

## Evaluation of ESP Textbooks Based on Physical Characteristics, Authenticity, Appropriacy and Sufficiency

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**Abstract:** *The current research is an attempt to describe the evaluation of the English textbook for Management students taught in Iranian universities. The purpose of this study was to evaluate the management book based on four criteria including physical characteristics, authenticity, appropriacy, and sufficiency. For this purpose, a questionnaire consisting of 12 four-likert scale items, based on Sheldon (1988) model was used. Participants were 10 management teachers, and 20 management students. The results of this study indicated, that the teachers and students had different opinions or attitudes toward ESP books in most circumstances. Therefore, it is the teacher's responsibility to pay attention to the students' needs and take the students' problems into consideration when they are selecting books for the course.*

**Key Terms:** *ESP, management materials, textbook evaluation*

### 1. Introduction

Developing a successful language program is a complex and time-consuming process in which educators and practitioner must be able to integrate \ research and practice to guarantee that students are provided with the most effective and productive learning context. According to Richards (2001), a successful program is one that has appropriate courses which systematically take the progression of students' learning and needs into account. Furthermore, Chisman and Crandall (2007) state that English for Specific Purposes (ESP) programs should provide an opportunity to learn specific English, but programs are not as strong as they would be if new approaches based on research and practice were utilized.

Research has shown that adopting innovative approaches that can guarantee the success of ESP learners has become a challenge for most educators. In other words, teachers and

administrators should take the responsibility for bringing the research and practice into the classroom, although they are often limited in time and resources (Chisman & Crandall, *ibid*; Crandall & Sheppard, 2004). On the other hand, due to the fact that textbooks and teaching materials are the most commonly applicable resources in the ESP classroom, the best and logical solution would be to combine the innovative research and practice into the materials which are selected for ESP program. Therefore, the purpose of this study is to determine how to strengthen teaching materials by analyzing the students' and teachers' needs in order to enhance learning through innovative teaching approaches and content that is relevant and useful to the ESP learners.

### **1.1. Statement of the problem**

The numbers of students who are interested in developing their specific English knowledge through ESP programs in Iran as an EFL context are increasing. While the students are receiving English language instruction in the public schools, the time spent on learning English is not enough. However, the opportunity to learn English is available through some English language learning centers. Another point which is worth mentioning here is that, though programs aid in improving English, they are not as strong as they could be (Warriner, 2007).

Therefore, designing textbooks and teaching materials with an innovative approach that better meet the needs of the ESP learners represents a solution that would benefit teachers, administrators and students. But, before designing the textbooks for ESP learners, the needs of these learners must be determined if we want to determine how to most effectively build such materials. In addition, the attitudes of teachers and administrators regarding learners' needs, successful teaching practices, and existing teaching materials should also be taken into account. Tomlinson (1998) believes that quality materials can facilitate and strengthen the second and foreign language learning process.

## **2. Review of related literature**

### **2.1. Needs of learners**

Textbooks and materials must meet the users' needs if they want to be beneficial for the learners. For doing this, a needs analysis of the learners must take place before designing teaching materials. According to Stufflebeam, McCormick, Brinkerhoff & Nelson (1985, as cited in Richards, 2001), needs analysis as a distinct and necessary phase in planning educational programs emerged in the 1960s as part of the systems approach to curriculum development and was part of the prevalent philosophy of educational accountability (p.51).

### **2.2. Attitudes of administrators and teachers**

According to some research, some EFL learners, in general and most ESP learners, in particular are reluctant to attend English programs because the programs or books cannot satisfy their needs. In other words, there is a mismatch in program and learner goals (Brown, 2009;

Schalge & Soga, 2008; Warriner, 2007). One of the steps which can be taken in this regard is to determine what the needs which have been perceived by administrators and teachers because they can contribute to the bridging of the gap between the learner population needs and goals. Add to it, the investigation of the attitudes of administrators' and teachers' attitudes toward the textbooks and teaching materials should be taken into consideration.

### **2.3. Analyzing textbooks and materials**

Illes (2008) contends that textbooks and teaching materials can be regarded as a good cornerstone for the instructors when they are used carefully. One of the best methods for improving the design of materials is getting information about the strengths and weaknesses of existing materials. When we are well acquainted with learners' needs, as well as the attitudes of administrators and teachers by taking language programs and available resources into account, we can detect gaps in existing teaching materials.

### **2.4. Authenticity**

If we, as teachers, are interested in maximizing learning outcomes, teaching must be as effective as possible. If we want an effective teaching to take place, the needs of the students must be prioritized.

According to Chisman (2008), incorporating authentic projects and experiences in the classroom can be regarded as one of the helpful strategies which proved effective for EFL learners. When learners recognize the value of what they learn and can directly transfer it to their real world encounters with the language, they will be more motivated to attend class.

In some researches done by Gilmore (2007), he concluded that the inadequacy of many current textbooks, which due to their lack of authenticity can be considered as one of the main reasons for preventing learners develop overall communicative competence.

As some research has emphasized (Friedman, 2009; Mayora, 2009; Schwarzer, 2009) many approaches exist for taking authenticity into account in the language classroom. Authenticity can be incorporated through exposing students to authentic situations in which they must use the language, as well as engaging them in authentic spoken and written text to use as a springboard for interactive activities.

As research has demonstrated, authenticity can be integrated into the language classroom through a variety of sources. However, educators in existing programs do not have extensive amounts of time to sift through assorted resources and materials, which may be difficult to locate, and develop activities. Authentic materials and ideas for incorporating authenticity in the language classroom need to be brought to educators. Textbooks and teaching materials can aid in creating authentic situations by suggesting different activities with audio texts, the Web, YouTube, and community involvement projects.

### 2.4.1. The role of authenticity in ESP

A great deal of research has done with regard to second language acquisition and effective ESP programs (Schwarzer, 2009; Watanabe, 2008; Watanabe & Swain, 2007). In addition, Mayora (2009) and Gilmore (2007) emphasized the role of authenticity in English language learning, on one hand. Therefore, it is practical to pay attention to corpora in designing teaching materials by considering the fact that authentic texts are very useful in language teaching.

On the other hand, according to Richards (2001), some teachers think that using authentic texts is a big responsibility for them. They mention some reasons behind this idea for justification. First, they have to develop learning resources around authentic materials; second, teachers have to spend a lot of time for selecting suitable sources for materials and developing activities and exercises to accompany materials (p. 253). Therefore, it is not necessary for teachers to spend extra time for selecting suitable resources when we combine research and practice to materialize the resources available for a course in the language classroom,

### 2.5. Purpose of the study

Textbooks and teaching materials have been considered to be a key component in the language classroom in Iran as an EFL context. Therefore, designing teaching materials with new ideas and by taking the results of latest research is an effective way to reach and impact a large majority of administrators, teachers, and ultimately learners in this context.

Teaching materials can contribute to the improvement of ESP programs if they are designed with the specific needs of the learners as the driving force. Improving adult ESL programs should be a priority when we consider the increasing number of ESP learners and the amount of limited English proficient learners in Iran.

Although, according to Sheldon (1988), textbook is taken as the visible heart of any ELT program, some challenge exists on the importance of ELT textbooks in teaching and learning. However, we cannot make any claims about the advantages and disadvantages of any textbook without doing any scientific evaluation. As far as the management textbooks taught in Iranian universities, no evaluation has been reported about whether these books are suitable and to the point for ESP learners or not. By taking this problem into account, the main purpose of this study was to carry out EFL textbook evaluation in the Iranian context in the field of management from the viewpoints of teachers and their students. In other words, exploring the extent to which the teachers and learners were satisfied or dissatisfied with the management textbooks taught in universities at undergraduate level is the main purpose of this study.

### 2.6. Research question

By considering the afore-mentioned problems, the following research question was used to guide the study:

Q1: Is there any significant difference between the teachers' reactions and students' reactions about existing textbooks and teaching materials in the field of management?

### **3. Methodology**

#### **3.1. Overview**

The purpose of this research was to investigate the current status of existing ESP programs and evaluate teaching materials currently used at those programs. In other words, this study aimed to carry out EFL textbook evaluation in the Iranian context in the field of management from the viewpoints of teachers and their students.

#### **3.2. Participants**

The participants of the study were 10 randomly selected male and female Iranian management teachers holding either MA or Ph.D in management and about 20 management students studying at MA level who had already experienced studying specific English for management and seemed capable enough in understanding the items of the evaluation checklist offered in the form of questionnaires. However, the checklist was translated into Persian.

#### **3.3. Instruments**

To conduct the study, the checklist approach utilizing Sheldon's evaluative checklist (1988, see Appendix A) was used for the purpose of this study. However, only some items which were more helpful were extracted from the main checklist including the items related to Physical characteristics, Authenticity, Appropriacy, and Sufficiency. There were 12 four-Likert items in this questionnaire. In other words, certain key and most frequently attended items were drawn from both checklists and the participants were given chance to express their opinions through the checklists.

#### **3.4. Procedures**

In order to perform this study, a mixed method research design was utilized. The study was conducted in two phases: data collection, and data interpretation. First, both teachers and students selected for this study received the checklist, which was translated into Persian so as to avoid any language problems. The checklist was emailed to some of them because they were not easy to access. After determining attitudes of students and teachers, an analysis of existing teaching materials was conducted. The textbooks used in the evaluation included three management books taught in management colleges in Iran including English for the students of management by Yaser Mirmorseli, English in Economics and Management by Sadegh Bafandeh Imandoust, and Management by Patrick Montana. The textbook and materials evaluation explored the approaches used within the various texts and materials and whether those texts are capable of meeting the learner populations' needs based on teacher and student responses in interviews.

The interviews with the teachers and students provided insight into their perception of learner needs, as well as teaching approaches that they find most effective with the learner population. In addition, the interviews explored teachers' and students' attitudes toward existing teaching materials. Teachers and students of existing programs had experience working with this group of learners and were able to identify learner needs, as well as effective ways of approaching those needs, at least to some extent.

After the data were collected by all participants, qualitative and quantitative analyses of data were carried out for the descriptive and inferential statistics. Finally, the results were interpreted and necessary discussion was made and conclusion was drawn.

#### 4. Results and Discussion

As it was already mentioned, the main purpose of this study was to see whether there is any significant difference between the students' and teachers' attitude toward management books taught by different teachers at university. After both teachers and students answered to the evaluation questionnaire for ELT books, their answers were given to SPSS for the purpose of analyzing data.

**Table 1. Mean sample for teachers and students**

Question	Group	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Q1	Student	20	1.60	.503	.112
	Teacher	10	2.90	.876	.277
Q2	Student	20	2.85	1.268	.284
	Teacher	10	1.50	.527	.167
Q3	Student	20	2.75	1.020	.228
	Teacher	10	3.50	.527	.167
Q4	Student	20	2.75	1.020	.228
	Teacher	10	1.70	.483	.153
Q5	Student	20	2.45	1.146	.256
	Teacher	10	3.20	.422	.133
Q6	Student	20	1.30	.470	.105
	Teacher	10	1.50	.527	.167
Q7	Student	20	1.40	.503	.112
	Teacher	10	3.50	.527	.167
Q8	Student	20	1.55	.510	.114
	Teacher	10	3.50	.527	.167
Q9	Student	20	1.55	.510	.114
	Teacher	10	1.70	.483	.153

<b>Q10</b>	Student	20	2.55	1.146	.256
	Teacher	10	1.50	.527	.167
<b>Q11</b>	Student	20	2.20	1.152	.258
	Teacher	10	1.50	.527	.167
<b>Q12</b>	Student	20	1.40	.503	.112
	Teacher	10	3.50	.527	.167

As it is clear from Table 1 and 2, there was a significant difference between the teachers' and students' attitude about the questions asked about the four characteristics of evaluation including physical characteristics, appropriacy, authenticity, and sufficiency in all questions except question 6, 9, and 11. In other words, students answered negatively to all questions except question 6, 9, and 11 and teachers answered positively toward them. Regarding question 1, teachers believe that there is enough space for writing inside the book while it was not the case for students. With respect to question 2, students believed that the book is too large for them while it was not the case for teachers. As far as the question 3 is concerned, teachers believed more than students that the spine is labeled. With regard to question 4, students believed more than teachers that the book can be used more than once. By considering the mean result in question 5, teachers reported to believe more than students that the books are substantial enough or interesting enough to hold the attention of learners. However, there was no significant difference between teachers and students about question 6 which mentions that the books are pitched at the right level of maturity and language. Regarding question 7, teachers had more belief than students that the book is topical. With respect to question 8, teachers believed that the content of the books is obviously realistic while it was not the case for the students. But, the teachers and students had the same opinion about this matter that the tasks used in the books exploit language in a communicative or 'real-world' way. Considering question 10, students believed that the tasks in the books have been simplified or artificial while the teachers had the opposite ideas. Taking the results of question 11 into account, both teachers and students believed that the book is complete enough to stand on its own. Finally, with regard to question 12, teachers believed that they can teach the course using only the student's book.

**Table 2. Independent sample t-test for teachers and students**

Question	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	T	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
<b>Q1</b>	-1.300	.250	-5.193	28	.000
<b>Q2</b>	1.350	.421	3.208	28	.003
<b>Q3</b>	-.750	.345	-2.172	28	.038
<b>Q4</b>	1.050	.342	3.069	28	.005
<b>Q5</b>	-.750	.377	-1.989	28	.057
<b>Q6</b>	-.200	.189	-1.056	28	.300

<b>Q7</b>	-2.100	.198	-10.619	28	.000
<b>Q8</b>	-1.950	.200	-9.761	28	.000
<b>Q9</b>	-.150	.194	-.772	28	.447
<b>Q10</b>	1.050	.383	2.738	28	.011
<b>Q11</b>	.700	.385	1.817	28	.080
<b>Q12</b>	-2.100	.198	-10.619	28	.000

## 5. Conclusion and Recommendation

In this study, we analyzed three books in the field of management. The evaluation consisted of a brief scan to determine whether the students and teachers had the same or different ideas or attitudes toward the books taught in university. The three books were judged by different criteria based on Sheldon model such as physical characteristics, *authenticity*, *appropriacy*, and sufficiency.

One of the main missions for ESP teachers is to fulfill the needs of learners, and textbooks that accommodate all of these needs and objectives are rare. As the results of this study indicated, the teachers and students had different opinions or attitudes toward ESP books in most circumstances. Therefore, it is the teacher's responsibility to pay attention to the students' needs and take the students' problems into consideration when they are selecting books for the course. Of course, we should keep in our mind that one problem with evaluation is the subjective nature of checklist design and its subsequent effect on textbook selection; Littlejohn (1998), as cited in McGrath (2002), argues that designing checklists may result in limitations that are linked to what 'desirable materials should look like' (p. 46).

Therefore, it is strongly recommended that the Iranian teachers at university takes measures to update the ESP curriculum by adopting an improved textbook, updated to better achieve the goals set up by the Ministry of Science, Research, and Technology.

Curricula should be revised every three or four years. There are two forms of change: Long-term change and short-term change. Long-term change is the change which is done to the curriculum every three or four years, as mentioned above. Short-term change is the change which is done to the curriculum at any time when such assessment necessitates or dictates the incorporation of new elements into the curriculum in the unit, or into a section, a minor change.

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## Appendix A

## Sheldon's evaluative checklist for ELT textbooks

Items	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
1-There is enough space to write in the book.				
2-The book is robust (too large or too heavy)				
3-The spine is labeled.				
4-It is a book that could be used more than once, especially if it is marked by previous students.				
5-The material is substantial enough or interesting enough to hold the attention of learners.				
6-It is pitched at the right level of maturity and language, and (particularly in the case of ESP situations), at the right conceptual level.				
7-It is topical.				
8-The content is obviously realistic, being taken from L1 material not initially intended for ELT purposes.				
9-The tasks exploit language in a communicative or 'real-world' way.				
10-If not, the texts are unacceptably simplified or artificial (for instance, in the use of whole-sentence dialogues).				
11-The book is complete enough to stand on its own, or must the teacher produce a lot of ancillary bridging material to make it workable.				
12-I can teach the course using only the student's book, or must all the attendant aids (e.g. cassettes) be deployed.				