Evaluation and Design of Textbook

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Abstract: English textbook is of great significance in students' language input. The purpose of this research is to evaluate the quality of textbook from the perspective of authenticity, which is related to students' engagement with the tasks in the textbook. The study found that reading tasks may not be authentic to meet students' learning needs. Then some suggestions on material adaptation and supplementation will be given in this paper.

Keywords: textbook evaluation, authenticity, adaptation and supplementation

1. Introduction

Textbook is an essential learning material in junior high school. The evaluation and design of textbook have its significance on helping teachers identify what material is suitable for learners, and how to adapt or supplement the material for learning purposes. In this essay, an English textbook used in Guangzhou, China, will be evaluated. After introducing the theoretical background, there will be three sections in the essay. The first section is about evaluating the material. The second part will discuss material adaptation and supplementation. Lastly, section three will evaluate and reflect on new materials in terms of their strengths and weakness, the effectiveness of the proposed design[1-6].

2. Theoretical background

Textbook plays a crucial role in English language teaching curricula around the world. Garinger (2002) asserts that textbooks have ready-made activities, which would save time for lesson preparation. Teachers could employ the lesson content and the way to teach the lesson directly without starting from scratch. Besides, textbook is reported to be a source of language input and cultural information (Riazi, 2003; Harmer 2001). Learners could be exposed to linguistic features and cultural values based on the words and visuals in the textbook. In addition, textbook is considered an indispensable element for language teachers' professional development (Jamalvandi, 2014). For novice teachers, textbook seems like a trainer supporting teachers with the syllabus and effective teaching methods. Many inexperienced teachers would base their teaching on textbooks for convenience and authority because textbooks are generally written by experts (Richards, 1993). Moreover, textbooks could be used in class and after class, being a useful tool for self-study by students. As for the minuses, Tomlinson (2001) points out that textbooks may not meet the diverse needs of students. For example, weaker students may not adapt to the content complexity which advanced students are satisfied with. Another drawback comes from the view of Richards (1993). He explains that textbooks may deskill teachers considering their over reliance on textbooks. This idea is consistent with Crawford's stance (2002) that teachers' creativity may be deprived if their thinking and responses to learners are limited by textbooks.

It is said that no textbook is perfect. Teachers need to select appropriate textbooks to meet learners' needs in a particular context, which makes textbook evaluation necessary. Textbook evaluation involves measuring the values of textbooks and then judge the effects of materials on people (Tomlinson, 2003). In the process of evaluation, certain criteria would be applied to identify the effectiveness of materials. Then the evaluation results would lead to the decisions on material adaptation and supplementation, compensating for potential deficiencies in the material and making the materials more suitable for learners (McGrath, 2002). Adaptation can be categorized into two types: adaptation as addition (extemporisation, extension and exploitation) and adaptation as change. In terms of supplementation, it means adding something new by utilizing published materials or devising our materials to narrow the gap between the coursebook and the official syllabus or students' needs (McGrath, 2016)[7-12].

This essay will focus on the authenticity aspect in Unit 5 reading section. The concept of authenticity started during the period of communicative approach in the 1970s. Authenticity provides learners with a taste of the world where communicative competence is required. It may cover a variety of areas such as authentic texts and tasks, authentic contexts and language. According to Morrow

(1977), "An authentic text is a stretch of real language produced by a real speaker or writer for a real audience and designed to convey a real message of some sort" (p13). The term real presents the real-life communicative purposes in authentic texts rather than learning language points. This view is in line with Lee (1995), who believes that authentic texts have an intrinsic communicative quality. In terms of using authentic texts, one is that authenticity texts provide examples of how the target language is used in real-life contexts (Ciornei & Dina, 2015), which would help learners acquire an effective communicative competence in the target language. Besides, authentic texts could maintain or increase students' motivation for learning because they give students the feeling that they are using the "real" language in the real world. (Guariento & Morley, 2001). Apart from authentic text, authentic tasks are valued in the classroom. Nunan (1988b) defines authentic tasks as the replication or rehearsal of the communicative behaviour in the actual contexts. By contrast, pedagogic tasks like gap-filling or multiple choices focus on the development of accuracy rather than language using (Nunan, 1989).

3. Evaluate the Materials

3.1. Context analysis and needs analysis

In China, English is one of the three primary subjects besides Chinese and Maths taught in the school curriculum. The English textbook to be evaluated is designed for the eighth graders in junior high schools of Guangzhou City. The English textbook consists of eight units, each of which contains language systems and skills as well as culture corners. About 40 students in a class should finish the book within one term and take the final-term exam. The exam is composed of two parts: the written test of 90 points through the paper and the speaking-listening test of 30 points through the Internet. The teachers who mostly graduated from key universities in China are native Chinese speakers with C1 or C2 English level. Besides, the teaching staff has three-year teaching experience on average. They prefer traditional teaching methods in class like the grammar translation method and pay more attention to reading and listening practice, which teachers think is more effective in improving English scores. When students get higher scores, they may have more opportunities to rank higher and enter better classes or high schools when affected by the present Chinese educational system. Therefore, many classes are teacher-centered and exam-oriented. In term of 14-year-old students in junior high school, their first language is Chinese and second language is English. Learners have studied English for six years and have a level of B1. The intrinsic motivation for most students to learn English is to get higher marks in school, which may affect their future development and self-confidence. Another motivation is the passion for English. Some students may take an interest in English from movies, songs or travel in western countries. They expect to speak fluent English like the way native speakers do. However, despite better reading and listening skills shown in the exam scores, students could not communicate in English in real life due to the lack of an English-speaking environment outside the classroom. Additionally, students get used to being leading by teachers with regard to learning contents and the types of homework. "Rote learning" may be a typical learning style in class. Also, students vary in the willingness to participate in class activities based on different personalities like the introverted and extroverted[13-19].

3.2. A checklist for external and internal evaluation

Textbook evaluation is necessary in terms of many reasons. First, it can be used to identify textbooks' productivity and value (Salehi et al., 2015) and check whether the aim that knowledge is conveyed is completed (Najafi Sarem et al., 2013). Second, teachers could be familiar with textbooks' pluses and minuses (Sheldon, 1988) to make the most of them. To achieve constructive textbook evaluation, teachers can use three basic evaluation methods: the impressionistic method, the checklist method and the in-depth method. Among these methods, the checklist method is used here. McGrath (2016) explains that the checklist is systematic and cost-effective. It can allow many vital elements to be recorded in a short space of time and a convenient format. Also, it is explicitly presented to make all categories well-understood. According to Mcdonough and Shaw (2003), two stages for determining the evaluation checklist include external and internal evaluation. External evaluation offers a brief overview of the material like the layout and the provision of digital materials. By contrast, the internal evaluation shows closer and detailed information about the material such as the treatment and presentation of the skills, the sequencing and grading of the materials. Through external and internal evaluation, teachers could identify the gap between the claims made by the author and what is actually presented inside the textbook (Mcdonough & Shaw, 2003).

The checklist in appendix 2 is designed based on the checklists from Mukundan et al. (2011) and McGrath (2016) as well as my thoughts. In terms of how and why the checklist is formed, many factors should be taken into account. Grant (1987) points out that the checklist should consider

learning-teaching context and the needs of students and teachers. For example, the No.1 item checks if the textbook is consistent with the syllabus formulated by the local educational administration in China. As for students' needs, items (No.5-No.8) focus on learners' age, interests and self-study. Apart from these, the checklist also pays attention to students' differentiation. For example, the No.18 "Reading activities are balanced between individual response, pair work and group work" involves the demanding on different learning styles. Likewise, the No.17 "Reading texts cover diverse and interesting topics" implies that students may be interested in various themes and reading contents. Thus, students' needs have been valued in this checklist. Moreover, content-specific criteria evaluating the nature of the material is one of the specific criteria suggested by Tomlinson (2013c). Content-specific criteria like language skills and systems are the main categories in internal evaluation. Language skills cover four skills (reading, listening, speaking and writing) whereas language systems contain grammar and vocabulary, as shown in the checklist. Furthermore, evaluation should investigate the effects of classroom tasks embedded in the textbook and the procedures to conduct them (Ellis, 2011). In this way, teachers could familiarize themselves with the rationale behind the design of the tasks and think about how they can be better used in a certain context. Therefore, items (No.29-No.33) cover the task evaluation particularly. Another aspect of determining the checklist criteria is "communicative" (Grant, 1987, p119). Communicative competence is the goal of learning a language. Thereby, the No.21 "Speaking activities are developed to initiate meaningful communication" is produced based on the communicative principle. At the last stage, the format of responses is scoring which varies from 0-3. The items with higher scores may be more suitable in teaching contexts while those with lower scores may indicate the weak areas to be improved (McGrath, 2016). Scoring is chosen for its clearer and more specific way to indicate the strengths and weaknesses of the textbook[20-26].

4. Materials adaptation/supplementation

After the suitable checklist is decided, the textbook is evaluated from the external and internal perspectives based on the overview of the whole book and the Unit 5 Reading part particularly. The final results of the textbook evaluation are shown in appendix 2 with some blue marks. In the checklist, we can see some merits that the textbook have diverse topics to interest students and designs vocabulary list from the easy to the complex for cognition considerations. Besides, there are clear teaching objectives for each unit. However, the items (No.18,31,33) with the lower marks are prominent. These indicators may reflect the less communicative feature in reading text and the passive engagement of learners in tasks, related to lower authenticity in language teaching. Being aware of the disadvantages, teachers could adapt and supplement the textbook to maximize the appropriateness of materials (McDonough et al., 2013), which would stimulate more motivation in learners and create an environment beneficial to learning.

Widdowson (1978) puts forward that authenticity is a characteristic that implies the relationship between the learner and the input text, and students' responses to it rather than the input text itself. In this regard, authenticity relates to the learners' engagement with the task. The more engagement of learners is put into the task, the more authentic the task may become.

Thus, the following adaptation and supplementation will be centered on increasing authenticity by enhancing students' involvement in tasks[27-31].

In picture 1 of appendix 1, part A as a lead-in activity is designed to stimulate learners' previous experience and knowledge, setting a context for understanding the following reading passage. It consists of four pictures and simple sentences to fill in, which may be less attractive in the format. Teachers could search for English interviews, movie clips or documentaries on exchange visit before class and play them out in class. The lively characters and dynamic images on the video could excite learners' senses and interest them better than the written presentation in part A. This adaptation increases the variety of authentic texts (interview, movie, documentaries), which may familiarize learners with the topic in a broad way and expose them to target language use.

In picture 3 of appendix 1, part C1 and part C2 focus on vocabulary learning in the form of gap filling. The words are predetermined by the textbook designers such as "introduce and culture". In part C1, the lexical items are presented in isolation or inauthentic contexts. In order to make part C1 more authentic, learners could be encouraged to find out unfamiliar words and phrases individually. Then they will look up these words in the dictionary and write down the key- notes. The notes may include the phonetic symbol, part of speech and high-frequency meaning of the word. After that, teachers could motivate learners to share their notes with classmates by copying the notes to the blackboard. In this way, learners could get involved in the learning process through "formulating their own assertions about vocabulary and lexical relationships" (Murdoch, 1999, p6). Therefore, part C1 will be adapted into a new task that facilitates learners to discover their needed words and share. As for part C2,

students should guess the words from the context in the short paragraph and fill in the blanks. However, short attention is paid to these words in C2, which is unlikely for learners to acquire them proficiently. Thus, there could be another exercise for learners to search for more meanings and make sentences using these words in the box. For example, "experience" as a countable noun in part C2 means an event or an activity. Students may find that "experience" is also an uncountable noun referring to the knowledge or skill gained from doing something. Therefore, they could make a sentence like "My mother has much experience in cooking". Through the additional exercise, the learner's curiosity will be aroused compared with a presentational methodology where learners are more dependent on the teacher (Willis, 1993).

In picture 4 of appendix 1, part D1 and part D2 raise comprehension questions on the reading passage. Part D1 describes a dialogue between a reporter and a student and requires a gap-filling exercise. Students could fill in these blanks quickly based on the details in the reading text. In order to extend D1, more critical questions could be added to the dialogue. For example, "What is the purpose of the exchange visit held by the school? What kinds of students would take part in the exchange visit? What suggestions do you offer to those who will take part in the exchange visit?" These open-ended questions could prompt the student to think from a critical lens and then have a deeper understanding of the passage. At this point, critical literacy is a process where teachers and students are deeply involved (Shor, 1999). In terms of part D2, there is a written report on the educational exchange in the reading passage. The written report adopts the gap-filling form as well, which may seem monotonous. However, part D2 could be adapted into a written or spoken report for the interests of learners, since some students may be good at writing while others tend to show their speaking fluency. Instead of working individually in the original part D2, group work may be more suitable considering the complexity of the task. Students will be given ten or fifteen minutes to prepare for the written or spoken report they choose. After that, the written works could be put up on the blackboard while active learners could share the spoken reports. Both of the reports would be given constructive feedback from teachers. In this process, students' interests and capacities are highly considered, leading to more "motivation and self-investment" (Norton, 1995). What's more, part D3 is designed for students to discuss "why is an exchange visit educational and interesting". This kind of question does not consider that most students may not participate in the exchange visit before. Learners may find it hard to express themselves if there is no relevant experience. In this case, I would advise that the topic of discussion should be turned into "why traveling or studying abroad is meaningful and interesting". The new topic would remind learners of experience living abroad or trigger relevant knowledge even if they have not gone abroad. Therefore, the change will meet one adaptation principle as "personalization" which means drawing on students' lives or exploiting their knowledge to devise tasks (McGrath, 2002). Through the adaptation on the discussion topic, there may be more opportunities for students to share viewpoints and interesting stories.

Furthermore, there could be a supplementary task D4 given enough class time. As shown in picture 2 of appendix 1, the reading passage contains personal statements from Sarah and Eric. Students could be encouraged to create a similar statement or a dialogue at the end of the passage. Such a task could check learners' understanding of the reading text from these scripts and enhance the interaction between the learner and the text (Mishan, 2005). This supplementation here is achieved by devising our own material rather than utilizing published materials (McGrath, 2016).

5. Evaluate and reflect on new materials

After the adaptation and supplementation on part A, part C and part D, there will be an evaluation and reflection on these new tasks. In part A, learners will be exposed to a variety of authentic texts like documentaries and movies. The audio-visual authentic materials provide learners with a richer source of input and have the potential to develop the communicative competence of learners with different levels (Gilmore, 2007). Learners will also find the videos more engaging than the quiet page. However, if the videos chosen contain difficulties related to some vocabulary and cultural knowledge, students may be demotivated (Prodromou, 1996) from the disturbance of understanding. Teachers could try to select materials appropriate for learners and offer help if needed[32-37].

With regard to part C1, there is flexibility in choosing new words and expressions based on individual needs. This change will promote learners autonomy because they can take charge of their vocabulary, leading to intrinsic motivation, which comes from within the individual (Deci & Ryan, 1985). Also, learners could acquire new knowledge from each other's notes on the blackboard rather than depending heavily on teachers. The learner-centered idea is thus implicated. Nevertheless, the task may be hindered with the exception that some learners may not have a dictionary nearby. In this case, teachers may organize some pair work as appropriate. Furthermore, the added exercise following part C2 requires learners to find out more meanings and make sentences themselves, enabling learners to

master more meanings of each word and use the word in real examples. The repetitive emergence of vocabulary in different sentences could enhance input, attracting students' attention and facilitating their learning (Russell, 2012). This method could boost the interaction between the words and the learner and thus more authenticity would be involved. Apart from the benefits of the new task, one of the possible limitations is that weaker learners may lack the ability to write down new sentences. From the weaker learners' perspective, sentence-making exercise may involve complex language and cognitive load (Skehan, 1998). Considering students' English levels and time management, teachers could organize students into groups to finish the task.

In terms of part D1, there will be some critical questions following the previous practice. This part is designed to develop learners from text participants to text analysts who focus on values and power relations in the reading passage (Janks, 2014). After the supplementation, learners could not only grasp the surface meaning as the main idea and details by skimming and scanning but also get to know the deeper meaning by critiquing the text. Then learners could have a chance to know the complete version of the text. In part D2, the gap-filling exercise is turned into a written or spoken report. Students in groups would be required to read the whole text and work out the storyline first. Then they communicate with group members to form the report in their own words. Also, the topic of part D3 is changed to be more suitable and relevant to learners' lives, promoting viewpoint output. In both D2 and D3 task, learners could take advantage of language ability and compensate for each other's weakness in group discussion, where cooperative learning may be set up. Cooperative learning could encourage learners to engage more in the learning process and thereby improve their autonomy (Sousa et al., 2019). However, one difficulty related to the task is that potential conflicts may arise in negotiation and decision-making, commonly seen in group work. To solve this problem, teachers could select a leader with higher English proficiency in each group based on teachers' familiarity with students. The leader will assign the task into smaller ones to every member and control the process, making sure the task quality and completion in a way. Lastly, the added D4 practice requests learners to create a personal comment or dialogue at the end of the passage. This kind of task could exercise students' imagination and language use but take much time in class. If the class time is limited in a specific context, teachers could choose either D3 or D4 to finish. Alternatively, transforming the D4 task as homework could be another choice.

6. Conclusion

Textbook evaluation and design play a crucial role in language teaching both for experienced and novice teachers. In consideration of context analysis and the needs of learners and teachers, an evaluation checklist including external and internal evaluation come into being. After evaluating the English textbook in Guangzhou, China, it can be inferred from the checklist that authenticity in reading tasks is one of the highlighted weaker aspects. In response to this, some adaptation and supplementation on reading tasks are proposed to improve authenticity, such as adding critical questions, converting individual gap-filling into group work report, writing personal statements to the end of the text. Through adapting and supplementing the task, students may be more engaged in the task, contributing to closer interaction between the learner and the task. Finally, authenticity enhancement is realized through students' higher involvement in the new task.

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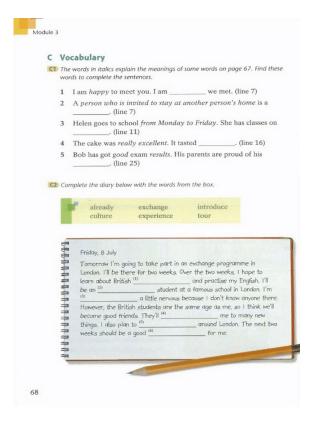
Appendix 1- picture 1



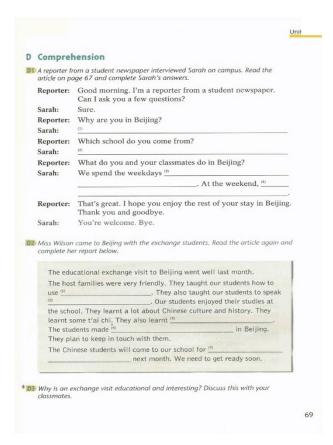
Appendix 1- picture 2



Appendix 1- picture 3



Appendix 1- picture 4



Appendix 2

Appendix 2: A Checklist For Textbook Evaluation				
External Evaluation A. The book in relation to syllabus and curriculum				
It matches to the specifications of the syllabus.		П	П	П
B. Support for teachers				
2. The activities can be exploited fully and can embrace the various				
methodologies in ELT.				
3. There are clear teaching objectives for each unit.				
4. The book is supported efficiently by essentials. (e.g.audio/video				
materials, teacher's book, workbook)				
C. Suitability to learners		•		•
5. It is compatible to the age of the learners.				
6. It is compatible to the needs of the learners.				
7. It is compatible to the interests of the learners.				
8. It is suitable for self-study.				
D. Physical and utilitarian attributes				
9. Its layout is attractive.				
10. It indicates efficient use of text and visuals.				
11. It is durable.				
12. It is cost-effective.				
Internal Evaluation				
A. Language skills				
13. Reading texts are culturally appropriate.				
14. Reading texts contain representatives of language use.				
15. The socio-cultural contexts of the reading texts are retained.				
16. Reading texts have communicative and sociocultural purposes.				
17. Reading texts cover diverse and interesting topics.				
18. Reading activities are balanced between individual response, pair work				
and group work.				
19. The book has appropriate listening practice with well-defined goals.				
20. Listening materials are authentic or close to real language situations.				
21. Speaking activities are developed to initiate meaningful				
communication.				
22. Writing requirements take into consideration learner capabilities.				
B. Language system		1		,
23. The number of new words in each lesson is appropriate to the level.				
24. There is a good distribution (simple to complex) of vocabulary load				
across chapters and the whole book.				
25. Words are efficiently repeated and recycled across the book.				
26. The grammar is contextualized.				
27. Grammar is introduced explicitly and reworked incidentally throughout				
the book.				
28. The pronunciation is learner-friendly with no complex charts.				
C. Tasks		1		1
29. Most of the tasks in the book are interesting.				
30. Task objectives are achievable.				
31. Tasks elicit learners' response/engagement with the text.				
32. Tasks activate learner's knowledge of the target language/culture				
33. Tasks involve purposeful communication between learners				
D. Exercises				
34. Exercises vary in format like gap-filling, multiple choices.				
35. Exercises help students who are under/over-achievers.				
36. Exercises move from simple to complex.				