УДК 37.013

EVALUATION OF TEACHING MATERIALS

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Materials evaluation is very important in teaching process. It raises teachers' awareness in selecting a suitable material for a certain teaching process, as there are many textbooks in markets. In order to select a suitable textbook one should evaluate the textbook. The article researches different scholars opinions. The scholars think that evaluation makes the textbooks be in agreement to the learners' needs and interests. Then the article defines definition of evaluation according to different scholars and determines the participation of people in the evaluation process. The article concludes that the evaluation process should involve teachers, learners, administrators, and supervisors.

Key words: *materials evaluation, teaching, teacher, learner, scholar, audience.*

Шахла Адишірін кизи Караєва. ОЦІНКА НАВЧАЛЬНИХ МАТЕРІАЛІВ

З давніх часів вибір відповідного підручника для конкретних цілей був однією з основних проблем для вчителів мови. Оскільки не існує досконалого підручника для різних аудиторій, а також щоб уникнути проблем у процесі навчання, педагогу слід ретельно оцінювати матеріали для освіти. Педагогам необхідно робити будь-які вдосконалення в підручниках, щоб вони були більш ефективними в процесі навчання. Правильна оцінка матеріалів може підвищити обізнаність вчителів про використаний матеріалі. У статті дається докладний визначення та аналіз оцінки інформації, різниці між оцінкою і тестуванням, викладається думки різних видатних вчених про оцінку матеріалів. Зроблено висновки про те, що оцінки матеріалів діляться на сумативні, формативного і іллюмінативне. У цілому оцінка визначається як систематичне отримання інформації про важливі аспекти навчання. Оцінка матеріалів для навчальних програм включає в себе в першу чергу досвід викладачів, а потім учнів, адміністраторів і керівників.

Ключові слова: *підручники середньої школи, оцінка навчального матеріалу, кваліфікація викладача, підвищення якості навчання.*

Издавна выбор подходящего учебника для конкретных целей был одной из основных проблем для учителей языка. Так как не существует совершенного учебника для различных аудиторий, во избежание проблем в процессе обучения педагогу следует тщательно оценивать материалы для образования. Педагогам необходимо делать какие-либо усовершенствования в учебниках, чтобы они были более эффективными в процессе обучения. Правильная оценка материалов может повысить осведомлённость учителей об используемом материале. В статье дается подробное определение и анализ оценки информации, разницы между оценкой и тестированием, излагается мнения разных выдающихся учёных об оценке материалов. Сделаны выводы о том, что оценки материалов делятся на суммативные, формативные и иллюминативные. В целом оценка определяется как систематическое получение информации о важных аспектах обучения. Оценка материалов для учебных программ включает в себя в первую очередь опыт преподавателей, а затем учеников, администраторов и руководителей.

Ключевые слова: *учебники средней школы, оценка учебного материала, квалификация преподавателя, повышение качества обучения.*

Every year a number of publications appear in the book market. It becomes difficult to select a suitable textbook for particular teaching goals. No decisions or suggestions can be made about any aspect of language curriculum, aims, content, methods, and materials without evaluating and making judgments on these decisions and suggestions. Therefore, evaluation of teaching materials is getting to be more important in language teaching instruction nowadays. To select the right book for a classroom implementation has always been one of the major problematic issues for language teachers.

Textbooks are generally written for general language learners so they cannot predict all the learners' specific language needs and interests. There is a common belief that "no textbook is likely to be perfect, of course, and practical considerations, such as cost, may have to take precedence over pedagogic merit" (Robinson, as cited in Jordan, 1997, p. 127).

"The search for materials leads, ultimately, to the realization that there is no such thing as an ideal textbook. Materials are but a starting point. Teachers are the ones who make them work" (Savignon, 1983, p. 138). Sheldon (1988) also joins this opinion by claiming "it is clear that coursebook assessment is fundamentally a subjective, rule-of-thumb activity, and that no neat formula, grid, or system will ever provide a definite yardstick" (p.

245). She agrees that a carefully evaluated textbook can do well in the classroom if it is appraised in terms of its integration with and contribution to specific educational goals.

But its success or failure can only be reasonably determined during and after its period of classroom use. So, a perfect book for everyone cannot be found "but there are books that are superior to others, given individual requirements" (Inцzь, 1996, p. 4). A lot depends on selecting a suitable textbook. Selecting a more suitable textbook for a particular situation can reduce problems during classroom implementation. Accordingly, in order to select a suitable textbook one should evaluate the textbook.

Textbooks need some kind of modifications in order to be adopted for a particular situation. The problems, which can be found during the use of textbooks, can be smoothed through evaluation process.

The application of an evaluation process to improve the success of the textbook in the implication in terms of user identifications, and characteristics has been broadly used and exercised by researchers (Ayman, 1997; Chambers, 1997; Зakır, 1996; Demirkan-Jones, 1999; Ellis, 1998; Hutchinson and Torres, 1994; Inцzь, 1996). Evaluation makes the textbooks be in agreement to the learners' needs and interests. Hutchinson (1987) claims, that "materials evaluation is essentially a matching process in which the needs and assumptions of a particular teaching-learning context are matched to available solutions" (p. 41). Through the correct materials, evaluation process teachers can reach both their own goals and objectives and those of the course. He claims that an effectively and appropriately used materials evaluation process can raise the teachers' awareness about the teaching materials in the following ways:

1) Materials evaluation obliges teachers to analyze their own presuppositions as to the nature of language and learning.

2) Materials evaluation forces teachers to establish their priorities.

3) Materials evaluation can help teachers to see materials as an integral part of the whole teaching/learning situation (Hutchinson, 1987, pp. 42-43).

The ELT documents (1987) even devoted one of its publications entirely to the problems of the teaching materials under the title "ELT textbooks and materials: problems in evaluation and development" (Sheldon, 1987), but at the end there was not any unique model which can decide all problems (Ellis, 1998). Yet all these attempts serve to reach some improvements in teaching, to give pretty well grounded directions and recommendations to language teachers to get benefit from and to better their language teaching.

Sheldon (1987) finds some difficulties which hinder the realization of compromise on materials evaluation such as the textbooks often neglect the target learners, the grammar explanations often take more room in the textbooks, and "course rationales, for instance in regard to the introduction and recycling of new lexis, or the grading and selection of reading passages, are rarely explained for the teachers' benefit" (p. 3). These difficulties or problems are to be solved through materials evaluation.

Evaluation of teaching materials needs to be done to improve teaching instruction, to make it in harmony with recent innovations, as the materials cannot be considered simply the everyday tools for language teachers. "They are the embodiment of the aims, values and methods of a particular teaching/learning situation" (Hutchinson, 1987, p. 37). The evaluation process makes teachers feel motivated to raise the quality and awareness of their own teaching/learning instruction and to keep up-to-date with current developments. In many teaching contexts, textbooks seem to be the core of a particular programme and the textbook may be the only choice open to the teachers. Because of this reason, the evaluation of textbooks merits very serious and careful consideration "as an inappropriate choice may waste funds and time" and demotivate students and other colleagues (McDonough and Shaw, 1993, pp. 64-65).

Now it is time to know what evaluation is? Many educational researchers find the evaluation very important for language teaching instruction. Some of the scholars believe that evaluation and testing are of the same meaning (Bachman and Palmer, as cited in Lynch, 1996). But it is more than testing being "an intrinsic part of teaching and learning" (Rea-Dickins and Germaine, 1992, p. 3). According to Lynch (1996) evaluation is different from assessment and testing primarily on the basis of its scope and purpose and can be defined as a systematic attempt to collect information in order to make correct and sound decisions and judgments on the program and its components, the information can be gathered not only through qualitative and quantitative ways but also through different methods such as observations, unstructured interviews and the administration of pencil-and-paper tests. Evaluation is also necessary because it motivates to gain information to bring about innovation or change (Rea-Dickins, 1996). The aim of evaluation in education seems to be to improve, or to discontinue a program or product as "evalu-

ation implies a judgment which derives from a complex relationship between the object of evaluation and the values, attitudes and beliefs that motivate the evaluation" (Wright, 1990, p. 343).

Hutchinson (1987) views the evaluation as "a matter of judging the fitness of something for a particular purpose" (p. 41). Williams and Burden (1994) define three types of evaluation:

1) Summative evaluation, suggests selecting groups of learners and teachers and administrating tests at the beginning and end of the programme in order to find out "whether any changes found could be attributed to the innovation itself". In this process a treatment group is compared to a control group studying a number of variables, as well. But the deficiency of this evaluation is its unableness to provide necessary information about the reasons why "under the given circumstances, the project has or hasn't proved successful".

2) Formative evaluation, "involves the project from the beginning" and "it is ongoing in nature, and seeks to form, improve and direct the innovations rather than simply evaluate the outcomes"

3) Illuminative evaluation, where the two summative and formative evaluations play an important role. In this evaluation "the evaluator is actually involved in the day-to-day working of the project" trying to get as much information about the issue as much as he or she can (Williams and Burden, 1994, pp. 22-23).

So this kind of evaluation gives a pretty good ground "to avoid problems" and lead "to a success of any innovation" (Williams and Burden, 1994, p. 27).

Alderson's (1992) guidelines for planning an evaluation focus on purposes, audiences, evaluators, content, methods, timing, negotiations, deadlines, deliverables and project frameworks. He points out "if evaluators can evaluate evaluations, they can improve the evaluation process, and thus contribute to the usefulness and relevance of evaluations" (Alderson, 1992, p. 299).

Being an important part of the whole education program "evaluation makes teachers aware of the parameters in which they are working" and at the same time "helps them to analyses the context for possible openings for innovation or constraints" (Rea-Dickins and Germaine, 1992, p. 20). So evaluation is defined as systematically getting information about the nature, context, tasks, features, purposes, results of the program in order to make decisions or judgments for planning of courses, for further directions about implementing modifications (Alderson, 1985;

Brown, 1995; Lynch, 1996; Mackay, 1994; Rea-Dickins and Germaine, 1992; Tomlinson, 1998).

When various aspects of the teaching and learning process are evaluated, teachers apply different criteria in order to make their decisions and judgments. Evaluation needs to be systematic and principled. The evaluators should know what and how they are going to evaluate when the textbook is used.

As the textbooks are tools for language teachers, the teachers are the first population to evaluate materials (Hutchinson, 1987). This population determines the success or failure of teaching materials in use. They need to like the textbooks in order to teach in a better and more motivated way. "Evaluating materials, like much else in curriculum development, should call on the teachers' expertise" because they show a comparatively large labor association in this process and "because they represent a potent political force within the program" (Brown, 1995, p. 163). Wright (1990) also claims that the evaluation of textbooks should be a teacher's concern as they are immediate users of the textbooks.

The learners are the target audience for teaching materials. While evaluating textbooks, teachers should focus on learners' needs, interests, their background knowledge, their culture, and purposes for learning English, level of language knowledge. The base of textbook evaluation stands on learner perspective. Allwright (1981) considers the 'learner involvement' in the process of decision-making about materials very important and suggests learner-training sessions for getting their opinions about preferences for activities and tasks.

She proposes writing a learner's guide, as well, with the help of which the learner can independently learn the language. Sheldon (1987) considers the learners an integral part of the education process and claims that whatever the teacher's opinion as to the limitations, learners' ideas about and attitudes towards the textbook should be discovered. Dubin and Olshtain (1986) approach the learners as an important factor in the classroom and their active part in the learning process should be emphasized and think that it is very important to put the learners into situations in which they must share their decisions, preferences and so on.

The administrators also have a role not only in materials evaluation process but in overall faculty development (Pennington, 1998). In many cases teachers are dependent on institutional administrators and can use only the materials that are given them by

administrators. It would be very useful to get the administrators involved in the process of evaluation and in such case to work collaboratively.

So, the materials evaluation process should involve teachers, learners, administrators, and supervisors. However, as the teachers are more important figures in the process of selection and evaluation of textbooks than any other participants, such as, learners and administrators, the research study will consider the ways teachers evaluate the textbook for their teaching setting because they are immediate users of textbooks, they may better know their learners' needs and interests and they may cooperate with the administrators in this process.

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