

Textbook Selection and Evaluation in EFL Context

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Abstract

Decisions related to textbook selection and evaluation are of great importance. The purpose of this study is to evaluate the three English language textbooks currently used at high schools in Iran from the high school English teachers' point of view.

For this purpose, a 46-item questionnaire was developed about the five sections of the textbooks (vocabulary, reading, grammar, language functions, and pronunciation practice), their physical make-up, and practical concerns. Fifty high school teachers with more than five years of teaching experience were asked to reflect on the questions by checking one of the four options included.

The results indicated that the textbooks are not acceptable from the teachers' point of view considering their five sections, their physical make-up, and some practical concerns.

Keywords: Textbook evaluation, syllabus design, textbook selection, curriculum, EFL context, materials development

1. Introduction

It is a fact that selecting and evaluating textbooks in EFL context is of utmost importance. However in Iran, there is limited research conducted to evaluate the textbooks that are already in use or those that are intended for use in future. In most of these studies, the researchers have themselves evaluated different textbooks by means of the checklists and questionnaires suggested by other scholars (Aliakbari, 2004; Jahangard, 2007; Razmjoo, 2007; Azizfar, Koosha and Lotfi, 2010). However, the primary users of textbooks are the teachers. So a comprehensive evaluation can only be carried out while the teachers and their view points are also taken into consideration.

2. Literature Review

Textbooks play a pivotal role in language classrooms in all types of educational institutions - state schools, colleges, language schools - all over the world. According to Lamic (1999), that is why despite the development of new technologies that allow for higher quality teacher-generated materials, demand for textbooks continues to grow, and the publishing industry responds with new series and textbooks every year. According to Razmjoo (2007) many students working with a textbook feel secure and have a sense of progress and achievement. Cunningsworth (1995) also argues that textbooks are an effective resource for self-directed learning, an effective resource for presenting materials by the teachers, a source of ideas and activities, a reference source for students, a syllabus that reflects pre-determined learning objectives, and support for less experienced teachers who have yet to gain in confidence.

According to Daoud and Celce-Murcia (1979), information on textbook selection is useful since it is sometimes part of the ESL/EFL teacher's responsibility to select the textbook she/he will use in a given class. Such a decision should be made carefully and systematically, not arbitrarily. They add that even in countries where the choice of the textbook does not directly involve the teacher, teachers may be asked to submit reports on the usefulness of the textbooks they are already making use of. Several possible criteria and procedures for carrying out a sound selection of appropriate

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