebooks, and repetition strategies— are treated in "Word Power" sections of the series. Efforts will also be made to investigate whether the materials train learners on the use of any vocabulary learning strategies so that they become successful and independent users of those strategies. In Interchange series, new vocabulary is presented and practiced mostly in Word Power section. As mentioned earlier, each unit includes, among other parts, a Word Power section which introduces the new words needed for the purposes of the unit and then gives some practice in the use of them in the form of different tasks (e.g., completing the chart, categorizing the words, etc), pair work, group work, and so on. Among various vocabulary learning strategies adopted by second/ foreign language learners of English from different language backgrounds, dictionary use strategies (or what Nation, 2001 calls “sources” strategy), keeping vocabulary notebooks and repetition strategies top the list (Ahmed, 1989; Gu and Johnson, 1996; Gu, 2003; Wu, 2005). To save space and for the sake of brevity, the following abbreviations will be used in this section: Inter = Interchange, SB = student book, TB = teacher book, WB = work book, and P. = page.

The major strategies mentioned above seem to have been undervalued in Interchange series. Regarding dictionary use strategies, it must be mentioned that the strategy has been explicitly mentioned only eleven times in the whole four-volume sixty-four-unit series (Inter1, TB, P.8; Inter2, TB, pp.4, 8, 16, 32, 67, 87; Inter3, TB, pp. 19, 30; and Inter3, WB, pp. 16, 56).

However, dictionary use strategies have sometimes been implicitly encouraged throughout the series through exercises such as “add one/ two more
words to each category” (e.g. in Inter1, SB, pp. 6, 8, 101; Inter 2, SB, pp. 46, 50; Inter3, SB, pp. 10, 80), checking to see whether the words have got “a positive or negative sense” (e.g. Inter 2, SB, pp.16, 67, 80; Inter 3, SB, p. 30) and “choose the correct words” (almost all over the series). These activities and exercises however, might not lead to the students' frequent use of dictionary strategies simply because of their implicit nature. However, using dictionaries as a vocabulary learning strategy is emphasized almost always in teacher books. But, the point is that not all teachers study the teacher books and thus might not become aware of these strategies and their importance in order to emphasize them in their teaching. There is little stress on dictionary look-up strategies in student books and work books (only two cases could be observed: Inter3, WB, pp. 16 and 56: “Complete this chart and then check your answers in a dictionary”.

Keeping vocabulary notebooks or jotting down new vocabulary items was one of the best and most commonly used strategies by the learners in the studies of Gu (2003) and Ahmed (1989). The scrutiny of Interchange series for this critical strategy suggests disappointing results. Only twice has the strategy been explicitly mentioned in the whole series! (Inter 2, TB, P.8: “Encourage students to keep a vocabulary notebook and Inter 3, TB, P.60: “Suggest students different ways to store vocabulary in their notebooks”).

As mentioned earlier, another vocabulary learning strategy mostly adopted by EFL learners is repetition. There is little explicit emphasis on this strategy throughout the series. One case in point is in Inter1, TB, P. 19 which reads “say the word for each material. Students repeat the word”. Pronunciation of the word to be learned is sporadically stressed (seven times in total in Word Power sections in the whole series) by asking the teachers to “model the correct pronunciation of the word”. However, this seems not to be sufficient in vocabulary acquisition. The authors of the series could have extended this type of
activity into repetition strategy by asking and encouraging learners to repeat the new words after receiving the correct pronunciation model.

The major strategies recommended in the teacher guides for vocabulary learning seem to be elicitation, explanation, personalization of vocabulary items to be learned as well as focusing students' attention on pictures. These strategies can be frequently observed all over the series and in almost all “Word Power” sections. “Recycling or reviewing” new vocabulary during next class is also paid great attention to in the series.

The main strategy encouraged in Interchange work books for learning vocabulary or still better saying, for consolidating the meaning of newly-acquired words is completing “crossword puzzles”. This strategy has been adopted two times in Intro WB (pp. 43 and 55), twice in Inter 1 WB (pp. 11 and 33), four times in Inter 2, WB (pp. 24, 47, 60, 84) and two times in Inter 3, WB (pp. 36 and 72).

The most frequently-used vocabulary learning strategy encouraged throughout the whole Interchange seems to be the strategy of “learning vocabulary in a group of semantically related words” (what is commonly called as” semantic field” method in SLA research) and collocations. This strategy is prevalent all over the series. In the word power section of Inter1, SB, Unit one, vocabulary needed for greeting or what the book calls” hello and goodbye” is presented. Unit two, deals with words for various jobs. Unit four presents vocabulary needed for entertainment. Unit five introduces Kinship terms or” family tree”. Unit six deals with words for sports and exercise, unit seven with chores and activities, unit eight with places and neighbour, unit nine with appearance and so on. This idea is also explicitly stated in the introduction to teacher's edition: “In word Powers the students typically categorize new vocabulary” (mainly based on their meaning), to reflect how the mind organizes new words” (Richards, 2005, P. viii).
TEXTBOOK EVALUATION

The results of teachers' evaluation of the series

Here, a five-digit Likert-scale questionnaire consisting of eighteen criteria above (and a copy of which exists in the Appendix) was administered to eleven teachers who had been teaching the series for many years. The results are summarized in Table 3 below:

Table 3

Descriptive Statistics for Teachers' Evaluation of the Series

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No. of the question</th>
<th>The criterion</th>
<th>No. of respondents</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>SD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>The lay-out and physical characteristics of the series are interesting and attractive.</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>3.91</td>
<td>1.34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>The materials are too biased and culture-specific (i.e. include cultural norms of only one culture and exclude the others).</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>3.33</td>
<td>0.97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Review or progress tests are included in the series.</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1.29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>The instructions for activities and exercises are clear enough.</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>4.11</td>
<td>1.21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>A glossary or a vocabulary list is included at the end of the book or throughout the book.</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>1.85</td>
<td>1.22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>The materials are graded (i.e. move from the easiest to the most difficult one) and recycled (i.e. the materials in one unit are repeated in other units).</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>3.75</td>
<td>1.07</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.</td>
<td>All skills (e.g., listening, Speaking, Reading, Speaking, reading and writing) and components and components of language</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>4.08</td>
<td>0.91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Description</td>
<td>Rating</td>
<td>Average</td>
<td>Standard Deviation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---</td>
<td>-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>--------</td>
<td>---------</td>
<td>--------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.</td>
<td>The recordings for listening sections are “authentic” and not artificial.</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0.98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.</td>
<td>The materials correspond to the learners’ needs and match their aims and objectives.</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>3.75</td>
<td>1.31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.</td>
<td>The design and content of the series suggest ease of use and encourage learner motivation.</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>3.48</td>
<td>1.46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11.</td>
<td>The books develop learners' socio-pragmatic and strategic competencies.</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>3.50</td>
<td>1.39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12.</td>
<td>The teacher guides are available. They are helpful in achieving the objectives of the course.</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>4.10</td>
<td>0.87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13.</td>
<td>Power relations between the characters in the units are of equal rank.</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>4.10</td>
<td>1.64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14.</td>
<td>Appropriate visual materials are available for the series.</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>3.36</td>
<td>0.95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15.</td>
<td>The topics and tasks in the series are interesting and attractive.</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>3.50</td>
<td>1.28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16.</td>
<td>Grammar is practiced and presented well and systematically in the units.</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>3.63</td>
<td>1.11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17.</td>
<td>There are enough vocabulary items in each unit and they are practiced well in the units.</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>2.31</td>
<td>1.11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18.</td>
<td>The series encourage learners to develop their own vocabulary learning strategies and make use of major vocabulary learning strategies such as dictionary use, keeping vocabulary notebooks and repetition.</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>2.27</td>
<td>1.12</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
As it is evident from Table 3 above, the teachers' ideas about and evaluation of the series overlap, to a great extent, with those of the researcher.

Conclusion

Interchange (third edition) is, as its authors rightly claim, one of the leading and most successful courses for ESL/EFL learners throughout the world. The series incorporates, among other good points, most of the positive qualities required of a textbook referred to in various materials evaluation checklists. Some of these positive qualities and criteria discussed above included the layout and physical characteristics of the series, the availability of review or progress tests, clarity of the instructions for exercises, the grading and recycling of materials, the inclusion of multi-skills and components, authenticity of listening recordings, the correspondence of materials to the students' needs, user-friendliness of the design and content of the materials, the series' developing socio-pragmatic and strategic competencies, availability of teacher guides, equality of power relations between characters in the units, availability of visual materials, inclusion of interesting topics and tasks, attention to and systematic presentation of grammar.

Despite the great number of advantages listed above, the series, like most of the other course books, is not free from some shortcomings. These pitfalls which were discussed in details in the "results" section mainly included the series' not equipping the learners with enough vocabulary knowledge and its avoidance of dealing emphatically with, as well as training learners on, the use of major vocabulary learning strategies such as dictionary use, keeping vocabulary notebooks and repetition strategies which have been found to be of paramount importance in second/foreign language vocabulary acquisition. Thus, in the light of the present study, the authors of Interchange (third edition) might be suggested
to give these pitfalls a second thought so as to improve the series and meet the vocabulary needs of the students who use them.

However, a word of caution must be mentioned here. Much of the language teaching that occurs throughout the world today could not obviously take place without the extensive use of textbooks. Although the use of textbooks in teaching has the advantages of providing structure and a syllabus for a program, helping standardize instruction, maintaining quality, providing variety of learning resources, providing effective language models and input, being visually appealing (Richards, 2004), depending solely on textbooks may not reflect students’ needs and may distort content and present an idealized view of the world and deskill teachers (ibid). That is, learning how to use and adapt textbooks is an important part of a teacher’s professional knowledge. Using a course textbook such as Interchange series (third edition), only provides a framework in which to build the base. Using textbooks from cover to cover, without any supplementary materials is not the most satisfactory method for meeting student’s needs.

In brief, although there are various beliefs on textbook use from never using them in the classroom to using every page to the letter, which seem to be of contradictory nature, the middle and logical ground between these two is the most practical and effective approach for teachers and most reflective of EFL/ESL learners’ needs. Thus, it is important that the teachers strike a balance between being a slave to their texts and not following any system or order which is usually provided by the textbooks.
TEXTBOOK EVALUATION

References


## Appendix

**Likert-scale questionnaire used for teachers' evaluation of the series**

1. The lay-out and physical characteristics of the series are interesting and attractive.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

2. The materials are too biased and culture-specific (i.e. are include cultural norms of only one culture and exclude the others).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

3. Review or progress tests are included in the series.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

4. The instructions for activities and exercises are clear enough.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

5. A glossary or a vocabulary list is included at the end of the book or throughout the book.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
6. The materials graded (i.e. move from the easiest to the most difficult one) and recycled (i.e. the materials are in one unit are repeated in other units).

1 2 3 4 5

7. All skills (e.g., listening, speaking, reading and writing) and components of language (e.g., grammar, vocabulary and pronunciation) have been incorporated into the series.

1 2 3 4 5

8. The recordings for listening sections are” authentic” and not artificial.

1 2 3 4 5

9. The materials correspond to the learners' needs and match their arms and objectives.

1 2 3 4 5

10. The design and content of the series suggest ease of use and encourage learner motivation.

1 2 3 4 5
11. The books develop learners’ socio-pragmatic and strategic competencies.

1 2 3 4 5

12. Teacher guides are available. They are helpful in achieving the objectives of the course.

1 2 3 4 5

13. Power relations between the characters in the units are of equal rank.

1 2 3 4 5

14. Appropriate visual materials are available for the series.

1 2 3 4 5

15. The topics and tasks in the series are interesting and attractive.

1 2 3 4 5

16. Grammar is practiced and presented well and systematically is in units.

1 2 3 4 5
17. There are enough vocabulary items in each unit and they are practiced well in the units.

1 2 3 4 5

18. The series encourage learners to develop their own vocabulary learning strategies and make use of major vocabulary learning strategies such as dictionary use, keeping vocabulary notebooks and repetition.

1 2 3 4 5
Chapter 5

Evaluation of Iranian Junior High School
EFL Textbooks
TEXTBOOK EVALUATION

Introduction

Sheldon (1988) suggests that "textbooks represent the visible heart of any ELT program" (p. 237). Textbooks provide the objectives of language learning; they function as a lesson plan and working agenda for teachers and learners. Cunningsworth (1995) argues that textbooks are an effective resource for self-directed learning, an effective resource for presentation material, a source of ideas and activities, a reference source for students, a syllabus where they reflect pre-determined learning objectives, and support for less experienced teachers who have yet to gain in confidence. He also contends that we should also ensure "that careful selection is made, and that the materials selected closely reflect [the needs of the learners and] the aims, methods, and values of the teaching program." (p. 7).

The significance attached to textbooks has generated a great deal of debates and research studies (Tomlinson, 2001). Different textbooks have been evaluated from a variety of aspects in both EFL and ESL contexts (Kirgoz, 2009; Richmond, 2005). Locally produced textbooks have also been the focus of research (Jahangard, 2007). This study intends to evaluate the ‘Right Path to English’ (henceforth RPE) which consist of three language books locally developed and prescribed by the ministry of education to be taught to the 1st-, 2nd- and 3rd- graders in the Iranian junior high schools.

Literature Review

The word “materials” includes not only textbooks but anything which plays a role in facilitating the process of learning a given language, such as the Internet, CD-ROM, the textbook (Tomlinson, 2003). Despite this, many may associate materials with textbooks only. This is due to the predominance of textbooks in any given language programs. In fact, in a language classroom the textbook is the foundational cornerstone around which all activities are centered.
Scholars are divided on the role textbooks play in language classrooms (Hyland, 2000; Tomlinson, 2001). Scholars who side with the effectiveness of textbooks argue that textbooks provide the required materials to students and teachers in the most convenient way while those who argue against the use of textbooks believe that textbooks prevent teachers from being creative, in one hand, and fail to account for learner differences on the other. These debates have never made textbooks to pale into insignificance. Rather, a worthwhile body of research has been generated to account for the textbook characteristics, the facilitative and debilitative role they play in language learning and teaching and the kind of language used in the textbooks as compared with naturalistic language use (Yakhontova, 2001; Zarei, 2011). According to Tomlinson (2010) materials can be instructional as they provide learners with language knowledge, experiential as they expose them to language in use, elicitive as they stimulate language use on the part of the learner and finally they can be explanatory in the sense that they facilitate learners’ discoveries about the language.

As scholars acknowledged the importance of textbooks, they began to carry out some studies in areas of materials development and materials evaluation. Tomlinson (2011) considered materials development both as a field of study and as a practical issue. According to him, as a field of study, it refers to any procedure an individual goes through in order to design, implement and evaluate the materials while as a practical issue, it refers to anything that a writer or a teacher does in an attempt to provide a source of language input, maximize the likelihood of language intake and stimulate language output. He puts forward some language learning and language teaching principles to be taken into consideration when developing materials. Materials evaluation, on the other hand, refers to “the process of measuring the value and effectiveness of learning materials (Richards & Schmidt, 2003, p. 322). Thus, in evaluating a given textbook, both the strengths and weaknesses of the textbook are
highlighted and suggestions as to how to address the shortcomings are provided. The strengths and weaknesses, however, are not based on the researchers’ intuitions, but rather based on an in-depth analysis of what related literature offers. To this end, a good number of principles and criteria have been suggested (Chambers, 1997; Tomlinson, 2003; Williams, 1983). Some examples of these criteria could be the appeal of the materials, affective and cognitive engagement of the learners, their ability to motivate learners and exposure to authentic language (Tomlinson, 2003). Tomlinson (2010) suggests that any evaluation of materials should be based on the application of theories of language acquisition, principles of language teaching and a working knowledge of the target language and the knowledge of how the materials are being used.

Dudley-Evans and St. John (1998) argue that an effective evaluation solicits information which emphasizes the strengths and weaknesses of the materials and clarifies how materials are used. In the principles of effective materials development, Tomlinson (2010) touches upon a number of principles for language acquisition and language teaching. For example, whether the learners have the opportunity to use language in an attempt to achieve communicative purposes and whether they have rich and meaningful exposure to comprehensive input of language. These principles, as he states, can be used in developing language materials.

Chambers (1997) also provide us with a number of criteria for good materials, namely, establishing relative merits of the textbook from a pool of features such as the suitability for age group, cultural appropriateness, methodology, skills, teacher’s book, personal involvement and student achievement.

McDonough and Shaw (1993) divide the evaluation process into the external and internal analysis. Visual materials, inclusion of vocabulary list and mentioning of the proficiency level of learners are among the criteria for external
analysis of the textbooks while the presentation of the skills, the sequencing of the materials and the efficacy of the teacher’s guide constitute the categories of internal analysis.

In addition to the criteria for evaluating the materials, different types of evaluation have also been recognized. Ellis (1997) distinguishes between the predictive and retrospective evaluation. He defines predictive evaluation as the process of deciding what materials to use and retrospective evaluation as the process of evaluating materials that have already been used. He sub-categorizes retrospective evaluation into impressionistic and empirical.

Tomlinson (2003, p. 22) enumerates some purposes for materials evaluation. He states that one might evaluate a textbook so as to help a publisher to make certain decisions about a publication, to develop materials him/herself, to select a book or to write a review. He also makes a distinction between pre-use, whilst-use and post-use evaluation. Pre-use evaluation, which is often impressionistic, involves predicting, quite subjectively, the potential merits of the book for the intended audience. The second stage of materials evaluation, that is, whilst-use evaluation refers to the measurement of the value of a book while it is being used. Tomlinson (2003) counts the clarity of instruction and layout, comprehensibility of texts and credibility, achievability of tasks and practicality, teachability and flexibility of materials as falling in the realm of whilst-use evaluation. Finally, the post-use evaluation is evaluating the materials after they have been used in a program to measure its short-term and long-term effect on the learners.

Textbooks have been evaluated from different perspectives, namely, based on teachers and learners’ attitudes, the methodology of the textbook, textbook treatment of skills, sub-skills, speech acts, and also based on a comparative analysis of naturalistic and textbook language (Zarei & Khalessi, 2011; Moore, 2002).
To evaluate textbooks from the viewpoint of teachers, learners, the researcher him-/herself and probably materials writers, researchers have developed checklists and evaluating schemes (Celce-Murcia, 2001; McDonough & Shaw, 1993; Rivers, 1981; Sheldon, 1988; Williams, 1983).

Jahangard (2007), based on thirteen criteria which he finds most relevant to the evaluation of textbooks such as appropriate visual materials, clear instruction and interesting topics and tasks evaluates the English textbooks taught at Iranian high schools. He enumerates the merits and demerits of the books and provides some suggestions as to how to alleviate the shortcomings.

Zarei (2011) set out to investigate the possible effects of teaching the *Interchange* series on the cultural attitudes of two groups of learners, namely, those who have already been using this series and are about to complete the three volume *Interchange* and those who are about to take it. He had the participants fill out a questionnaire containing cultural components. The results indicated that textbooks have the potential to give learners a new perspective on cultural issues.

Kirgoz (2009) evaluated three textbooks, prescribed by the ministry of national education, for use in grade Four. Teachers and students participated in the study by first responding to a thirty seven-item questionnaire in L1 constructed by the researcher and then going to an interview. The interview was held in L1 the transactions were recorded and then transcribed and translated into English for the purpose of data analysis. The textbooks were found acceptable and suggestions were made for future revisions to make them more effective.

An interesting line of research on textbook evaluation has been analyzing textbook language content against naturalistic language use. Corpus-based studies have been especially beneficial in revealing linguistic gaps between textbook’s language content and actual language use (Harwood, 2010). Romer (2004) carried out a comparative analysis of use of modal auxiliaries in context, their distribution and meanings between the spoken data available in the British
English corpus and a number of texts selected from English textbooks. The results of the study showed a large gap between the frequency of modal verbs in the corpus and in the textbooks. The three most frequent modals in the corpus were found to be will, would and can each of which had occurred more than 45000 times while in the textbooks the most frequent modals were can and will respectively. Gilmore (2004) investigated discourse features of seven textbook dialogues published between 1981 and 1997 and compared them with some compatible naturally occurring interactions. He found that the textbook dialogues differed considerably from real-life interactions in terms of features such as lexical density, turn-taking patterns, pausing, the use of hesitation devices and backchanneling.

As was mentioned earlier, Tomlinson considers materials evaluation a sub-category of materials development so that the insights from materials evaluation can be utilized by materials writers. The researchers subscribe to this idea and believe that textbooks which are the heart of classroom activities and the spirit of the syllabus development reified into concrete tools which need to be evaluated against the criterial principles of materials development as a post-mortem operation. That is to say, besides considering criteria such as teachers and learners' beliefs and cultural issues it is necessary that textbooks be analyzed with reference to the degree of conformity with the most widely accepted principles of language learning and teaching or as Waters (2009, p. 311) calls it “advances in materials design”. He points to two perspectives on this: the applied linguistics perspective in which the design of the teaching materials is expected to reflect academic theorizing and research findings in language, language learning and language teaching. The second perspective, also known as the audience-based perspective, places primary stress on the perception and accommodation of the learners' needs. The current study which subscribes to the
above-mentioned two perspectives concerns itself with the evaluation of the RPE series against the two touch stones of:
a. the extent to which the RPE textbooks at issue are congruent with the most widely accepted criterial principles of SL learning teaching and,
b. the extent the RPE series have been successful in fulfilling the target learner’s needs.

Therefore, the following two research questions are posed:
1- How much do the ‘Right Path to English’ series conform to the most widely accepted criterial principles foreign language learning?
3. How much do the RPE series have been successful in accommodating the junior high school learners’ perceived needs in foreign language learning?

Methodology

Participants

Thirty two EFL male learners, aged 13-16, who were studying the RPE series at publicly maintained junior school to learn English as foreign language participated in the study.

Instrument

In order to answer to second research question, a 25-item questionnaire whose major focus was to canvass the participants opinions about the RPE’s appropriacy of content, speaking, listening, vocabulary and grammar, exercises and activities, physical appearance, and culture was administered. The check list was devised drawing on the available checklists in textbook evaluation literature. The Cronbach reliability of the obtained scores was found to be .82.
Procedure

The design of the checklist was based primarily on Celce-Murcia’s (2001) checklist with some additional relevant items which were borrowed from other available ones from Chambers (1997) and Rivers (1981). The checklist was prepared first in English and then translated by the researcher into Persian (the participants’ L1). Having prepared the checklist, the printouts were taken to the classroom and after a perfunctory discussion about the effectiveness of the RPE with the participants they were administered. It took about twenty minutes for the learners to answer the questionnaire.

Data analysis

The RPE series was evaluated from the applied linguistics perspective and audience-based perspective (Waters, 2009). The first section, measuring the textbook against research findings in the literature (Brown, 2001; Ellis, 2010; Nation; 1991) evaluates the textbook from the applied linguistics perspective and the second section, seeking the learners’ beliefs regarding the effectiveness of the textbook using a checklist, evaluates the RPE series from the audience-based perspective.

Results and Discussions

Textbook evaluation according to applied linguistics perspective

The first research question posed above queries the extent of conformity of the RPE series to some of the most advocated principles and the most confirmed findings of materials design as sub-field of applied linguistics inquiry. As previously mentioned, the applied linguistics viewpoint on materials design gives relatively higher priority to the degree the textbook designer have been aware and incorporated the fundamentals of the research findings to the development of the materials. Due to the limitations of space and time, it was
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not possible to include all the details of the possible criterial findings about materials development, therefore, we had to contend ourselves with several of the most important ones such as skills and content. Actually, more weight was attached to grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation, listening and speaking because the magnitude of the shortcomings in these areas was relatively more remarkably larger in the RPE series. In each one of the sub-sections below, a the related literature is briefly reviewed and then the RPE series will be scrutinized against the touch stones which are pointed to in the literature and finally, some suggestions are proposed on the possible ways to alleviate or rectify the shortcomings.

**Grammar**

A close scrutiny of the selection, arrangement and presentation of the grammatical point included in the RPE series smacks of a combination of structural linguistics and behavioristic psychology once dominating the field as reified in different versions of audio-lingual method of language pedagogy in the past and some features of the grammar translation method. The features which are primarily associated with the grammar translation to language pedagogy which is, in turn reflected in the way linguistic content is selected, graded and presented are mainly the use of L1 as the language of instruction in L2 instruction, little or no systematic attention to listening and speaking skills, explicit-deductive teaching of grammar and selection of vocabulary merely based on the reading passages used (Richards and Rogers, 2001). Though no explicit reference to the use of L1 is made neither in the introduction of the book intended to guide teachers on how to use the book nor is it explicitly used in the series, the lack of sufficient grammar-oriented exercises compel the teachers to get recourse to the learners’ L1 in delineating the grammatical points at issue in most of the lessons.
The exercises included are mainly substitution, transformation, and replacement drills which are borrowed from the techniques which were most common in audio-lingual method of language teaching.

In the past fifty years, a multitude of approaches to teaching grammar, such as inductive grammar teaching, contextualized grammar teaching, form-focused instruction and the processing instruction, have been recognized. Oxford et al, (2007) present two models of grammar teaching: the explicit mode which is divided into focus of form (FonF) and focus on meaning (FonM) and the implicit mode which constitute inductive and deductive teaching of grammar. In FonM no direct attention is paid to grammar whereas in FonF the form is occasionally brought to surface. In the explicit inductive approach to teaching grammar, the students’ attentional resources are allocated to the forms of the language but the learners are to work out the rules from the examples. In the explicit deductive approach, “the teacher presents rules and their associated structures, and learners must apply what they are learning to specific instances…Lessons are rarely oriented toward communication” (Oxford, et al, 2007, p. 123). The main drawback of the explicit-deductive approach is that “many learners, after years of instruction, do not feel competent to say more than a few sentences in the L2” (Oxford, et al, 2007, p, 123). Ellis (2010), on the other hand, defines contextualized grammar activities as activities where the primary objective of the activity is to practice the use of a particular grammar point. In such grammar activities two or more learners interact with each other focusing on a particular grammar point. This activity prescribes what linguistic devices to use. Another interesting grammar activity is called input-enrichment activities. This activity can take a number of forms, oral/written, while students are involved in listening to something, reading something or writing something. Input-enrichment activities are meaning-focused and thus encourage incidental learning. In the later revisions of the RPE series, inclusion of some communicative drills as
pointed out in (Brown, 2001) might repair and enhance the stature of the grammar section from an almost sterile mechanical leverage to a more communication and interaction oriented class activity.

**Vocabulary**

Closely related to the discussion made in the grammar section is the presentation of vocabulary items in the RPE series. The vocabulary items are introduced in to serve the illustration and presentation of the syntactic structures embedded in every lesson of the series. The authors could have included other more reliable criteria such as the frequency of the occurrence of the lexical items available from corpus studies (see Coxhead, 2000; West, 1953).

Nation (1991) introduces 120 items which serve as survival vocabulary for anyone who wishes to be able to function communicatively in an English speaking context. He subdivides them into eight categories: greetings and being polite, buying and bargaining, reading signs, getting to places, finding accommodation, ordering food, talking about yourself and controlling and learning language. Regarding the first category, that is, greetings and being polite, the RPE series introduce a couple of good phrases such as Hello, Hi, Good morning, Good afternoon, Good evening, goodbye, Bye, Excuse me, Mr. and Mrs. It also provides the learners with some phrases to talk about themselves. For example, by the end of junior high school the learners are expected to be able to talk about their ages, physical appearances and states of mind. Other categories of survival vocabulary are totally lacking. Of course, some of these categories are addressed by textbooks for high school students. They are, however, marginally addressed while more time and space needs to be invested on teaching them. Another issue regarding the presentation of vocabulary concerns the means by which the set of vocabularies are presented. Thornsbury (2002) offers a set of choices relating to the presentation of the vocabulary. The set includes
translation, real things, pictures, actions/ gestures, definitions and situation. The two main sets which are quite appropriate for young learners are translation and especially the use of pictures (Jalongo, 2004; Preitkruez, 1972). In the RPE series, most of the words are presented through translation. Pictures are scarcely used, except in one case to illustrate different parts of the face. The use of authentic pictures from real life contexts of situation could add to the graphical appeal and beauty of the series, particularly where the target consumers of the series are young learners. Color pictures and fine arts if employed artistically can enhance the motivation of the learners to read the books, thereby, teach them the intended content indirectly as is the case in peripheral learning.

**Pronunciation**

Pronunciation plays a prominent role in the success of communication in a given language. As a result, in order to help learners better succeed in communication, it is necessary that English pronunciation be taken care of in ELT textbooks. ELT textbooks have focused on the teaching of both segmental features of language such as consonants and vowels, the discrimination of minimal pairs and the suprasegmental features such as stress and intonation (Celce-Murcia, 2001; Kelly, 2000). The RPE series addresses the segmental features of language by providing a pronunciation table at the end of each unit focusing on a particular IPA entrance along with highlighting a given feature of a consonant or a vowel such as different pronunciations of letter C or E. Minimal pairs and suprasegmental features are not included in the pronunciation section of the units.

An ELT textbook in an EFL context can make use of various resources in the teaching of segmental and suprasegmental features of the language. These range from most implicit such as teacher talk and CDs to most explicit such as chaining, reading aloud (Kelly, 2000; Thompson, 1995). Although segmental
features of the phonetic system of English have been included in the working agenda, the amount of space allocated to pronunciation implies that it is relegated to a minor aspect of language in the RPE series. To compensate for this demotion and relegation imposed by the RPE series teachers can invest more class time and activities to compensate for this shortcoming. These, needless to say, necessitate the inclusion of more listening activities in the textbook. Due to a multitude of factors, it is believed that listening is one of the most difficult skills to acquire in an EFL context. (Uso-Joan and Martinez-Flor, 2006).

**Listening**

Listening is a complex activity which constitutes the cornerstone of language acquisition (Krashen, 1994). The recognition that listening is a complex activity which involves an active and interactive process and that it plays a primary role in the acquisition of L2 has had a considerable influence on language teaching practice (Rost, 2005). It is a goal-oriented activity which involves bottom-up and top-down taking place at different phonological, grammatical, lexical and propositional levels (Rost, 2001) and according to Bloomfield (1942, cited in Rost, 2001) understanding and speaking a language is achieved primarily through hearing and imitating native speakers.

Different approaches to teaching listening to L2 learners have been offered (Anderson and Lynch, 1988; Richards, 1990). Underwood (1989) proposes pre-, while- and post-task activities for listening about which Wilson (2008) commented that while pre-task activities are suitable for activating schemata and establishing the reasons why the learners are asked to listen, while-listening activities which include listening for gist and/or detail, inferencing and note-taking mainly serve the purpose of having students learn the evidence of understanding or non-understanding. Post-listening activities provides the learners with an opportunity to ponder over their listening experience without the
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necessity of having to process the language online. They include checking answers, discussing difficulties, focusing on form in more detail and so on. The overall goal of teaching listening is to ensure that the learners are successful both in terms of process and product, e.g. in terms of using top-down and bottom-up processes to get to the correct answer. From the above-mentioned discussion, the importance of listening as a crucial means of learning a language was highlighted. This urges the ELT textbook writers to provide tasks and activities which can enhance the listening skill of the learners. It is worthy of notice that while almost all of the commercial textbooks in the market include listening sections as an important component of the content of the books, surprisingly, this is not the case with the RPE series and the listening skill is totally disregarded. With this omission of the listening section from the RPE series, the learners are actually deprived of a great opportunity to get familiar with the sound system of the target language, a drawback to which the failure of the majority of the learners who dispense to EFL learning in the public schools and do not afford to go to private language schools can be partly attributed.

A possible suggestion as to how to compensate for this drawback in the series for the practicing teachers is that they use the reading passages as the content of listening comprehension activities. After a warm up on the topic of the reading passage and doing some pre-listening activities to activate the related schemata in the minds of the learners, the teacher asks the learners to close their books and the teacher reads the passage slowly and clearly to the class. Then, the teacher poses a number of general questions related to the content of the passage tapping their overall understanding of the passage. A word of caution seems necessary here, because research shows that there are essential differences between the characteristics of spoken and written texts in terms of information density, structural complexity, redundancy, choice of lexis which can make a written text inappropriate for listening activities due to the limited capacity of the
brain in on-line information processing which is one of the indispensable
diabilities of listening comprehension, the teacher can alleviate this problem by
providing more processing time for the learners by making deliberate pauses
between the phrases and sentences and repeating each phrase or part of the
sentence twice. In some case where long and embedded sentences are the case,
with a bit of ingeniousness on the part of the teacher, the complex sentences can
be broken down into complete independent sentences which constitute the
original one to make it more on-line- processing-friendly for the learners.

Speaking
Speaking as a skill in its own right and as a prerequisite to the written
language was first given prominence by audiolingualism (Richards and Rogers,
2001). As Richards (2006) says it has never been neglected in ESL/EFL courses.
Audiolingualism was based on behaviorist theories of language learning and
therefore claimed a central role for repetition in learning a given language with
an emphasis on accuracy and error-free utterances. Audiolingualism neglected
two important aspects of language. Firstly, the relationship between form
and meaning and secondly, the relationship between language and the social
context of use was not accounted for. Following the emergence of cognitive and
sociolinguistic theories of language learning, the role of meaning and the
 correspondence with form were emphasized. Recently, as Richards (2006)
discusses, considerable light has been thrown on speaking based on advances in
discourse analysis, conversational analysis and corpus analysis. Due to the
importance of speaking, its mastery has been the primary goal of many ELT
textbooks and programs and the evaluation of success of learners and programs
depends on whether or not they have been up to the expectations when it comes
to oral proficiency. Consequently, textbooks and teachers have focused on a
variety of direct approaches such as questioning strategies and topic management
and indirect ones such as group work and task work to the teaching of speaking (Richards, 1990). In EFL contexts, language classrooms suffer from a couple of deficiencies, namely, the use of L1 as language of instruction, the large number of students in each class which limit their opportunities to speak the target language and the lack of motivation on the part of the learners (Nunan, 1993, cited in Lazaraton, 2001). Audiotapes and videotapes can be of significant help in engaging students to actively participate in speaking activities. Other techniques to get students to involve in speaking activities include structured interviews where students exchange real information about each other by asking and answering questions based on the use of specific structures and picture activities where students describe pictures or match pictures with texts. Rivers (1981) mentions three aspects of language: language as product, language as tool and language as process or activity. Language as product refers to the focus on the formal characteristics of language where language is considered as “an object of study” (Rivers, 1981, p. 185). Language as tool stresses the ways language is used in order to operate on the environment, that is, how to express our intentions such as asking, ordering and denying. Finally, language as process refers to what it takes to successfully use language communicatively. Grammar-translation method approaches language mainly as a product and as an object of post mortem analysis.

The dialog sections in the RPE series seem to have very little communicative value since they are “often more stilted and artificial in their development” (Rivers, 1981, p. 203). These types of dialogs are called grammar-demonstration dialogs. They are carefully prepared in order to highlight a particular aspect of a grammatical point to be studied. It seems that the dominant approach adopted by the RPE series designers in the development of the dialogs has been the grammar-demonstration type dialogs. It is recommended that in later revisions of the series modifications be made so that a shift of focus from
this type of dialogs to conversation-facilitation dialogs where students are immediately provided with useful functions of language to help them communicate in the target language are made. In contrast to grammar-translation dialogs which are quite long, conversation-facilitation dialogs are short and several of them may be included in each unit of the textbooks, therefore, useful phrases can be used in different contexts and in a number of variations (Rivers, 1981). Furthermore, the researchers believe that in dialogs all features of spoken language including spoken words such as hey, yummy, yeah, guy, kid, to bug, (Good) morning, alive and kicking and a challenging level of fast speech must figure significantly in ELT textbooks. It needs to be reiterated here that the development of speaking skill is closely related to vocabulary teaching (Nation, 2005). This assertion entails that in order to develop speaking in the target language the most frequent vocabularies of spoken language rather than those of written language should be taught as research has indicated that the most frequent words used in spoken and written languages are essentially different (Biber, 1989; Coxhead, 2000).

**Textbook Evaluation According to the Audience-Based Perspective**

The second research question aims to find out about the learner beliefs regarding the effectiveness of the RPE series. Table 1 demonstrates the learners’ responses to the items on the checklist. The last column (N) represents the number of participants and the penultimate one (M) represents the mean of the total score that all the participants gave to each item. As can be seen from the table, mean scores range from a low of .28 to a high of 1.97. 1.97 is close to number 2 on the scale which equals to poor. Consequently, it can be said that learners do not generally believe in the effectiveness of the textbook in helping them learn English. The checklist consists of seven components, namely, content, culture, exercises, physical appeal, pronunciation, skills and vocabulary and
structure. The overall mean for each component was also counted: content .80 , culture .84, exercises .90, physical appeal 1.38, pronunciation .84, skills 1.75 and vocabulary and structure .90. Authenticity, appeal, accounting for learners’ needs and organization constitute different categories of content. The total mean of 0.80 out of 4 may be due to the fact that the different parts of the textbook such as the dialog and reading sections are intentionally designed to highlight a grammatical point. The reading in the last unit of the 3rd book concerns Hamid’s day as a routine. It contains fourteen sentences with all sentences containing will as future tense marker. Such a text lacks authenticity and, consequently, the learner does not appeal to it. This is also in contrast with the fact that daily routines in English are referred to using the present simple tense. Since the RPE series has been locally produced, it is in complete conformity with Iranian local culture. The only drawback to the cultural aspect in the textbook seemed to be a lack of both the diversity of local sub-cultures across the nation and worldwide cultures. As a result, only one item on the presentation of world culture was included and as can be seen from the total mean (.84) the world culture is under-represented. The items on the skills section are mainly concerned with equal presentation of the four skills. The skills total mean (1.75) is a little higher than that of content and culture. This is despite the fact that the listening skill is totally lacking and the speaking skill is almost lacking. Vocabulary and structure got a total mean of .90. The items on this section seek the learners’ beliefs on whether they think vocabulary and structures are appropriately presented in terms of sequence, recycling, load and different contexts. The total mean is far from ideal and the reason for this, as previously mentioned, could be because of the fact that both vocabulary and grammar center around the forms of language only and the learners find nothing meaningful and relevant to their present and future lives. The items on the exercises (total mean of .90) are concerned with the communicative value of exercises, recycling of previously taught grammar points
and whether they are meaningful or mechanical (Brown, 2001). Concerning the communicative value of the exercises, it needs mentioning that only three substitution drills in each unit can potentially require oral answers from the learners without having much communicative effect.

Table 1
*Learners’ Responses to Items*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Content selection and presentation</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>0</th>
<th>1</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Topics are logically organized</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>.50</td>
<td>32</td>
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<tr>
<td>Content is up-to-date</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.28</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Language is authentic</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1.09</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Content covers linguistic needs of learners</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1.25</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Content is appealing</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Language functions are covered</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>.72</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Skills**

| Speaking skill is attended to      | 6  | 16 | 5  | 4 | 1 | 1.97| 32 |
| Listening skill is attended to     | 17 | 6  | 7  | 1 | 1 | 1.97| 32 |
| All skills are equally attended to | 11 | 11 | 7  | 0 | 3 | 1.81| 32 |
| Reading sections are varied and interesting | 7 | 16 | 4 | 2 | 3 | 1.28| 32 |

**Vocabulary and Structure**

| Grammar is sequenced from easy to more difficult | 4 | 10 | 7 | 9 | 2 | .56 | 32 |
| Vocabularies are presented in a variety of ways | 4 | 12 | 3 | 10 | 2 | .81 | 32 |
| Vocabulary load is appropriate            | 10 | 10 | 3 | 6 | 3 | 1.06| 32 |
| Vocabulary words are recycled in           | 7  | 3  | 8 | 11 | 3 | 1.47| 32 |
**TEXTBOOK EVALUATION**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>subsequent units</th>
<th>10 12 6 3 0 1.22 32</th>
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<tr>
<td>Vocabulary words are sequenced from easy to more difficult</td>
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<tr>
<td>Grammar points are recycled in subsequent units</td>
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<tr>
<td>Vocabulary words are used in a variety of contexts</td>
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<td>Exercises are meaningful and interesting</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Previous grammar points are recycled</td>
<td>3 12 10 5 2 1.06 32</td>
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</table>

<table>
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<th>Physical Appeal</th>
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<td>The textbook is attractive enough</td>
<td>18 9 2 3 0 1.25 32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Picture are interesting</td>
<td>6 16 5 4 1 1.41 32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The cover, binding and size are appropriate for intended learners</td>
<td>17 6 7 1 1 1.50 32</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pronunciation</th>
<th>9 8 6 3 6 0.84 32</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pronunciation is adequately attended to</td>
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<tr>
<th>Cultural Aspects</th>
<th>17 5 9 1 0 0.84 32</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>World culture is presented</td>
<td></td>
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</table>

(0 = lacking; 1 = very inadequate; 2 = poor; 3 = adequate; 4 = excellent)
And since other exercises require direct manipulation of some linguistic forms only, they would fall in the realm of mechanical exercises rather than meaningful ones. These, could account for the low total mean. Physical appeal and pronunciation obtained the total means of 1.38 and .84 respectively. The mean scores for components and individual items on the checklist allude to the fact that learners are far from satisfied with the RPE series in all aspects. Measurement of the RPE series both in terms of recent findings in language learning and teaching and also based on learners’ beliefs emphasizes the fact that it does not have much to offer to learners and that it is in desperate need of reconsideration meaning that the textbook must be supplanted by a more effective textbook which takes into account the communicative needs of the learners.

**Conclusion**

To sum up, it need mentioning that for measuring the RPE series against the principles of language teaching and learning I was somehow selective, in that I focused on those areas which I, from experience, thought was most neglected or presented in an outdated way. Therefore, there is no section on reading and writing skills, for example, as either the series somehow incorporates it adequately or it is not of paramount importance for the learners of that level. Regarding cultural aspects, the textbook is totally consistent with the local culture and for this reason no item on the checklist requests learners’ beliefs in this aspect. The only cultural aspect which is lacking in the series is a lack of any information about the cultural norms of other nations which seems to be a necessary part of language textbooks. As was previously mentioned the textbook falls short of expectations both based on the principles of language teaching and learning and in terms of learners’ beliefs.
References:


TEXTBOOK EVALUATION


TEXTBOOK EVALUATION

Chapter 6

An In-Depth Evaluation of a Series of ELT Textbook: TopNotch
Introduction

The importance of the role of textbooks in language teaching and learning cannot be denied. Although there might be some opponents of the idea of using published textbooks in ELT classes, the majority of people dealing with education, teaching, and learning assert the saliency of published textbooks in ELT classes. Toms (2004) indicates that proponents of the application of course books argue that it is the most convenient form of presenting materials, it helps to achieve consistency and continuation, it gives learners a sense of system, cohesion and progress, and it helps teachers prepare and the learners revise.

McDonough (1993) believes when an education system wishes to introduce innovations in its schools, nothing changes until the first materials embodying the new principles desired or decreed are available for the teachers.

Materials are an essential element within the curriculum, and do more than simply “lubricate the wheels of learning”. At their best, they provide models of desirable classroom practice, they act as curriculum models, and at the very best they fulfill a teacher development role. Good materials also provide models for teachers to follow in developing their own materials (Nunan, 1988).

One of the proponents of the presence of textbooks, Richards (2001), believes that much of the language teaching that occurs throughout the world today could not take place without the extensive use of commercial textbooks. Learning how to use and adapt textbooks is; hence, as he claims, an important part of a teacher’s professional knowledge.

Cunningsworth (1984) believes that there are very few teachers who do not use published course materials at some stages in their teaching career. Many of us find that it is something that we do very regularly in our professional lives.

Therefore, selecting appropriate materials for any learning environment is one of the most sensitive tasks for teachers and materials developers. Kulm et al. (1999) argue that to make the most effective use of a textbook, teachers must
TEXTBOOK EVALUATION

decide which textbooks are appropriate for their needs. A teacher needs to
determine the extent to which a textbook focuses on and is aligned with a
coherent set of significant, age-appropriate student learning goals that the
teacher, school, or district has identified as integral to the understanding of and
progress in a particular academic subject. They must also assess how well a
textbook's instructional design effectively supports the attainment of those
specified learning goals. The only way to gain this information, he claims, is
through careful evaluations of textbooks and other materials.

Consequently, we must make every effort to establish and apply a wide
variety of relevant and contextually appropriate criteria for the evaluation of the
textbooks that we use in our language classrooms. We should also ensure that
careful selection is made, and that materials selected closely reflect (the needs of
the learners and) the aims, methods, and values of the teaching program (Litz,

Tomlinson (2001) considered material development (and evaluation) as
both a field of study and a practical undertaking. As a field, he argued it studies
the principles and procedures of the design, implementation and evaluation of
language teaching materials. As an undertaking, it involves the production,
evaluation and adaptation of language teaching materials, by teachers for their
own classrooms and by materials writers for sale or distribution. He stated that
study of materials development is a recent phenomenon.

Until recently materials development was treated as a sub-section of
methodology, in which materials were usually introduced as examples of
methods in action rather than as a means to explore the principles and procedures
of their development (p. 66).

Tomlinson (1998) believed that there are some major endeavors to undertake
for improving the quality of the materials used in L2 instruction. Carrying out
systematic evaluation of materials currently in use to find out to what degree and
why they facilitate the learning of language and pooling our resources and bringing together researchers, writers, teachers, learners and publishers in joint endeavors to develop quality materials are among those attempts that seems to be relevant to this literature.

He stated that the term “material evaluation” refers to attempts to measure the value of material. He was of the opinion that in many cases this is done impressionistically and consists of attempts to predict whether or not the materials will work, in a sense that the learners will be able to use them without too much difficulty and will enjoy the experience of doing so. He argued that we should accept the view that for materials to be valuable the learning points should be potentially useful to the learners and that the learning procedures should maximize the likelihood of the learners actually learning what they want and need to learn. It is not necessary that the learners enjoy and value the materials.

Ellis (1997) distinguished between two different types of material evaluation: a predictive evaluation designed to make a decision regarding what materials to use and a retrospective evaluation designed to examine what have actually been used. He believed that nearly most of the material evaluations that have been done are predictive type. There are two ways in which teachers can carry out this kind of evaluation. One way is that teachers rely on evaluations carried out by expert reviewers. For instance, journals like ELT journal assist teachers in this respect by providing reviews of published course books. On the other hand, as an alternative, teachers can carry out their own predictive evaluation. As Ellis indicated, there are numerous checklists and guidelines available to help them to do so. However, there are limits to how ‘scientific’ such an evaluation can be. He quoted from Sheldon (1988) that believed” it is clear that course book assessment is fundamentally a subjective, rule-of-thumb activity, and that no neat formula, grid, or system will ever provide a definite yardstick.”
In regard with ESL materials evaluation, Griffiths (1995) argued that there are many factors to be taken into account when evaluating material for use with speakers of other languages (ESOL). These days, he asserted, there is a huge variety of ESOL materials available to choose from which means that those entrusted with this responsibility can face a daunting task. As such, he proposed some of the most important questions to be asked when evaluating materials for speakers of other languages. One may find these questions useful for providing a checklist for ESL materials evaluation. These questions are as follow:

- Does the material match learner objectives?
- Is the material learner-centered?
- Does the material facilitate interactive learning?
- Is the material socio-culturally appropriate?
- Is the material gender-sensitive?
- Is the material up-to-date?
- Are vocabulary and comprehensible input levels well-graded?
- Is the material age-appropriate?
- Is the material interesting and visually attractive?
- Is the material relevant to real life?
- Is the material easy to use?
- How ethnocentric is the material?

In the literature of textbook evaluation many different schemes and checklists have been offered by different writers and evaluators. The number of checklists is great but as Litz (2005) claims all of these checklists have a lot in common. He contends that various writers have suggested ways of helping teachers to be more sophisticated in their evaluative approach, by presenting evaluation “checklists” based on supposedly generalizable criteria that can be
used by both teachers and students in many different situations. Litz points out that although Sheldon (1988) suggested that no general list of criteria can ever really be applied to all teaching and learning contexts without considerable modification, most of these standardized evaluation checklists contain similar components that can be used as helpful starting points for ELT practitioners in a wide variety of situations. He further points out that preeminent theorists in the field of ELT textbook design and analysis such as Williams (1983), Sheldon (1988), Brown (1995), Cunningsworth (1995) and Harmer (1996) all agree, for instance, that evaluation checklists should have some criteria pertaining to the physical characteristics of textbooks such as layout, organizational, and logistical characteristics. He suggests some other important criteria that should be included in the checklists such as those that assess a textbook’s methodology, aims, and approaches. Moreover, criteria should analyze the specific language, functions, grammar, and skills content that are covered by a particular textbook, etc.

As it was mentioned above, different types of frameworks have been suggested for textbook evaluation by different experts and researchers in the realm of ESL/EFL material and textbook evaluation. Followings are some of the frameworks among the existed ones.

- **Chastain’s framework (1971)**
- **Tucker’s framework (1975)**
- **Davison’s framework (1979)**
- **Celce-Murcia’s framework (1979)**
- **Williams’ framework (1983)**
- **Sheldon’s framework (1988)**
- **Ur’s framework (1996)**
- **Littlejohn’s framework (1998)**
What can be inferred from above arguments is that in the current context of language teaching and learning (in order to choose suitable materials for a course whether by a teacher or by administrators) evaluation is usually carried out and no one can deny its importance. In this regard, this paper, then, is concerned with the carrying out an evaluation (using Littlejohn’s framework, 1998) on a series of ELT materials, namely Top Notch.

Littlejohn’s framework has been selected in this research because he believes “what is required is a framework which separates assumptions about what is desirable from an analysis of the materials” (p, 192). He asserts that we need a general framework which allows materials to ‘speak for themselves” and which helps teachers/analysts to look closely into materials before coming to their own conclusions about the desirability of the materials. His framework seeks to evaluate the selected textbook regardless of how it is used in the classroom. He mentions it as analyzing the materials “as it is’, because a set of materials can be used quite differently in different contexts based on the knowledge, abilities, and preferences of different teachers. This framework, thus, is claimed to be devoid of impressionistic criteria about what is desirable in a set of materials. By analyzing the individual activities (tasks) in detail and by studying important characteristics of the book, this framework is claimed to be “in-depth” and “objective” rather than subjective.

**Research Questions**

As such, an ELT textbook series called Top Notch was selected to be evaluated using Littlejohn’s framework. Since the publication of Top Notch series (2006), little evaluation has been conducted on them. In this paper, we tried to evaluate Top Notch series to seek answers to the following questions:

1) What are explicit features of Top Notch series?
2) What pedagogic values does Top Notch series have?
3) Is Top Notch series able to fulfill the objectives claimed to be set for them?

**Methodology**

As it was mentioned before, this study is theoretically based on Littlejohn’s (1998) framework. In this framework Littlejohn tries to evaluate the textbook to be selected regardless of how it will be used in the classroom or how the teacher will use it, because a set of materials (textbooks) can be used differently in different contexts based on the knowledge, abilities, and preferences of different teachers. Consequently, as Littlejohn believes, we need a framework that helps us to analyze material ‘as it is’ and a framework that ‘allows materials to speak for themselves’. “My focus”, he states, “however, is on materials as a pedagogic device, that is as an aid to teaching and learning a foreign language.”(p. 192). Deciding about presence or absence of a specific characteristic in a book cannot be agreed upon by different teachers or evaluators. As such an appropriate framework should be devoid of impressionistic criteria about what is (not) desirable in a set of materials, and that is what we can see in Littlejohn’s framework. As he claims, the framework tries to be in-depth and objective rather than subjective by analyzing the individual activities in detail and based on important features. Thus, he has considered following questions as the basis of his framework:

1. What aspects of materials should we examine?
2. How can we examine the materials?
3. How can we relate our findings to our own teaching context?

He introduces the details of his framework by discussing these questions. Here some parts of his discussion are referred to in brief.
What Aspects Of Materials Should We Examine?

In this connection, Littlejohn states that his framework consists of two main sections namely publication and design to focus on “methodology” of the material and their “context”.

As he puts it, publication relates to the “tangible” or physical aspects of the materials and how they appear as a complete set or book. “Here we will be concerned with the relationship that may exist between the students’ materials and any other components … and the actual form of the material … all of which may have direct implications for classroom methodology.” (p. 193).

Publication
1. Place of the learner’s materials in any wider set of materials
2. Published forms of the learner’s materials
3. Subdivision of the learner’s materials into sections
4. Subdivision of sections into sub-sections
5. Continuity
6. Route
7. Access

He further points out that we may also look inside the materials to determine how they are divided into sections and sub-sections, etc.

The second section in the framework, design (following Richards and Rodgers proposal 1986) relates to the thinking underlying the materials. Here we deal with such issues as the aims, principles of selection, principle of sequencing, subject matter and focus of subject matter in which they draw on the learner’s process competence (knowledge, affect, abilities, skills)), participation (who does what with whom), learner roles, teacher roles and finally the role of materials as a whole.
How can we examine the materials?

Now that we know what aspect of materials should we examine we should find a way of examination. In order to have a detailed and objective tool to gather the required information, Littlejohn suggests three levels of analysis on a set of materials. As he states, on its own the framework has a very limited use since it is not able to guide the analysis in examining the materials to any depth. “The principal problem is that some aspects in the framework actually entail coming to a conclusion about other aspect in the framework” (p.195). This means that analysts should not only examine different sections of the materials but move through different “levels” of analysis, to make more and more inferences while they move from a consideration of the more easily identifiable aspects to the more abstract and complex. So we have three levels, from most objective, what is physically there in the materials (level 1) through deductions about the demands likely to be made of teachers and learners (level 2) to conclusions about the apparent underlying principles and “philosophy” of the materials (level 3).

Level 1: What is there?

Littlejohn points out that this level deals with the ‘explicit nature’ of the materials, where we would expect little disagreement in describing the materials. We might begin, for example, with the publication date, the intended audience, and the amount of classroom time required (based on statement found within the materials). We can also look at the physical aspects of the materials such as their published form, number of pages total number of components in a complete set, etc. Looking further into materials we can examine how the ‘units’, ‘chapters’ etc. are subdivided, their length, and if there is any standard pattern within them.
Level 2: What is required of users?

This level of framework moves the evaluator on to a deeper level of analysis to what, as Littlejohn claims is the most important aspects of materials. Here the evaluator needs to understand what exactly teachers and learners using the materials are expected to do. Littlejohn indicates that in order to come to these conclusions, the evaluator needs to divide the materials into their constituent ‘tasks’, and then to analyze each task, in turn. Thus, it is important to establish a precise definition of what ‘a task is’. There can be different definitions of a task; however, Littlejohn identifies three key aspects of tasks:

- a process through which learners and teacher are to go
- classroom participation concerning with whom (if anyone) the learners are to work
- content that the learners are to focus in

Using a detailed definition of this kind will enable us to go through an extract of a set of materials and divide it into tasks. In this level each task is analyzed based on three questions:

I. What is the learner expected to do?
   A. Turn-take
   B. Focus
   C. Operation

II. With whom?

III. With what content?
   A. Form
      - input to learners
      - output by learners
   B. Source
C. Nature

Working through materials in this detailed manner is likely to be very revealing of the underlying character of the materials and for showing the pedagogical value of each textbook activity. As Littlejohn states, it is precisely in the nature of classroom tasks that materials designer’s assumptions about the best route to classroom language learning become clear, and in consequence, teacher and learner roles become defined. It is also through an analysis of tasks that we can most effectively test out the various claims made for the materials. If, for example, the materials claim to be ‘learner-centered’ yet we find that by far most of the tasks involve the learners in ‘responding’ and in working with content supplied by the materials, there would appear to be a serious mismatch. Littlejohn mentions that to assist in gaining an overall picture of the materials, percentages of each feature can be calculated, such that, for example, we can say that X percent of tasks involves ‘writing’, Y percent involves ‘discussion and negotiation’, Z percent involves ‘repetition’ and so on.

Level 3: what is implied?

This final level of analysis draws on findings at level 1 and 2 to come to some general conclusions about the apparent underlying principles of the materials. Working from a description of the explicit nature of the materials (level 1) and an analysis of tasks (level 2), we can make statements about the overall aims of the materials, the basis of selecting and sequencing both tasks and content, and also we will be able to come to a conclusion about the roles proposed for teachers and learners, and the role of the materials as a whole.

Littlejohn has offered a table of summary (appendix a) under the title of ‘What and How’ as a guide for evaluators to make inferences about the design of the book. This table categorizes the findings of all three levels and helps the evaluator compare his/her findings by the use of two schedules: EN (=schedule
for recording the explicit nature of the materials) and AOT (= schedule for the analysis of tasks).

**Participants**

Participants of this study consisted of 10 people including five ELT experts and five EFL teachers. The ELT experts were asked to help in this study to complete evaluative checklists. The teachers were asked to help experts working on one of the checklists developed for evaluating the design of selected textbook. Each of these teachers had at least six months (note that Top Notch series has recently been introduced to Iranian EFL institutes) experience of teaching the textbooks under analysis.

**Materials**

The selected textbook evaluated in this study was Top Notch series including six-level English course for adults and young adults. A sample of these books which contained about 13.5% of the total materials-- Littlejohn argues that “I have found it is useful to analyze about 10% to 15% of the total material, ideally chosen around the midpoint” (p. 196) — was extracted. This sample included four units. Each unit of Top Notch series is composed of a two-page warm-up section plus a four two-page lessons and a two-page checkpoint section. The sample contained a total number of 127 tasks. Each task was labeled by a number that was applied in task analysis sheets.

This study examined Top Notch series developed by Joan Saslow and Allen Ascher in 2006 and published by Pearson-Longman publication. Top Notch as its authors claim is a dynamic six-level course for international communication with the flexibility to fit any teaching situation. They indicate that Top Notch sets a new standard, using the natural language that people really
speak. It allows students to confirm their progress at the end of every concise two-page lesson.

There are also some more features claimed by authors as follow:

- Clearly defined goal,
- Observable progress,
- Authentic language,
- Purposeful content,
- Practical tasks,

**Instruments**

A checklist was developed in order to examine the explicit features of Top Notch series. This checklist, a draft of which is given in appendix b, was based on Littlejohn’s framework. As Littlejohn directed in his framework according to the nature of the materials under evaluation some minor changes was applied, the general format was in accordance with the framework though.

There was another checklist based on Littlejohn’s framework (appendix c) under the title of *Task Analysis Sheet* (TAS). This checklist examines the activities and tasks in one typical unit of each textbook. The Task Analysis Sheet includes three main sections 1. What is the learner expected to do? 2. Who with? And 3. With what content? Each section has also several subsections.

The first section examines the materials according to three aspects: A. Turn take (initiate, response, and/or not required); B. Focus on ( language system, meaning, and/or meaning-system relationship); and C. Mental operation (retrieve form long-term memory, select information, draw on prior knowledge, relate sound to objects, compare, etc.)

In the second section three possible situations for interaction are checked: learner to class, learner individually simultaneously, learners in pairs/groups.
The third section is also divided to following parts: A. input to learner, B. expected output from learners, C. Source, and D. Nature.

For the sake of convenience each TAS was designed in a way that enabled the evaluators to enter the information related to the 10 tasks in one sheet.

There was also a third checklist (appendix d) developed based on claims declared by the authors of Top Notch series and Richards and Rodgers notion of design, as is mentioned in Littlejohn’s framework, to seek participants’ ideas about some number of 36 statements. These statements were categorized according to following nine sections of design part in Littlejohn’s framework:

1. Aims and objectives
2. Principles of selection
3. Principles of sequencing
4. Subject matter and focus of subject matter
5. Types of teaching/learning activities
6. Participation: who does what with whom?
7. Classroom roles of teachers and learners
8. Learner roles in learning
9. Role of materials as a whole

Data collection

The checklist developed to examine the explicit features of Top Notch series was worked on by the researchers themselves because as Littlejohn puts it, this checklist is dealt with “tangible” or physical aspects of the materials and there will not be any disagreement among different evaluators about the results provided by this check list.

The second checklist (TAS) was offered to five ELT experts as raters. It is worth mentioning here that this checklist, proposed by Littlejohn, is developed in a way that it can be worked on by even one rater. Here in order to enhance the
reliability of evaluation, these five experts were asked to help to evaluate the materials. Each rater was provided with a sample of material and checklists to work on. Before starting the job, a brief description of the whole material (number of units in each textbook, the sequence and patterns of activities, the number of textbooks in each level, components, etc.) was presented to the raters to have a general idea about the Top notch series. Of course the organization and sequence of activities in Top Notch series textbooks is in such a way that it is repeated in every unit. In this regard, there seemed not to be any critical differences (considering the organization and sequence of activities) between the total amount of materials and our sample. Then each rater was asked to work on the first five tasks as a kind of piloting to become familiar with the nature of the evaluation he was involved with. After elaboration on some possible vague points and a break of five to seven days the main rating activities started.

The third checklist then was handed to these five experts and also to five teachers with experience in teaching Top Notch books in order to have a thorough vision on design as explained in previous section. Experts were asked to help us because after working on TAS checklist they would have a general view on Top Notch series and they could also use their expertise in ELT to work on this checklist. Teachers helped us at this part because of their experience of teaching these books. They had an idea about the whole material, not just the sample. In this case if, possibly, there were any partial differences between our sample and the whole material, it would not be hidden from these experienced teachers’ stand points.

Data Analysis

For the first checklist a report on explicit features of Top Notch series is provided in the results section. Regarding TAS checklist after analyzing each expert’s ratings, using statistical procedures and SPSS software, frequency
counts and percentage indexes were reported for individual features listed in task analysis sheets.

An analysis for the third checklist (Design) was performed to find an agreed view on each of sections mentioned in Littlejohn’s framework. By the use of the relevant statistical procedures, a general percentage index was reported for subcategories of this checklist and then the percentage index of each question was reported (appendix e) as well.

Results and Discussion

Explicit Nature of Top Notch

(Question one: What are explicit features of Top Notch series?)

The researchers have scrutinized Top Notch series package very carefully in order to present as much about its explicit nature as possible. The authors of Top Notch series are Joan Saslow and Allen Asher and the publisher is Pearson Longman. Of course Gazale Javan publication, Longman agent in Iran, publishes and distributes this series in our country. There is enough information about both publishing companies such as contact address and telephone numbers that can be found on the inside front cover of the textbook. There is also some information on page 1 about the authors’ formal education, teaching experience and field of study, administration and curriculum/syllabus and materials development experience.

Another important feature that most of the evaluative checklists have paid attention to is “cost” which affects decisions on choosing a textbook. The price of Top Notch textbooks, compared to the other available ELT textbooks in the market, seems to be reasonable. It should be mentioned here that each textbook (e.g. 1A, 2A, 1B...) comes with a students’ Super CD-Rom and contains Workbook. The price of each level’s textbook at the time of writing this research is 75000 Rials. This series was published in 2006 and was meant to be used with
adult and young adult students from beginning to advanced levels. The supplementary materials and components are Workbook and Students’ CD-Rom (attached to the student books), Teacher’s edition and Lesson planner, Class audio program, Top Notch TV, Copy and Go (prepared class activities for each lesson), Assessment package, Course placement test, and a Companion Website including more exercises for students and more resources for teachers.

Every book consists of five units, each one in 12 pages. After first two pages of every unit there are four two-page lessons and there is a checkpoint (progress check) at the end of each unit. Before starting the first unit in each textbook there are some parts and preliminary sections as follows:

- **Table of contents**

  This page is divided into three parts. The first part shows page numbers of each unit. The second part deals with reference sections’ page numbers and the third part contains page number of each unit of the attached Workbook.

- **Scope and Sequence**

  This part includes the plan and sequence of activities for two textbooks in each level e.g. scope and Sequence for 2A and 2b are presented together. This part is in four pages which may serve as a guide into the content of the book. It is a table including ten columns. In the first column there is the title and topics of the lessons and the page number and the title of Top Notch Songs which come at the end of some units. In the second columns there is some information about the kind of vocabulary presented in each unit. The third column is devoted to the conversation strategies that are expected to be applied and worked in each unit. The fourth column relates to the grammar points which are presented in each lesson. Column five is also dealing with grammar points under the title of Grammar Booster which contains some extra activities and points related to each
unit’s grammar and comes at the end of the book. The sixth column brings some information about the speaking parts of each unit. Pronunciation, listening, reading and writing are the titles of the rest of the columns. They contain information about the topic and kind of the activities presented in each unit.

○ **Acknowledgements**

This page is divided into two parts. In the first part the authors have acknowledged the contributions of the members of the International Advisory Board who had helped in the process of the development of Top Notch series. In the second part the authors have thanked the reviewers and piloters who have reviewed Top Notch in its final form.

○ **To the teacher**

The first page of this part contains some information about the intended audience and different levels of Top Notch series. It also describes some (claimed) key elements of Top Notch instructional design. The second page presents some information about the components of Top Notch that was mentioned above.

○ **Units**

As it was mentioned before, every unit in Top Notch textbooks consists of twelve pages. The first two pages are aimed at providing some number of warm-up activities for learners. The sequences of activities in these two pages are mainly as follow:

On the top left of first page of every unit a small box demonstrates the goals of each unit. The general pedagogical goals of the unit are mentioned orderly in these boxes. For instance, the goals of the first unit of Top Notch 2A
are 1. Get reacquainted with somebody, 2. Greet a visitor to your country, 3. Explain local customs, and 4. Ask about a person’s experiences.

The tasks start with a part called Topic Review followed by other tasks, namely, Discussion, Sound bites, pair work and a part with the title of ‘What about you?’

- **Topic Review**
  This part introduces some aspects of the topic of each unit. It provides a number of pictures embedding some new vocabularies that help learners to discuss the topic and the questions asked about their own opinions.

- **Discussion**
  This part poses some questions to be discussed in class about the topic. Learners are asked to express their ideas and discuss them with the class based on their information and knowledge.

- **Sound Bites**
  These tasks in Top Notch textbooks provide conversation samples in written and aural forms. Students are asked to read along as they listen to the conversation. The oral conversations are chosen from natural conversations among different speakers of English.

- **Pair Work**
  Pair-work activities as the name suggests are tasks that involve learners in activities in pairs. Different kinds of practice such as speaking, writing, etc. are included in these tasks.
The tasks under this title ask learners to put themselves in conversation characters’ shoes. The tasks demand learners to act as if they are in situations similar to conversations and react in their own way. The next pages of every unit are divided into four two-page lessons and a two-page checkpoint. The sequences of activities are almost constant and in addition to the aforementioned ones following tasks are also presented in these pages:

- **Conversation Model**
  These sections provide structure listening and speaking practices. They introduce the meaning and use of the grammar, which follows these sections, in context. These tasks also use graphics and pictures to set the scene and illustrate new vocabularies. These conversations provide students with useful expressions and discourse features.

- **Grammar**
  This section introduces the grammar used in conversation deductively with some examples and provides some exercises for learners to practice the grammatical points in realistic contexts.

- **Vocabulary**
  There are some sections under this title that introduce a number of new vocabularies by the use of interesting graphics and pictures. These tasks, as it is claimed by the authors, are corpus-based and give learners the chance of acquiring vocabularies essential for communication. These tasks contain explicit presentation, practice and extended recycling of words, collocations, and expressions in each unit.
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- **Listening comprehension**
  This part which is usually accompanied by some pictures provides some pre-listening warm-up questions. Then it demands students to listen to the audio and try to find different kinds of information. A variety of listening skills such as listening for main ideas and details are practiced in this section. Some post-listening activities are also involved in these kinds of tasks.

- **Conversation pair work**
  This task is a freer model of the conversation tasks which allows students to use their own information to complete the conversations containing blank parts and to practice them in pairs. There are also some directions provided for students in this part in order to help them brainstorm the topic and the main ideas of the conversations.

- **Reading**
  The reading tasks are mostly divided into three parts: Reading warm-up, Reading and some follow up questions for comprehension check about the main ideas, details, or sequencing information. The reading texts are varied and all of them are authentic and sourced. Of course the texts are chosen based on the levels of textbooks and their comprehensibility for students is considered in selection.

- **Top Notch Interaction**
  These tasks consist of three parts. In the first part some points about a particular real life notion, custom, culture, etc. are presented to students. Then in the following parts students are asked to work in groups and pairs to interact with each other more freely by using the information presented in the first part. These
activities offer opportunities for increasingly free and rigorous practice within the class.

- **Pronunciation**
  These sections provide guidance and some controlled practice in organizing and producing sounds linked to the conversation models.

- **Writing**
  These tasks usually appear at the final pages of each unit. The learners are demanded to write on some topics using the information presented in previous pages of each unit and also using their own ideas and opinions.

- **Top Notch Song**
  These tasks ask students to listen to some pop songs while they are able to read through the lyrics provided at the end of the book. These activities provide the practice of the target grammar and vocabulary embedded in the song. Top Notch songs appear in checkpoint sections of each unit.

- **Unit Wrap-up**
  These kinds of activities are also among those which appear in the checkpoint sections of each unit. As the name suggests there are some exercises presented here to review and wrap up the unit materials. These parts also act as a progress check for learners.

- **Alphabetical word list**
  This part follows units section in Top Notch books. It contains an alphabetical list of all productive vocabulary in the textbook. Each word comes
with a number which refers to the page on which the word first has appeared or first has been defined.

- **Social language list**
  It contains a unit-by-unit list of all the productive social language from the textbook.

- **Pronunciation table**
  This is a part which introduces the pronunciation symbols used in the textbook.

- **Grammar booster**
  This part offers some additional grammar practices related to each units grammar points.

- **Top Notch Pop Lyrics**
  This part contains the lyrics of every unit’s Top Notch song activity. As it was mentioned before workbook and student’s CD-Rom are attached to each student books. Consequently, the last part of each textbook is devoted to these components.

  One of the innovative features in Top Notch series is the attachment of workbook and student’s CD-ROM to the textbook. As it was referred to before, the workbook and student’s CD-ROM are attached to the end of the each level’s textbook. This feature can help students to have both student’s book and workbook at a same time and in every session of the learning class. By this feature there won’t be any case of misplacing or forgetting to bring workbook and CD-ROM to class with the main book by students. Another characteristic of
this feature is that it enables Top Notch books to occupy less space as a result of
the attachment of workbook to the main book.

Results of Task Analysis

In this part the results of TAS evaluation are presented in tables and
graphs with their interpretation. The results of TAS evaluation are presented in
the form of average for five raters in order to be easily compared. In each part a
brief interpretation of tables is presented.

What is the learner expected to do?

This question analyzes the demands which the tasks have on the learners
i.e. how the learner is supposed to accomplish the task. This part examines three
specific aspects of a task as follows.

Turn-Take

Table 1 shows the results of five experts’ ratings of TAS for first part of
the checklist under the title of Turn-take. Turn-take, as Littlejohn (1998) put it,
refers to the kind of participation which the learner should have when
accomplishing the learning task. When a learner participates in a learning task,
he/she may initiate using the language i.e. he/she is expected to express what
he/she wishes to express without a script of any kind, or he/she may just respond
i.e. the kind of language he/she is expected is narrowly defined. Besides, the
learner may not be expected to use language at all, for instance, he/she may just
be demanded to listen to the listening in this case no initiation and no response is
expected from the learner.

As Table 1 shows nearly half (53.29%) of the tasks in Top Notch expect
the learners to “respond”. The rests of the tasks include 30.82% “initiation” and
15.88% “the tasks that do not require learners to initiate or respond. These results
show that the Top Notch tasks more often encourage students to use the language and more importantly they often require them to express themselves rather than be a listener. In conclusion, we can see that Top Notch tasks cater for more involvement of the learners in the classroom events. Of course we should not ignore that half of the tasks in this textbook require learners to “respond” and a smaller proportion require students to “initiate” using the language.

Table 1

*Frequency and Percentage for Turn-Take*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Turn-take</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Respond</td>
<td>396</td>
<td>53.29%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Initiate</td>
<td>229</td>
<td>30.82%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not required</td>
<td>118</td>
<td>15.88%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>743</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Focus

This section of TAS examines the tasks to see where the learner is expected to concentrate his/her attention when he/she participates in learning tasks presented by Top Notch. Based on the presented task by the textbook the learner may be required to focus on “language system” i.e. the rules or form of the language, “the meaning” i.e. the message of the language being used, or the “meaning-system relationship” i.e. the relationship between language form and its meaning.

Table 2 shows that 43.76% of the total tasks in Top Notch series draw on “meaning”. Activities which draw learners’ attention to form-meaning relationship occupy next biggest proportion of the tasks by 34.00%. And 22.23% of the tasks are those which direct students to focus on language form. In conclusion, we can see that the tasks in Top Notch mainly focus on meaning considering that about half of the tasks just focus on meaning and 34% of them
focus on both form and meaning. This can be interpreted as Top Notch tries to enhance comprehension by the use of the tasks that draw students’ attention more to the meaning of the language than its form.

Table 2

*Frequency and Percentage for Focus*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Focus on</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Meaning</td>
<td>372</td>
<td>43.76%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meaning/system relationship</td>
<td>289</td>
<td>34.00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Language system (rules or form)</td>
<td>189</td>
<td>22.23%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>850</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Mental Operation**

Different mental operation may be used while the learners participate in language learning tasks. A wide variety of mental operations are probable when a learner wants to comprehend or produce language and this diversity of mental operations is as a result of the complexity of human mind. In this section of TAS ten items of mental operation were examined, namely “Retrieve from long term memory” i.e. a mental operation through which the learner is expected to recall items from previous units to the present task, “Build text” by which the learner produces rather a long stretch of spoken or written discourse (more than 50 words), “Draw on prior knowledge” in which the learner needs to draw on his/her prior linguistic knowledge in order to carry out a task, “Relate sounds to objects” by the use of which the learners listen and then point to the mentioned object or mark an object in their textbook, “Compare” via which the learners compare two or more sets of language data on the basis of meaning or form, “Decode semantic meaning” in which the learners are expected to deduce the
TEXTBOOK EVALUATION

The tasks in Top Notch demand all the ten mental operations to be accomplished. Draw on prior knowledge is used slightly more than other operations (16.09%). Retrieve from long term memory is demanded in 12.68% of tasks. Activities that ask students to compare the information are about 11.21% of the total proportion. Activities that demand selecting of information are about equal to the tasks by which learners need to apply language rules as well as the tasks that demand decoding of semantic meaning (10.51%, 10.24% and 10.18% respectively). Building text and relating sound to objects are the two next mental operations which are almost equal (9.52% and 9.32% respectively). Finally repeat with expansion and deduce language rules are 5.63% and 4.49% of the total proportion of tasks. It can be seen from the table that Top Notch provides learners with activities that give them the opportunity to practice their previous learning, relate and apply them in new tasks and activities. This characteristic gives the textbook more consistency and continuity and helps the learners associate the new information to the old information in their mind. Of course we should not ignore that Top Notch pays less attention to deduction of language rules that reveals the fact that it does not apply a lot of inductive approach toward teaching grammatical structures and other teaching points within its tasks.
Who with?

This section of TAS seeks to find the kind of interaction occurring between the students and class or teacher while they are accomplishing a task. Three kinds of interaction are considered in this part as “Learner to class” in which one student is supposed to give his/her reports to the others in class, “Learners individually simultaneously” in which each individual student performs the required task but not in collaboration with other learners, and “Learners in pairs/groups” in which the learners are required to interact with each other in pairs or groups in order to carry out the task.

As can be seen in table 4 activities which require students to accomplish a task individually simultaneously compose 54.24% of total tasks in Top Notch. Tasks that involve learners into pairs or groups activities are 24.46% of total proportion. And 21.29% of tasks require interaction between students and
class. In conclusion, we can see that the authors of Top Notch in spite of claims for the importance of pairs/group works activities in the process of learning have given importance to tasks that involves learners into activities that should be done individually simultaneously.

Table 4

*Frequency and Percentage for Who With?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Who with?</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Learners individually simultaneously</td>
<td>428</td>
<td>54.24%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learners in pairs/groups</td>
<td>193</td>
<td>24.46%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learner to class</td>
<td>168</td>
<td>21.29%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>789</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*With What Content?*

This section of TAS examines another important aspect of a task in a textbook. “Input to the learners’, “Expected output from learners” and “Source” are subsections of this part whose analysis results are presented separately in tables and graphs.

*Input to the Learners*

This part examines the channel and/or the length of the input provided for the learners. The input is whether in the form of “Graphic” e.g. pictures, illustrations, diagrams, etc., “Oral words/phrases”, “Oral extended discourse”, “Written words/phrases”, “Written extended discourse”, or “Sound/music”.

As table 5 shows written words/phrases have dominant source of input (33.56%). Graphic is the next main source of input in Top Notch by 29.32%. Oral extended discourse and written extended discourse are the two next sources
of input that are almost equal (12.27% and 11.21% respectively). Oral words and phrases, in contrast to written words and phrases, are only 8.12% of total proportion of tasks. The smallest proportion of total sources of input in tasks of Top Notch belongs to sound and music. It should be noticed here that although Top Notch pays great attention to graphic form of input, it does not have a satisfactory amount of sounds and music source of input which are as important as graphics and illustrations in encouraging and motivating learners.

Table 5

*Frequency and Percentage for Input to Learners*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Input to learners</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Written word/phrases</td>
<td>380</td>
<td>33.56%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Graphic</td>
<td>332</td>
<td>29.32%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oral extended discourse</td>
<td>139</td>
<td>12.27%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Written extended discourse</td>
<td>127</td>
<td>11.21%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oral words/phrases</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>8.12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sound/music</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>6.46%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>1132</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Expected Output from Learners**

The kinds of expected output from learners in tasks can be either written or oral. In other words, it can be in words or phrases length or in extended length form. In Littlejohn’s framework, discourse which is more than 50 words is considered as extended form.

Table 6 shows the frequency and percentage of the expected output from learners in tasks of Top Notch. It is clear that most attention has been paid to written words and phrases (34.00%) while written extended discourse has the least proportion of output in Top Notch’s tasks (6.83%). Oral words/phrases and
oral extended discourse are between two ends of this continuum (30.27% and 28.88% respectively. In conclusion, we can see that there is no balance between written forms of expected output from learners in tasks of Top Notch. Also we can understand from the table and graph that Top Notch pays more attention to oral form of output which is used in every day conversations and communications. For the written form of output it mostly focuses on structures at words and phrases level rather than extended forms.

Table 6

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Expected output from learners</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Written words/phrases</td>
<td>219</td>
<td>34.00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oral words/phrases</td>
<td>195</td>
<td>30.27%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oral extended discourse</td>
<td>186</td>
<td>28.88%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Written extended discourse</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>6.83%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>644</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source

TAS examines three possible sources of the content for lessons and their activities. The content of lessons is provided whether by the materials, by the learners, or by the teachers. As table 7 shows the textbook provides a great amount of materials and contents for lessons itself (58.67%). Learners are the next source of content by 32.99% of total proportion of tasks. The noticeable point here is that the textbook provides little share of tasks and activities which allow teachers to participate in providing the content and selecting the topic of content as source of input to class (8.34%). It seems Top Notch demands teachers to be abided by their guidebook and other components.
Table 7.

*Frequency and Percentage for Source*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Materials</td>
<td>514</td>
<td>58.67%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learner</td>
<td>289</td>
<td>32.99%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>8.34%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>876</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Nature

In this section of analysis the type of content which is the focus of the learning activity is studied. The content which the learners and the teachers are required to work with may have different natures. It could demand personal opinion or it may require involvement of facts, fictions, or personal information. Some activities also may need metalinguistic knowledge of learners for being done.

Table 8 shows that tasks in Top Notch are of a variety of nature and they are almost evenly distributed. Fact, fiction and metalinguistic knowledge are three first kinds of nature which are almost equal (22.81%, 22.66% and 20.97% respectively). Personal information and personal opinion each by 18.17% and 15.37% respectively are involved in Top Notch activities. This kind of distribution of the different types of nature in Top Notch tasks could be interpreted as a sign of more variety in the text.
Table 8  
*Frequency and Percentage for Nature*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Nature</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fact</td>
<td>310</td>
<td>22.81%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fiction</td>
<td>308</td>
<td>22.66%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Metalinguistic knowledge</td>
<td>285</td>
<td>20.97%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal information</td>
<td>247</td>
<td>18.17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal opinion</td>
<td>209</td>
<td>15.37%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>1359</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Results of Design**

The second section in Littlejohn’s framework, Design, as it was mentioned above, relates to the thinking underlying the materials. This part involves consideration of areas such as the apparent aims of the materials, how the tasks, language and content in the materials are selected and sequenced etc. The results of the study of the design can help evaluator to see to what extent the materials developers have been successful in achieving their claimed goals.

In this part the results of the evaluations done by the raters (five ELT experts and five ELT teachers) on design matters are presented in the form of a table and a graph. The total scores of each section along with their proportion percentages are presented here. The detailed total scores and proportion percentages of each question are also presented in appendix e.
As table 9 shows, the selected textbook obtained 83.34% of the optimum score (125 out of 150) for aims and objectives part which seems to be rather high. Principles of selection acquired 81% of the optimum score (162 out of 200). Principle of sequencing and subject matter and focus of subject matter both received 86% of optimum scores (129 out of 150 and 172 out of 200 respectively). The obtained score for types of teaching/learning activities is 84.8% of optimum scores (212 out of 250). Participation received a higher score relative to other matters, 90% of optimum scores (135 out of 150), which means raters believe all three kinds of participation exist appropriately in Top Notch tasks. The second higher score is obtained by classroom roles of teachers and learners which is 87.5% of optimum proportion (175 out of 200). Learner role in learning obtained 83.5% percent of optimum scores (167 out of 200) and finally the role of materials as a whole received 82% of optimum scores (246 out of 300). In conclusion, we can see that all the scores are higher than 80 percent which can be a sign of success for the authors of Top notch series.

Table 9

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Design</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Proportion</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Aims and objectives</td>
<td>125</td>
<td>83.34%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Principles of selection</td>
<td>162</td>
<td>81%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Principles of sequencing</td>
<td>129</td>
<td>86%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subject matter and focus of subject matter</td>
<td>172</td>
<td>86%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Types of teaching/learning activities</td>
<td>212</td>
<td>84.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participation</td>
<td>135</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Classroom roles of teachers and learners</td>
<td>175</td>
<td>87.5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Question Two: What Pedagogical Value Does Top Notch Series Have?

Top Notch’s pedagogical values are as follow:

According to the results of the study (table 1) it was revealed that the tasks in Top Notch series more often encourage the students to use the language. These tasks demand learners to use language and express themselves rather than to be inactive and just listen. Based on the findings only 15.88% of tasks do not require students to participate in their accomplishment. This can indicate that Top Notch purveys more involvement of the learners in the classroom activities.

The results of this study (table 2) revealed that Top Notch series mostly tries to draw on meaning as the basis for the learning task. Since one of the objectives of Top Notch is to develop a communicative competence which is achieved by enhancing comprehension of the language, and comprehending the language needs attention to meaning, the results can be seen as one sign of success for this textbook. Attention to the relationship between meaning and form is also more prevalent in Top Notch than focusing just on the form of language.

Based on the results of the study (table 3) it is revealed that Top Notch’s tasks demand all the ten examined mental operations in order to be accomplished. Top Notch provides students with tasks that give the opportunity to practice their previous learning and also relate and apply them in new tasks and activities. This characteristic makes the textbook consistent and coherent and helps students associate the new information to the old information in their mind. Other kinds of mental operations that Top Notch
tasks pat more attention to are retrieving from long-term memory, comparison, decoding semantic meaning, selecting information and applying language rules.

The study also shows that (table 5) Top Notch has provided different types of input to learners among which paying attention to graphic form of input are considerable. The graphic form of input could help students to learn and memorize new materials more easily. It also makes the textbook lively and motivates students to study it more enthusiastically.

One of the pedagogic values of Top Notch series according to the results of this study (table 6) is its attention to the oral form of expected output from the learners. Both oral words/phrases and oral extended discourse are demanded form learners in Top Notch tasks. This form of output is used in everyday conversations and communications and can help students prepare themselves to use their language skills more fluently and confidently.

The results of the study also revealed that (table 7) for the majority of tasks and activities the textbook itself specifies its own texts as the source of content. In some respects it can mean that Top Notch frees teachers from the burden of providing the contents for each class sessions and it lets teachers to have more free time for other responsibilities. Top Notch tasks provide a great variety of contents from different sources which contain systematic practice of practical language such as: how to leave and take a phone message, how to request services at a hotel, etc. In addition, Top Notch provides content to help students develop a cultural fluency by creating an awareness of the varied rules across cultures for issues like politeness, greetings and introductions, etc. Of course some tasks require learners and teachers to contribute in providing content for class by the use of their background knowledge, previous information and stating their opinions.
According to the results of this study (table 8) it was understood that the tasks in Top Notch are of various nature and almost every kinds of task nature is included in Top Notch series. In other words, considering the nature of tasks, the tasks are distributed evenly. Both fact and fiction with almost equal proportion are included in the tasks. More importantly metalinguistic knowledge is also included in Top Notch tasks with almost equal ratio. Metalinguistic knowledge helps learners arrive at knowledge of forms structure and other aspects of language through reflecting and analyzing the language.

**Question Three: Is Top Notch Able to Fulfill the Objectives Claimed to Be Set For It?**

Based on the claims of the authors of Top Notch, it is a communicative English course aiming at preparing students to interact successfully and confidently with both native and non-native speakers of English. Also, Top Notch is meant to bring students to a “Top Notch” level of communicative competence.

According to the results of TAS (tables 1 to 8) and Design evaluations (table 9) now we can state that Top notch is almost successful to fulfill its claimed objectives. As Design evaluation results shows, the evaluators believe (more than 80 percent) Top Notch is appropriate and successful in its design. In addition, based on all the pedagogic values discussed above we can confirm the success of Top Notch series.

However, there are some shortcomings in Top Notch that must be taken into consideration by its authors. The results of TAS evaluation revealed that Top Notch introduces tasks that mainly demand learners to participate individually simultaneously. Only 24.46 percent of its tasks involve learners in pairs/groups activities. As it is known today working in pairs and groups let the students learn
from each other if the groups are formed appropriately and students are selected by care. Furthermore, working in groups reduces student’s anxiety which is one major problem when an individual student is responsible for doing the task and answering individually. As such Top Notch developers may need to take some further steps to achieve a textbook more in line with their objectives.

**Conclusions**

Although a number of shortcomings and drawbacks were found in Top Notch series, the results of the study seemed to reveal that this particular ELT textbook stood up reasonably well to a detailed and in-depth analysis and that its pedagogic values and positive attributes far out-weighed the negative characteristics. Both experts and teachers’ evaluation results showed that Top Notch series are in line with the goals set by its authors. Of course teachers of English language who teach Top Notch series are suggested to consider the shortcomings of the textbook and try to alleviate or compensate for these drawbacks by supplementing, modifying and adapting problematic aspects of the textbook. It should be mentioned here again that Top Notch textbook is accompanied by valuable components that are very helpful for the process of language learning and for assisting teachers.

We would like to end this conclusion by the argument of Byrd (2001) who states that in the evaluation process, those with the responsibility for choosing textbooks need to consider not just the fit between the curriculum and the textbook but also the practical issues of usability by teachers and by students. She believes once a textbook has been selected, teachers need to analyze the resources in the textbook to create a plan for daily lessons and for the whole course that helps them both implement and supplement what is already given in the most efficient and effective way.
Limitations of the Study

As it was mentioned in literature review, there are different kinds of frameworks for textbook evaluation. Each of these frameworks examines the selected textbook based on a number of theories and assumptions. Some analyze a textbook to see to what extent pragmatic considerations of materials presentation is applied in it. Others may attempt to examine the critical aspects of content presentation in a given book such as gender representation. As such, this study cannot claim to be exhaustive and the researchers cannot assert that every possible aspects of the selected textbook have been analyzed. There are still a lot more issues to be studied in Top Notch series.

As Sheldon (1988) states, textbook evaluation is not a once-only activity. When a course book is selected, its success or failure can only be meaningfully determined during and after its period of classroom use. He believes that learners are not taught in a vacuum, but come from somewhere and are proceeding towards specific educational goals and future training. The course book ultimately needs to be evaluated in terms of its integration with, and contribution to, these longer-term goals.

Suggestions for Further Study

As we stated above, different aspects of Top Notch series are open to further evaluation and analysis. Supplementary study is needed to extract psycholinguistic analysis of the Top Notch series. Pragmatic aspects of the content of this book can also be examined in a study. Also it is possible to study what teachers and learners actually do with Top Notch textbooks in language classrooms through classroom observation and interviewing teachers and learners.
Since there are a lot of ELT textbooks available in the market, some evaluations can also be carried out on other widely used textbooks. Another suggestion for further study would be evaluation of components of ELT textbooks such as their teacher’s guides, workbooks, and even their computer software.

In the end, it should be stated here that some evaluations can also be conducted on broader areas of language teaching and learning than on textbooks. Projects, for instance, can be carried out to evaluate the success or failure of an existing program and syllabus in an educational system.
References


Appendixes

Appendix A

Summary of What and How—using schedules

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Levels of inference</th>
<th>What: Aspects of the materials</th>
<th>How: source of data (schedules)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| **Level 1:** ‘what is there’ | Publication  
Place of learner’s materials  
Subdivision of learner’s materials  
Subdivision of sections into sub-sections  
Continuity  
Route  
Access  
design | EN/A3 Extent, A5  
Distribution  
EN/A3 Extent, A4  
Design and layout  
EN/A7 Subdivision,  
B2 Sequ. of Act.  
EN/A7 Subdivision,  
B2 Sequ. of Act.  
EN/A7 Subdivision,  
B2 Sequ. of Act.  
EN/A6 Route  
EN/A5b Access |
| **Level 2:** ‘What is required of users’ | Subject matter and focus  
Types of teaching/learning activities  
Participation: who does what with whom | AOT/III with what content?  
AOT/I what is the Lr expected to do  
AOT/II who with? |
## TEXTBOOK EVALUATION

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level 3: ‘what is implied’</th>
<th>Aims</th>
<th>Syllabus, seque. of Act. (EN/B2)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Principles of selection</td>
<td>Nature of tasks (AOT/I-IV)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Principles of sequencing</td>
<td>Sequence of tasks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Teacher roles</td>
<td>Distribution (EN/A5), turn-take(AOT/IA)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Learner roles (classroom)</td>
<td>Source (AOT/IIIB)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Learner roles (in learning)</td>
<td>Demand on process competence (AOT/I-IV)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Role of materials as a whole</td>
<td>Deductions from levels 1-3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

EN = schedule for rerecording the explicit nature of the materials

AOT = schedule for the analysis of tasks

A3, A4, I, II, III, etc. = item/question on the appropriate schedule

*Adapted from Littlejohn (1998: 203)*
Appendix B

Checklist for explicit nature of a set of materials

Title:

Publisher:

A. BOOK AS A WHOLE

1. Type:
2. Intended audience
3. Extent
   a. Components
   b. Total estimated time
4. Design and Layout
5. Distribution
   a. Material
   b. Access
6. Route through material
7. Subdivision

B. OVERVIEW OF AN EXTRACT

1. Length
2. Sequence of activity
Appendix C

Task Analysis sheet

Participant’s Name:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Task number</th>
<th>1. WHAT IS THE LEARNER EXPECTED TO DO?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>A. TURN-TAKE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Initiate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Respond</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Not required</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>B. FOCUS ON</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Language system(rules or form)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Meaning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Meaning/System relationship</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>C. MENTAL OPERATION</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Retrieve from LT memory</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Build text</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Draw on prior knowledge</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Relate sounds to objects</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Compare</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Decode semantic meaning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Select information</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Repeat with expansion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Deduce language rule</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Apply language rule</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>II. WHO WITH?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Learner to class</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Learners individually simultaneously</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learners in pairs/groups</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------------------------</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### III. WITH WHAT CONTENT?

#### A. FORM

- **a. input to learners**
  - Graphic
  - Oral words/phrases
  - Oral extended discourse
  - Written words/phrases
  - Written extended discourse
  - Sound/music

- **b. expected output from learners**
  - Oral words/phrases
  - Oral extended discourse
  - Written words/phrases
  - Written extended discourse

#### B. SOURCE

- Materials
- Teacher
- Learner(s)

#### C. NATURE

- Personal opinion
- Fact
- Fiction
- Personal information
- Metalinguistic knowledge
Appendix D
Design Questionnaire

Name (Optional): ELT Expert ☐ Teacher ☐ Note:

Below are a number of statements developed from claims declared by the authors of Top Notch series and based on the notion of Design introduced in Richards and Rodgers (1986). We would like you to indicate your opinion about each statement by ticking the boxes which best indicates the extent to which you agree or disagree with that statement.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Strongly disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Considering the sequences of activities in Top Notch series and your familiarity with these books do you think that:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 Top Notch as a communicative English course can be suitable for adults and young adults.</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Top Notch is able to propose students to interact successfully and confidentially with both native and non-native speakers of English.</td>
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<tr>
<td>3 Top Notch is able to bring students to a high level of communicative competence.</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Considering the nature of tasks in Top Notch (i.e. types of tasks, content, and language) and your familiarity with these books do you think that:</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>4 The tasks expose students to authentic, natural English both receptively and productively.</td>
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<tr>
<td>5 All conversation models feature the language people really use.</td>
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<tr>
<td>6 In regard of content, Top Notch includes systematic practice of highly practical language.</td>
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<tr>
<td>7 The model conversations are selected so that they make language memorable.</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Considering the sequence of tasks in Top Notch series and your familiarity with these books do you think that:</td>
<td>Strongly disagree</td>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>Neutral</td>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>Strongly agree</td>
</tr>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>8</strong> Each lesson provides vocabulary, grammar, and social language contextualized in all four skills.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>9</strong> All the new vocabularies in each unit are presented in a sequence appropriate at each level of study.</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>10</strong> The captioned illustrations, photos, definitions, examples and contextualized sentences remove doubts about meaning and provide a permanent in-book reference for students test preparation.</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Considering form, source, and nature of the contents in Top Notch series and your familiarity with these books do you think that:</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>11</strong> Vocabularies, grammar, and four skills are able to keep the pace of a class session lively and varied.</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>12</strong> Tasks are designed to prepare for interaction with both native and non-native speakers of English both linguistically and culturally.</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>13</strong> English in Top Notch series is treated as an international language rather than the language of a particular country or region.</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>14</strong> The reading texts in Top Notch lend students interest, seriousness, and authentic practice.</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Considering the types of teaching and learning activities in Top Notch series and your familiarity with these books do you think that:</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>15</strong> The controlled or free practices at the end of each lesson helps students to demonstrate their abilities to use new vocabulary, grammar, and social language.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The controlled or free practices at the end of each lesson motivate students and keep them eager to continue their study of English and build their pride.

The tasks and activities establish a movement from controlled to free practice. They offer opportunity for increasingly free and rigorous practice within the class.

The tasks contain simple instructions that students can readily understand and follow.

Models and examples in each task take any confusion out of what is expected of the learners.

The tasks in Top Notch provide:

- Learners to class and teacher mode of classroom participation.
- Learners individually simultaneously mode of classroom participation.
- Learner in pair/group simultaneously mode of classroom participation.

Considering the classroom roles of teachers and learners presented in Top notch series and your familiarity with these books do you think that:

- The tasks allow teachers to have control over classroom event.
- Both teachers and learners are expected to follow directions of materials.
- The tasks enable the teachers to elicit learners’ ideas and to monitor language output.

| 16 | The controlled or free practices at the end of each lesson motivate students and keep them eager to continue their study of English and build their pride. |
| 17 | The tasks and activities establish a movement from controlled to free practice. They offer opportunity for increasingly free and rigorous practice within the class. |
| 18 | The tasks contain simple instructions that students can readily understand and follow. |
| 19 | Models and examples in each task take any confusion out of what is expected of the learners. |

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- The tasks enable the teachers to elicit learners’ ideas and to monitor language output.

| 20 | Learners to class and teacher mode of classroom participation. |
| 21 | Learners individually simultaneously mode of classroom participation. |
| 22 | Learner in pair/group simultaneously mode of classroom participation. |
| 23 | The tasks allow teachers to have control over classroom event. |
| 24 | Both teachers and learners are expected to follow directions of materials. |
| 25 | The tasks enable the teachers to elicit learners’ ideas and to monitor language output. |

<p>| 26 | Top notch series enable teachers to test their students’ achievements in four skills. |
| 27 | The tasks enable learners to have daily confirmation of their progress. |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>28</strong></td>
<td>Learners are able to undertake tasks as directed by materials.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>29</strong></td>
<td>The tasks help learners to develop cultural fluency by creating an awareness of the varied rules across cultures.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>30</strong></td>
<td>The tasks enable students to practice conversations and to manipulate them.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>31</strong></td>
<td>Considering the Top Notch material as a whole do you think that: The activities and topics of each lesson are appropriate to keep the pace of class session lively and varied.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>32</strong></td>
<td>The tasks and materials provide concise and useful information about frequency, collocations, and typical native-speaker usage.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>33</strong></td>
<td>Tasks provide a stimulus for learners’ own creative language use.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>34</strong></td>
<td>Tasks are developed in a manner that involves the students in classroom decision making.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>35</strong></td>
<td>Materials can appropriately provide a route for teaching and learning English.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>36</strong></td>
<td>Each two page lesson is suitable for and can be managed in one class session.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix E

Detailed total score and percentage for Design

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<tr>
<th>Items</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Proportion</th>
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## TEXTBOOK EVALUATION

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</table>
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