TYPES OF TEXTBOOKS AND THEIR EVALUATION

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Abstract

Textbook evaluation is the process of making judgment about the appropriateness of textbook according to some criteria. From this, we can understand that textbooks should reflect with learners' need, which means the aims and objectives of the textbook should correspond with the learners' need according to language items, skills and communicative strategies.

Key words: textbooks, decision-making, curriculum, psychological principles, pedagogical principles, shadowing.

Textbook evaluation is the process of making judgment about the appropriateness of textbook according to some criteria. Groups of experts, who specialize in different fields, mostly participate in this process and they evaluate a certain textbook on the base of their views and priorities. Accordingly, there are some approaches in this process. One of them is teacher-own decision process, where teachers themselves select the textbooks based on their individual judgment. The second is centralized process, which is done by a government via Ministry of Education. Here, government regulates the textbooks used around the country by publishing regulations and by controlling its quality, whether the textbooks reflect the curriculum standards. According to Masuhara in Tomlinson, "there are three kinds of textbook evaluation. First, pre-use evaluation, where after publishing, its potential aspect is examined via prediction before the textbook is being used into practice, which is considered to be unreliable. Second, whilst-use evaluation, which is based on examining the textbook simultaneously with implementing it into practice. This process is not prediction and it is more objective, because here its physical appearance, tasks and integrated language skills are examined in order to know whether it reflects to the curriculum and syllabus. Third, post-use evaluation, which is one after some periods when textbook is being used in practical fronts. This helps to know its effectiveness for the learners in giving motivation, engagement and achievability. In such kind of evaluation, we can observe the strength and weakness of certain textbook and it helps us in decision-making process as well as in selecting the appropriate textbook for the learners"

According to Tomlinson, "post-use evaluation measures the actual effects of the materials on the users. It provides data with which reliable decisions regarding the use,

adaptation or replacement of the materials can be made" [The different ways of measuring post-use effects of materials mentioned in

Tomlinson are:

- Tests of what has been 'taught' by the materials
- Tests of what the students can do
- Examinations
- Interviews
- Questionnaires
- Criterion-referenced evaluation by the users
- Post-course diaries
- Post-course 'shadowing' of the learners
- Post-course reports on the learners by employers, subject tutors, etc.

Sheldon has offered other reasons for textbook evaluation. "They are:

i. 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.

ii. 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.

iii. It would help teachers to make optimum use of a book's strong points and to recognize the shortcomings of certain exercises, tasks, and entire texts"

Harmer emphasizes that "there should be three main stages in conducting textbook analysis. The first stage is selecting areas for assessment. In this stage, the evaluator decides the area he wants to assess. The area is then realized through establishing a checklist containing some aspects to be measured. In stating beliefs, the evaluator can compose belief statements in accordance with the area that he has previously decided. This statement of belief is used to make statements for assessment. Further, this can be realized by using simple tick and cross systems to compare different books"

As we know that, various scholars have suggested different ways to help teachers become more systematic and objective in their approach. They have often offered checklists based on supposedly generalizable criteria. These check-sheets use a variety of methods to assess how well a particular textbook under scrutiny measures. To evaluate the merits or demerits of such checklist approaches to the textbook evaluation process and for comparison purposes, there some approaches by different experts are offered, which we will analyze in our study.

First, Allen Tucker's 1975 system for evaluating beginning EFL/ESL textbooks, where Tucker introduces a system that has three components:

- a set of criteria claimed to be "consistent with the basic linguistic, psychological, and pedagogical principles" a rating scheme which provides a method for judging the comparative weightings of a textbook's merits, and

- a chart/graph which provides a visual comparison between the evaluator's opinion of the book and a hypothetical ideal model, hence facilitating a quick and easy display of the evaluator's judgment [58, 355-361].

Second is proposed by Cunningsworth, where he mentioned four criteria of textbook evaluation:

- corresponding to the learners' need,
- reflecting the present and future of language,
- facilitating learning in various ways and,
- having a clear role as a support for learning

From this, we can understand that textbooks should reflect with learners' need, which means the aims and objectives of the textbook should correspond with the learners' need according to language items, skills and communicative strategies. It should also help them to use their knowledge in real life situation and in future, when learners get their own professional and academic life. Facilitating learners in various ways means that textbooks should offer a number of activities and tasks, which help them to gain knowledge as well as to foster their motivation by presenting interesting topics, taking into account their level and age. Textbooks should also support both teachers and learners, with introducing ready-made materials for teachers and teachable language models and exercises for learners. As seen from Cunningsworth's framework of textbook evaluation, we can see that it is mainly based on internal factors, which are learners' need, support and exercises.

The next criteria in textbook evaluation is offered by Ur, where she included six main areas such as curriculum, graphic, tasks and topics, content, language and, skills. The following is her complete criteria on textbook evaluation:

- objective explicitly laid out in an introduction and implemented to the material,
- approach educationally and socially acceptable to target community,
- clear effective layout, print easy to read,
- appropriate visual materials available,
- interesting topics and tasks,
- varied topics and tasks, so as to provide different learner levels, learning styles, interests,
- clear instructions,
- systematic coverage of syllabus,
- content clearly organized and graded (sequences by difficulty),
- periodic view and test sections,

- plenty of authentic language,
- good pronunciation explanation and practice,
- good vocabulary explanation and practice,
- good grammar presentation and practice,
- fluency practice in all four skills,
- encourages learners to develop own learning strategies, and to become independent in their learning,
- adequate guidance for the teacher; not too heavy preparation load,
- audio materials,
- readily available locally

Ur's criteria framework covers all the aspects in textbook evaluation. She mentions from internal to external factors that are essential in evaluating the particular textbook, however, it is not as detailed as experts wish and there should be some modifications if these criteria are used in textbooks' evaluation process.

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