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S: I promise I'll do my homework as soon as the program is over.

M. O.K. Go ahead. You can watch it.

Suggested Activity (Discuss and Perform)

How would you handle the following situation?

A son is asking his very busy father to promise to play tennis with him during the weekend. (Practice with a friend)

Dialog 3. A student is talking with one of his teachers.

T: So, John, have you decided what to do after you graduate?

S: Yeah. I got a job as an assistant in a law office.

T: You did? Well, congratulations. I think you'll do very well. I wish you luck.

S: Thank you very much, sir.

Suggested Activity (Discuss and Perform)

If you were in the following situation, what would you do?

You are talking with an acquaintance at a party. S/he tells you that s/he is going to get married soon. (Practice with a friend)

Conclusion

In this article we have looked at some of the issues surrounding the evaluation and use of language teaching materials. Materials are an important component within the curriculum, and are often the most tangible and visible component of pedagogy. While the evaluation of materials can be partly carried out outside the classroom (such a task being greatly facilitated by the checklist and evaluative questions presented in the body of this article), their real potential or lack of

potential can only be evaluated in relation to real learners in real classroom. In keeping with the other sections of this article, then, I have suggested that the evaluation of materials should be largely based on the collection and analysis of classroom data.

Glossary:

Checklist: A checklist is a special type of questionnaire and sometimes much shorter than questionnaire which can be used when the evaluation is focused on small-scale aspects of a program, for example one component, such as speaking skills, of a syllabus.

Curriculum: a description of the contents of a course of instruction and the order in which they are to be taught.

Evaluation: In general, the systematic gathering of information for purposes of decision making. Evaluation uses both quantitative methods (e.g. tests), qualitative methods (e.g. observations) and value judgments.

Interactional Analysis: Any of several procedures for measuring and describing the behaviour of students and teachers in classrooms, (a) in order to describe what happens during a lesson, (b) to evaluate teaching, (c) to study the relationship between teaching and learning.

Textbook: A textbook provides texts and learning tasks which are likely to be of an appropriate level for most of the class. It saves time for teachers who would otherwise have to prepare his or her own.

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comfortable, he used to buy two inside seats. Once he sent his servant, who was not very clever, to buy his seats. When the servant came back, he said, "Please, sir, there weren't two inside places left, so I've taken one inside and one outside."

Suggestions for Improvement(II)

Some suggestions concerning the Language Functions of the given set of textbooks are brought up which can prove to be constructive. Language Functions are supposed to simulate real world conversations and to improve students' communicative skills. Real world conversations are more natural and more diverse than the simple mini-dialogs presented in the Language Functions section of these books. In other words, it will be very unlikely that the students will have no difficulty in daily conversations in English if they are taught just such simple mini-dialogs. Furthermore, if the reading passages of these books are compared with its Language Functions, the latter will be judged to be far simpler. Inasmuch as the students possess sufficient linguistic competence to digest the reading passages, there is room for upgrading the conversation used in the Language Functions.

To remedy the matter at issue, the writer of this paper has compiled some interesting and fairly natural conversations below. They are thought to resemble real word conversations more than those written in the textbooks. They are also said to be more functional for and more appealing to the students. At the end of each dialog, some guidelines and suggestions are given for further practice amongst students of the class. If these guidelines are applied, the students will be provided with opportunities for

participation in the classroom activities. The following dialogs chosen from Walter Matreyek's Functions (1990). However, they are just instances of amusing dialogs but not exhaustive.

Dialog 1. Two acquaintances meet in a supermarket and stop to talk.

A1: Hello, Stan. How have you been?

A2: Oh, hi, Luanne. Not bad, thank you. How about you?

A1: Pretty good. Today's shopping day, is it?

A2: Yeah. I have to buy a few things for dinner tonight.

A1: Uhhh... so do I. By the way, have you heard about Fred! (a few minutes later)

A2: ... that's really interesting about Fred. Well, I'd better finish my shopping. It's been really nice talking with you, Luanne.

A1: I've enjoyed it too. I hope we run to each other again.

A2: Yeah, I do, too. Take care, OK?

A1: Yeah, you, too.

Suggested Activity (Discuss and Perform)

Imagine the following situation. What would you do?

You unexpectedly meet a friend in the drugstore. you haven't seen each other for at least at couple of months. (Practice with a friend).

Dialog 2. A son is asking his mother for permission to watch TV.

S: Mom, can I watch TV? Superman is on now.

M: Have you finished your homework yet?

S: No, but I'll finish it after. I don't have very much.

M: Do you promise to start it as soon as the program is over?

Functions section but they hardly represent realistic situations within the foreign culture. The writer of this paper will, in Suggestions for Improvement section, expatiate upon this matter. There are some writing exercises by which the students are encouraged to use what they have learned in a actual communication. They encourage students to make utterances of their own. There is no material introduced just for fun and relaxation while using the language (e.g.humor, problems to solve, anecdotes, rhymes, and curious customs).

F. Practical considerations

The books printed in an ordinary style. The page layout is ordinary too. The type is quite clear. The binding, cover, and the quality of paper are satisfactory. However, they are not durable enough to stand up to normal wear and tear.

Suggestions for Improvement(I)

By no means do my suggestions intend to underestimate the writers' work. However, they can be applied to enhance the standards of the given set of textbooks.

The writer of this paper thinks that the following passages can be used for two different purposes. First, as stated in the evaluation of the textbooks, there are no supplementary readers available with them and the students of differing abilities are treated the same. To improve this deficiency, the writer of this paper presents the following passages which can be used for enrichment of the faster learners. Secondly, it was

discussed that some of the reading passages of the books were not appealing in content for teenagers and that no material was introduced just for fun and relaxation while using the language. To compensate for the foregoing deficiencies, the compiler has chosen some jocose short stories that are thought to interest the students.

1. LESS TO CARRY AND LESS TO COUNT

A boy once went to a baker's to buy an eightpenny loaf. He thought it was much smaller than usual, so he said to the baker, "I don't believe this loaf is the correct weight."

"Oh, never mind," said the baker, "you'll have less carry."

"Quite right," said the boy, and put sixpence on the counter. As he was leaving the shop, the baker called out to him: "Eh! you haven't given me the correct price."

"Oh, well," said the boy, "you'll have less to count."

2. CAUGHT!

A beggar who had tried many ways of getting money at last decided to pretend to be dumb. A man who passed the beggar as he sat in the street knew him by sight. Going up to him suddenly he asked, "How long have you been dumb?" The beggar, quite forgetting that he must not speak, answered at once, "Ever since I was a baby."

3. A FOOLISH SERVANT

There was once, in the days when people travelled in coaches pulled by horses, a very fat man who used to travel often. In order that he might have plenty of room and be

/3:/ sound are *err*, *fur*, and *curd* which are less frequent words in English. They could have used more frequent words like *dirty*, *person*, and so forth instead.

However, there are such deliberate sentences as "Please sit in this seat." that make the distinction between /i:/ and /I/ quite clear. Second, the Pronunciation Practice section could precede the New Words section and be designed so deliberately that students had the opportunity to learn the pronunciation of the new words that would follow. If the lessons had been organized in this way, different parts of each lesson could have been more related and it could have been more likely for students to achieve a good command of pronunciation. In Book 3, the Pronunciation Practice of the first lesson includes a quick review of some sounds in Books 1 and 2. The second lesson tries to teach how the plural morpheme that is adding -s or -es to the end of a word is pronounced differently in different words. The rest of Pronunciation Practice sections, in Book 3, are devoted to stress pattern of isolated words in English. In this set of Books, however, intonation and juncture are not considered at all.

Grammar is presented inductively through repetition, substitution, transformation, and production. As stated at the beginning of Book 1, the authors believe that grammar is not an end but a means to writing, reading, and speaking correctly. Related to grammar, there is a box, in each lesson addressed to the teacher, in which the grammatical points are explained. The writers believe that the teacher should never expect students to memorize these explanations. In these books, the exercises are well organized and give adequate

practice in what is supposed to be learned. Nevertheless, as mentioned earlier, some of the sentences are just banal vehicles for linguistic material and lack strength.

In this set of books, a reading passage is presented in each lesson and followed by some comprehension questions. Some of these reading passages are not interesting in content for teenagers. Some are too juvenile and some too dull. The writers could make use of some jocose stories that could prove appealing to the students of this age. The writer of this paper will discuss it more in Suggestions for Improvement.

There are three main problems with vocabulary presentation in the given set of books. First, in every reading passage, there are a number of new words. But only are some of these new words contextualized for clarification in the "New Words" section and the rest are taken for granted. For instance, in the last lesson of Book 1, such words as *receive*, *duty*, *guide*, and *entire* are contextualized, whereas, words like *universe*, *preach*, *trustworthy*, and so forth are not. Secondly, in some lessons, specially those of Book 3, too many words are presented. This sometimes makes the pace of the material too fast. Furthermore, the vocabulary is not reentered sufficiently within each lesson or in successive lessons. In other words, a new item is presented in a lesson but not repeated throughout the lesson or book.

E. Types of activities

There are some dialogs in the Language

only the reading and pronunciation sections have been practiced. One wonders why repetitions, substitutions, and transformations which can be best conducted and learned through tapes have been totally overlooked in them. Moreover, the tapes seem to aim at the students' pronunciation improvement in the reading section because the passages are read in a stilted and slow but not natural fashion. Thus, if the teacher has a good command of English pronunciation, and the students can trust his pronunciation, the books can be used as successfully without the tapes.

One major problem of this set of books is that there are no supplementary readers available with the books. As stated earlier, students of differing abilities are dealt with in the same way. To remedy this deficiency, the writer of this paper has tried to provide some supplementary readers and dialogs in the Suggestions for Improvement section.

Generally speaking, scope for student-initiated participation is out of question in these books for they are so tightly structured that they can only be used in a lockstep, teacher-directed fashion. Language Function sections could be a good place to ask students to have self-initiated participation. It is possible, by giving guidelines, to put the students in a situation in which they can initiate their own participation in classroom activities. This is what the writer of this paper has tried to realize in the Suggestions for Improvement section.

There is a table of contents at the beginning of each book setting out which structures are introduced but no definite order can be perceived. There is no index but a word list showing in which lesson each new word has

been introduced. There is no teacher's manual for the books with indications on how to use the materials. The writers of these books claim that they are every year revised according to the teachers' and other experts' comments.

C. Language and ideational content

The language in the lessons sounds authentic and free of dated slang or obscure dialectal idioms. The language used in these textbooks sounds correct for the persons and relations in which it is used. Nevertheless, the situations in dialogs of the Language Function sections are not sometimes realistic and some of the exercises are merely banal vehicals for linguistic material; i.e. they lack strength. In other words, there are few situations in which such sentences are used. To cite just one example, how frequently is the following sentence used? "A watch is more expensive than a pen." (Book1, p. 55)

In this set of English books, the culture of the people who speak English is scantily dealt with; however, there are no chauvinistic, racist, or sexist elements implicit or explicit in the textbooks.

D. Linguistic coverage and organization of material

To familiarize the students with the sound system of English, the writers have designed a section under the heading of "Pronunciation Practice". In Books 1 and 2, this section has been devoted to teaching vowels and diphthongs. But, there are two main problems with this section in Books1 and 2. First, the authors have sometimes resorted to low-frequency words in teaching some vowels and diphthongs and lost sight of more frequent words. For instance, the writers' examples for

There are, in fact, comparatively few empirical investigations of materials development and use in the classroom. One checklist, reported in Rivers (1981), investigated the possible questions concerning evaluation of textbooks. In River's checklist (1981:475) significant questions are raised within each of these areas. I found it more exhaustive in comparison to the foregoing checklists.

A. Appropriateness for local situation

To see whether or not a textbook is appropriate for a local situation, teachers must be informed about the objectives the writer has had in mind. The writer's objectives are usually disclosed in the preface or foreword of a book. Apparently, preface or foreword seems lacking in this set of books; however, at the very beginning of Book 1, there is a two-page section addressed to "the valued colleague", in which the authors claim to explicate the objectives and the teaching methods of each section of the books. But, they have just offered some teaching techniques rather than the objectives of each section. The writers' objectives in terms of the four skills, general reading, or specialized reading are quite missing in this section.

Each of these high school books is teacher taught. Three hours for Book 1, two hours for Book 2, and two hours for Book 3 per week during 9-month period. To some high school English teachers, scarcely is this time enough to finish the book, and to my knowledge, this time does not seem reasonably sufficient for teachers to teach and students to learn each book.

The pace of the material is another issue which must be considered. Having taught the

given set of books, I think Book 3 moves too fast for the intended students. The number of words in the vocabulary section of this book sometimes goes beyond 70 items. These long lists of vocabulary have proved overwhelming to students. Due to the unreasonable pace of the materials in Book 3, some teachers have to leave out some parts of the materials to complete the course in the time they have available. In other words, there is so much material in Book 3 that the teacher would feel smothered or pressured.

In material preparation, the students' interests according to their age should be taken into consideration. In this respect, however, the writers have sometimes made too obvious an effort to amuse the students. For instance, in Book 2, the reading of lesson 4 sounds too juvenile for the students or that of lesson 7 on Book 3 seems too dull for them. Moreover, the writers have failed to supply the material for the students of differing abilities. In other words, there is no extra material to be used for enrichment for the faster learners and no extra practice for the slower learners.

B. Appropriateness for teacher and student

The set of textbooks taught in Iranian high schools seem to be based on eclectic method. This method can be carried through well in the unit design if teachers do not deal with the sections of each lesson disjointedly. In the meantime, the native language, as it is asserted by the writers, should be eschewed as much as possible.

Films, slides, filmstrips, transparencies, large pictures, or flashcards are not available with this set of books. But, there are some tapes, with acceptable quality, available on which

The final area in which materials can be critiqued relates to the values and attitude which are inherent in them: it is possible to evaluate materials for their sexism, racism and so on. Littlejohn and Windeatt (1989) provide examples of textbooks which are biased in numerous subtle and not so subtle ways. For example, one book showed only two black people, one of whom was a muscular athlete, the other a manual worker. Another contained over thirty references to smoking and drinking in the first twenty five pages, perhaps thereby 'legitimizing and sanctioning such behaviour'.

Littlejohn and Windeatt (1989:174) conclude their survey of perspectives on materials design by posing the following evaluative questions:

1. Do the materials extend the learner's 'general' or 'specialist' knowledge?
2. What view of knowledge do the materials present? What implications might this have for how learners attempt to learn?
3. Do the materials develop the learner's understanding of what is involved in language learning and how they may help themselves?
4. How do the materials structure the teacher-learner relationship? What 'frame' if any is placed on classroom interaction?
5. Do the materials develop the learners' general cognitive abilities? Is language learning presented as reproducing or as problem solving?
6. What social attitudes do the materials present?

The discussion in this section underlines the deeply ideological nature of language

learning and teaching as reflected in the materials which provide the springboard for pedagogical action. Materials only take on value in context, and the social and cultural context in which they will be used must underpin their evaluation and selection. It could be claimed that the values implicit in the assertions made in this section reflect western, and even Anglo-Saxon views of language and learning which may not be appropriate in other contexts. This is something which only those with detailed knowledge of particular contexts can answer. However, there needs to be some caution in rushing to judgement on new ways of learning. Learners have an infinite capacity to surprise, and there is a danger that the claim of cultural inappropriacy may be used as an excuse for refraining from action. It may also block classroom initiatives which the learners themselves might welcome. In the final analysis, we can only judge the efficacy of materials by evaluating them in contexts of use.

While the checklists provided by Sheldon (1988), Littlejohn and Windeatt (1989) are extremely valuable, they only enable us to evaluate materials in a preliminary way. Most of the questions on such things as rationale, availability, layout and appropriacy relate to issues which are external to the classroom. Any comprehensive evaluation also needs to collect data on the actual use of materials in the classroom, and while we can exercise professional judgement in answering questions such as, 'does the introduction, practice, and recycling of new linguistic items seem to be shallow/steep enough for your students?', ultimately, such questions can only be settled with reference to their actual use.

checklist invites the teacher to adopt a critical stance toward the materials' aims, appropriateness and utility.

Littlejohn and Windeatt (1989) propose a more modest scheme for assessing materials. They suggest that materials can be evaluated from six different perspectives:

1. The general or subject knowledge contained in the materials.
2. Views on the nature and acquisition of knowledge.
3. Views on the nature and language learning.
4. Role relations implicit in materials.
5. Opportunities for the development of cognitive abilities.
6. The values and attitudes inherent in the materials.

Content areas covered in materials include the use of fictionalised characters and events, general interest (which often reflects the materials writer's guess about what might interest learners), academic subject matter, a focus on language itself, and literature. Littlejohn and Windeatt (1989) also add learning how to learn and specific purpose content to the list.

In considering the views on the nature and acquisition of knowledge inherent in materials, Littlejohn and Windeatt (1989) make reference to work in general education by sociologists of knowledge such as Young (1971), who have pointed out that what gets included in materials largely defines what may count as 'legitimate' knowledge. The way materials are organized and presented, as well as the types of content and activities, will help to shape the learner's view of language. They provide examples of grammatical explanations which convey the

simplistic and sometimes erroneous notion that the grammatical system consists of objective watertight rules, and that gaining 'knowledge' in language learning is basically a matter of accumulating objective facts. (Rutherford, 1987, provides an incisive critique of this 'accumulated entities' view of language learning.) Beliefs on the nature of learning can also be inferred from an examination of teaching materials. These will often relate to psychological and/or psycholinguistic theories of language learning or acquisition and may be explicitly spelled out in the introduction to the materials. The importance of role relationships in the classroom is being increasingly recognized within the profession. A key variable here is the amount of initiative and control which learners are allowed to exercise and the extent to which they are active participants in the learning process. Wright (1987) provides the most comprehensive treatment available on roles of teachers, learners and materials in language classrooms.

In discussing the opportunities provided by materials for cognitive development, Littlejohn and Windeatt (1989) contrast the 'empty bucket' view of learning with its emphasis on the accumulation of linguistic knowledge with a more active approach in which learners are encouraged to negotiate and interpret meaning and engage in problem-solving activities which challenge them cognitively as well as linguistically. They suggest that if this latter view becomes more widely accepted, we shall see a reorientation away from 'language learning as reproduction' to 'language learning as problem solving'. Beyond problem-solving, we have problem 'posing'. This more critical perspective is presented in Candlin (1984).

remain some room for improvement according to the scientific and meticulous evaluations.

The main reason why, throughout this paper, I shall be dealing with the evaluation and suggestions for improvement of the set of English books taught in Iranian high schools is that they are the staple book that form the basis of foreign language education in Iran. Furthermore, for any given set of materials the choice is not only between using them and rejecting them. Adaptation, as a third alternative can prove effective.

For the evaluation of this set of textbooks, I have grounded my arguments mainly on the detailed checklist for textbook evaluation proposed by Rivers (1981: 475). The major areas that should be evaluated in relation to the local situation are dealt with under the headings in A to F. Next, there will be a section under the heading of "Suggestions for Improvement" in which some changes in and additions to this set of books are proposed.

Related Literature

There is a certain amount of controversy associated with the use of commercial materials, particularly coursebooks. Swales (1980), for example, refers to the textbook 'problem' in *English for specific purposes*. One of the major concerns is that any given coursebook will be incapable of catering for the diversity of needs which exists in most language classrooms. The adoption of a particular coursebook or textbook series by a government ministry or educational authority is often fraught with controversy, and commercial publishers expend a great deal of time, effort and money in promoting and

securing contracts for their materials. On the positive side, the best commercial materials fulfil an important teacher education function, and remove much of the burden and time involved in creating materials from scratch. The creation of materials can be particularly burdensome in foreign (as opposed to second) language contexts, where authentic source and stimulus material may not be readily available.

When selecting materials it is important to match the materials with the goals and objectives of the program, and to ensure that they are consistent with one's beliefs about the nature of language and learning, as well as with one's learners' attitudes, beliefs and preferences. Evaluating and selecting materials is not an easy task. As Low (1989) points out, rather like the evaluation of hi-fi equipment, it remains something of a 'black art', even when supported by empirical investigations. *'Designing appropriate materials is not a science; it is a strange mixture of imagination, insight and analytical reasoning, and this fact must be recognized when the materials are assessed;* (Low, 1989: 153). Nevertheless, the selection processes can be greatly facilitated by the use of systematic materials which are consistent with the needs and interests of the learners they are intended to serve, as well as being in harmony with institutional ideologies on the nature of language and learning.

Sheldon (1988) provides an extensive checklist of questions which can aid in the selection of materials. He proposes that materials should be evaluated according to criteria such as their rationale, accessibility, layout and ease of use. A somewhat more accessible list of evaluative questions is provided by Breen and Candlin (1987). Their

ارزشیابی کتاب های زبان دوره متوسطه برای آموزش زبان خارجی در ایران :
ارزشیابی براساس فهرست تطبیقی

پرویز احمدی دارانی
دبیر زبان انگلیسی ناحیه ۳
آموزش و پرورش، اصفهان

چکیده فارسی

بدون تردید مواد آموزشی محسوس ترین عناصر فرآیند آموزشی هستند و در این میان کتب درسی نقش مهمی را ایفاء می کنند. مقاله حاضر دو هدف عمده دارد: ۱- ارتقاء کیفی کتب درسی زبان دوره متوسطه ۲- ارائه یک راهکار عملی در جهت انطباق پذیری کتب درسی زبان در راستای نیل به این اهداف از فهرست تطبیقی ریورز (۱۹۸۱) استفاده شده است. این فهرست شامل ۶ زیرمجموعه است که مفصلاً هر بخش از کتب درسی را مورد ارزشیابی قرار می دهد.

کلید واژگان: ارزشیابی، فهرست تطبیقی، کتب درسی، انطباق پذیری

Abstract

This article evaluates the set of English textbooks taught in Iranian high school in accordance with detailed checklist for textbook evaluation proposed by Rivers (1981: 475). The evaluation will be done under six headings consisting of appropriateness for local situation, appropriateness for teacher and student, language and ideational content, linguistic coverage and organization of material, types of activities, and practical considerations. While the focus of attention will be principally on evaluation, we shall also look at some adaptations and use of commercially produced materials as some suggestions for improvement. What emerges is an acknowledgement of the subjectivity of the process, but also the desirability of contracting this by means of more principled approach through a set of criteria. It is clear that feedback from both teachers and students is considered essential if material is to achieve its purpose, that is, to help learners to learn effectively.

Key Words: evaluation, check list, text books, adaptation

Introduction

The importance of the textbook is undeniable for it will inevitably determine the major part of the classroom teaching and the students' out-of-class learning. Therefore, one of the issues that a language teacher has to deal with is material selection or adaptation. Since in some situations materials are fixed, teachers must make effective use of what has already been prepared. Nonetheless, there may