Strategies for Textbook Selection and Evaluation in Terms of Four Main Skills for EFL Classrooms

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Abstract

Coursebook evaluation is of paramount importance for the reason that efficient selection of textbooks will increase the proficiency of EFL learners in the classroom.There exist lots of studies conducted about textbook evaluation and selection which cover crucial concepts related to choosing the most appropriate coursebook for EFL learners. Therefore it is important to lay store by English language coursebooks to reach a reasonable decision when choosing coursebook. English coursebooks are regarded as of little importance by many EFL teachers to improve students' abilities in language skills, they are rather beneficial if teachers follow important steps when choosing suitable textbooks for EFL classrooms. In this research paper, it is aimed to determine the instructors' views about fulfilling the essential requirements to attain success in EFL classrooms when evaluating coursebooks. In order to select a suitable coursebook it is a necessity to consider criterias that carry vital roles for increasing efficiency in language skills, therefore this research paper provides information about textbook evaluation and selection in terms of language skills for EFL learners as well as highlighting beneficial criterias to render the evaluation and selection process flawless.

Keywords. English coursebooks, selection criteria, EFL classrooms, language skills

Introduction

Ya-ni (2007) proposes that "As a key area in English Language Teaching (ELT), the significance of material design and evaluation has grown steadily. Evaluation is basically a matching process, which concerns matching learners' needs to available solutions." (p.1). This is a statement I agree with , for the reason that it is essential to evaluate the language teaching materials considering the needs of the learners to accomplish an efficient teaching process. Teachers of EFL should be considerate and careful about selecting coursebooks.

Inal (2006) emphasizes this point by saying :

…Within the public school system, teachers are not properly trained on how to choose,adapt, evaluate and use their coursebooks.Teachers need to be trained in a way that promotes effective teaching techniques so that students may benefit from their own learning experiences. Suggested guidelines on choosing coursebooks should cover all possibilities and problems, and the teachers should understand the solutions emphasized in the guidelines (p. 21).

Coursebook selection is a process that needs to be dealt with by language instructors diligently.If it is neglected, inappropriate selection of textbooks can result in deterious effects. As Inal puts it,

Most problems in teaching a foreign language are linked to the coursebook selection process. Once a coursebook is chosen, few efforts are made to evaluate the effectiveness of the book. Subsequently, the need to modify the curriculum is often ignored. The traditional system has done little to encourage the necessary training skills needed for coursebook selection, yet has insisted upon heavy workloads for both students and teachers (p. 21).

There exist many crucial factors useful while choosing the most suitable textbook. A coursebook should be evaluated thoroughly to be used in EFL classrooms. Teachers should always select the textbooks which meet the learner needs adequately. Cunningsworth (1995) acknowledges that it is very important to choose suitable criteria, since assessment will show a result of the textbooks evaluated. In many cases, coursebooks which is sufficient about needs and context are best to provide, the concepts related to flexibility and suitability for adaptation are also important. (p. 5).

A coursebook chosen by teacher includes some advantages for the students. Bierstedt (1955) argues that if a teacher selects a coursebook himself-herself , it is most probable for that book to carry a high quality. Since teachers are educated persons, they know their community and features of it like culture characteristics. Moreover teachers can understand their students and differientate their deficiencies and strengths. (p.173). Therefore, teachers' decisions about choosing coursebooks are reliable in many cases for the reason that teachers are good at determining the best teaching methods and the best coursebook for their students accordingly. Chambers (1995) points out that it is better to choose materials for an ELT class cooperating with as many of users as possible.In this way the feeling of ownership over decision and the wisdom that comes with selection is possible to increase. This kind of selection is much more advantageous than the other types of material and assessment papers selection which are not planned thoroughly. First, it is not unclear. The persons who make decisions get the opportunity of stating their ideas about their criteria and advocating them. Also once they determined their criteria, they know how to prioritize them. In addition, the process of decision making will be easier for it reduce the complexities about thinking. (p.33).

Importance of Coursebooks

It is certain that coursebooks are weighty for language learners, still those books can only be effective as long as they increase students proficiency in foreign language.

For a coursebook to have a desired effect on learners, it is essential for that book to stimulate teacher to make use of it greatly since coursebooks should let teachers reflect on and evaluate their thoughts about teaching and learning through establishing relationship among these factors. James (2001) notes that learner interest is among the main features which render a coursebook fertile, that is to say, productive for students. (p.62). Hutchinson stresses that " We learn a lot when we are enjoying ourselves. Fun is not just an added extra, it is the lifeblood of effective learning." (p.1). Here we understand that if coursebooks do not include activities that do not trigger sufficient enjoyment, it is possible for the students to lose their interests which will hinder their learning. Coursebooks should also give the learner the chance of improving their capabilities of conducting a successful interaction with their friends and teachers which will foster language learning.

Choosing the Right Book for the Class

Deciding on appropriate coursebook for the class is not an easy process at all if some essentials that carry importance for choosing textbooks are ignored. The more the students practice speaking especially through dialogs, the more confident they become in terms of using a foreign language effectively. According to Rivers (1978), we must never forget that our aim is to enable our students to communicate comfortably with the other people, to understand what they say in general and to explain what they themselves want to convey , when we choose learning exercises. (p. 3). Coursebooks should be motivating for learners to practice speaking in foreign

language as much as possible. Teachers should choose coursebooks which include activities beneficial for students in terms of increasing their communication powers indispensable for an efficient learning in EFL classrooms.

In the book titled '*At the chalkface practical techniques in language teaching*', Matthews (1985) provides sufficient information about the importance of teachers' awareness of their teaching situation when selecting suitable coursebooks for their students. (pp. 202- 204). Textbooks mainly carry a very important role since, in most circumstances, they act as a main supply for both teaching and learning process. A great deal of tasks for learning are determined taking the coursebooks into consideration, consequently, textbooks come first in importance to be used by teachers while they cover the syllabus of the year. Since many teachers are busy in daily life, It is difficult for them to find enough time to prepare teaching materials other than coursebooks which proves that prepared teaching materials cannot surpass the coursebooks in terms of efficiency (p.202). Teachers' deciding on a suitable coursebook entails some procedures related to defining their teaching situations. Teachers need to dwell on some important points before choosing a textbook. The objectives included in syllabus should meet the needs in terms of functions, topic, vocabulary and four skills. It is illogical to choose a textbook which consist of overloading materials for the available teaching hours. The age of students is also an important factor in determining the topics appropriate for them. In addition , students` interests are vital as textbooks that do not provoke interest would be of no use. Beside these, if the social and cultural elements used in the textbooks are not familiar to the students, they can be perplexing and it result in students' becoming confused.(p.203)

Matthew (1985) concludes that many textbooks are designed for classses of a few students which may cause difficulty to use effectively in larger classes. It is certain that in a language class, there will be learners of different levels, therefore, textbooks should be applicable for all learners no matter how various their learning levels are by providing them with moderate tasks which should not be too challenging or too easy (p.204).

Need For a Checklist

To evaluate and choose an appropriate textbook, teachers need to use a checklist which is useful for them to detect the most essential features of the elements included in coursebooks in a short time and without facing difficulty. Cunningsworth (1995) expresses this need as follows: "As different criteria will apply in different circumstances , it is best to identify your own priorities and draw up your own checklist." (p.2). When preparing or adapting a check-list, teachers should take necessary procedures, that improve the learners' language abilities in all aspects of language learning, into consideration. Teachers should also try to find reasonable answers to the questions prepared to determine the most suitable textbook for an efficient language learning process. Arnold (1985) lists some of the criterias as follows: general impression, methodology, coverage of grammar, four skills, presentation of new language, accuracy and fluency practice, variety, sexism, availability, price (p.206). A coursebook about which teachers reach a conclusion that it is right for students and applicable in an EFL classroom, should fullfil all the criteria existing in the checklist. That is why use of checklist is so important to decide on which coursebook is best for the students.

Peacock (2008) reporting that each year a surprising number of new textbooks show themselves in EFL market worldwide which result in difficulty in selecting suitable book for the students (p.1) emphasizes the need for checklist.

Selecting Textbooks for EFL Classrooms

Selecting textbooks diligently and with great care considering fundamental needs for an effective teaching and learning process will certainly have considerable contributions for both the teacher and the students in EFL classrooms . If a coursebook selected by teacher includes activities which arouse interest in the students , they will be eager to work on the coursebook and gradually their foreign language using skills will improve. Cross (1995) claims that the goal should be providing the learners with the feeling of achievement and a nice learning atmosphere instead of testing them. (p.163). This feeling help language learners gain self confidence and motivation. Besides, students become enthusiastic about challenging tasks included in a coursebook designed well and they they get more and more proficient in language as they achieve their aims. Monotony result in students losing interest, in order to avoid a situation like that, coursebooks should offer variety. Cross (1995) assumes that it is necessary to make use of imagination and a little struggle to provide large- classess with variety, if its usefulness is realised, classroom atmosphere becomes livelier, participation, motivation levels , and learning accelerates through activities. (p.3).

Evaluating Textbooks for EFL Classrooms

Teachers, when evaluating textbooks, should give priority to the learner needs which is the key factor to equip students well with language skills. Campbell (1972) underlines that "the value of coursebooks as a vital learning tool is universally recognized." (p.7). Yang (2003) indicates that cooperative tasks for learning can help developing coursebooks to motivate the learners to work on tasks with their friends as well as giving them the opportunity of study actively. (p.17). Evaluation of the coursebooks needs great care and analysis should not be completed all at once , otherwise, a coursebook that is, in fact, rather beneficial for the learners, maybe attributed to be of no use. Stevick (1972) asserts that " Sometimes rejection is inevitable , but often it is the result of hasty , or unperceptive or unappreciative examination of the existing book." (p.102).

Teachers should be encouraged to focus on assessing textbooks in detail and choose the best one for EFL learners. Kuzu (2007) acknowledges that it is a requirement to prove the quality of the coursebooks to use in teaching , as a result of this, evaluation and design of the materials used in education gains a considerable importance. A study conducted recently gives us important clues beneficial for design and assessment coursebooks which aim to encourage authors design course materials with more efficient visuals and to assess coursebooks used currently to determine reliable tools to follow when evaluating coursebooks (p.3).

Criteria for Evaluation

Teachers' struggle for evaluation of a coursebook will be in vain if they do not benefit from the criterias that help them choose the most suitable textbook. Cunningsworth (1995) states that, to evaluate a coursebook for its suitability requires assessment of the book with special criterias like learners' aims and background, available supplies and so on. (p.15).

A coursebook should always be evaluated making sure that the language learners get the opportunity of using the skills practically to improve their language abilities. Inal (2006) lists the important criterias as follows: subjects and contents of the tasks' relevance to aims , students' finding the tasks interesting, language relevance to the tasks, variety in the tasks, task authenticity, tasks providing students with training, texts or tasks' increasing the students general

knowledge, cultural sensitivities, the objectives of the coursebooks being compatible with the school's language, learning aims, the school's attitude towards language teaching (p.25).

Organization of Coursebooks

Textbooks should be composed diligently and carefully not to decrease efficiency of teaching-learning process in EFL classrooms. Haynes (2001) proclaims that " People's learning style fall into patterns. Knowing these patterns will help you to write books to suit all readers." (p.47). Consequently, in the same way, a teacher should be careful about choosing coursebooks organized appropriately for the learning styles of their students . Haynes (2001) again notes that, Students' learning show a tendency to begin with easy and structured tasks. (p.59). Coursebooks should not be a burden for the learners, instead, they should be organized so well that students will begin to learn a language through easy tasks and activities and gradually they will face more challenging tasks in the coursebooks,which is an effective technique for EFL learners. Razmjoo (2007) points out that, " the major parts of high school English textbooks are as follows: word study (new words and expressions); reading comprehension: "speak out";"write it down"; "language function" and "pronounciation practice" (p.7).

A well organized coursebook should activate the knowledge of language skills equally by presenting activities relevant to reading, writing, speaking and listening as well as vocabulary pronunciation and grammar. If all those factors mentioned are taken into consideration in a coursebook , proficiency of students will increase. Tomlinson (1998) indicates that it is not very beneficial to iterate the same thing all at once continuously, on the other hand, it is invaluable to allot the repeating process to periods of time for acquisition of language. But we keep on organizing coursebooks into units which depend on s specific language teaching aspect. Although it is known that long term learning requires active engagement we still use texts trivial and neutral for students in the process of reading and listening. (p.).Coursebooks should be organized in a way that, learners do not have to acquire knowledge all at once in a very short time. A teacher should prefer a coursebook which has reasonable goals to make students become successful language learners in EFL classrooms. Williams (1989) argues that " The shortcomings of the older type of integrated course book are that the language of reading texts is highly controlled, the subject matter tends to be rather uninteresting ,and there is insufficient variety of text type" (p.24).Aims should be determined considering all of the learner needs, ignoring even one aspect of the needs can result in decrease in the enthusiasm of the students towards learning a foreign language. Yang (2003) suggests some effective aims to accomplish a successful language learning one of which is that the activity should carry an aim and should make sense, in addition, the activity must be authentic and the concepts taught in the activity must match students' needs in terms of their levels, backgrounds and ages and a variety of activities is required (p.17).

Content of Language in Coursebooks

Language content in coursebook mostly deal with concepts taught rather than the way of teaching of them. To find out how appropriate the material for the learners, necessities of the learners can be assessed within the content of language. Cunningsworth (1995) advocates that, language content in coursebooks should show correlation with the needs of the students (p.31). Stevick (1972) points out that when adapting a book, the aim is to provide students with using language communicatively in contexts and language structure that make sense as much as possible (p.118). EFL learners should be encouraged to use the language in a linguistically communicative way.

Grammar

In a textbook grammar is a crucial language component which should not be devalued by language teachers in EFL classrooms. The learners should be motivated to learn grammar rules through activities rather than giving the rules at first, instead their knowledge should be reinforced in the final step explaining the grammar rules after the students complete doing the grammar activities. Hutchinson (1994) states that if children are expected to use English creatively it is necessary to provide them with a little knowledge of grammar. Children are motivated to figure out the rules of grammar as much as possible (p.2).In this way the knowledge of the grammar rules will be durable on the minds of the learners.

 Grammar parts can be supported with various activities which arouse interests in the learners. Rivers (1978) remarks that " Grammar is learned inductively and through action rather than through deductive grammar rules. Discovering the rules through exercises will be beneficial for the creativity of the learners"(p.23). I strongly agree wit this statement since it is better to 'learn' something instead of 'memorizing' in a plain way. Memorizing is not an effective way of language learning for it can result in forgetting knowledge in a rather short time. In order to avoid this situation, coursebooks should include grammar sections developed to encourage EFL learners to figure out and learn grammar rules through activities which arouse interest and enthusiasm. Arnold (1985) asserts that lots of textbooks organized functionally show a tendency to give little importance to the grammar, this carries risks since teaching learners interaction in writing and speaking requires an adequate accuracy. We should not aim achieving a communication which do not have a relevance with grammatical accuracy (p.204).

Vocabulary

Language learning process cannot be complete if vocabulary is neglected. Cunningsworth (1995) reveals that vocabulary was not as popular beforehand as it is for the last few years. With some knowledge of vocabulary, learners can interact better than with the sole knowledge of structures. Choosing vocabulary is not an easy process. Choosing words with relevance to their frequency is not enough for making sure that those words will be useful in the course (p.38).

 When selecting vocabulary focusing on just one aspect may not work. Besides providing learners with lots of new words, coursebooks can also be rather beneficial for students in that they improve strategies for vocabulary learning. Williams (1989) asserts that different types of texts help learners develop various reading styles and they get to know different text types. Moreover , vocabulary is developed through this technique (p.22). Learners' knowledge of the vocabulary needs to be enriched via extensive reading tasks which should be covered in the coursebooks.

Cunningsworth (1995) observes that good vocabulary development activities include the ones that follow:

 >semantic relations- word groups according to meaning ,synonyms, hyphonyms, opposites,

 >situational relationships- word sets associated with particular situations, eg. Sport, transport, politics

 >collocations- words commonly found in association , eg food and drink, for better or worse, also noun+ predisposition links and phrasal verbs (verb+ particle links), >relationships of

form (often referred to as "word building), eg long, length, lenghten. (p.38). Vocabulary learning should not be neglected in any way.

Four Main Skills

It is better for a teacher to choose coursebooks which include useful activities related to all four skills of language. In the opinion of Hutchinson (1994),It is not sufficient for children to have a sole knowledge of vocabulary and grammar, moreover, making use of that language is a requirement for them. It is essential for them to develop beneficial skills of language (p.2). I strongly agree with this view. A coursebook designed to improve language skills of the student will add quality to the learning process. Hutchinson (1994) claims that,

> Pupils need to develop fluency in using the language. They need to be able to listen and read without worrying about understanding every word. They need to be able to speak and write without having to think about every word and structure they want to use. Pupils need to develop language skills both as language users an as language learners" (p.2).

In coursebooks the activities should be alloted equally for the main skills: writing, reading, speaking and listening during a course. Allen (1972) indicates that "Practice of more than one skill will provide the learners with variety and raise interest in the lesson."

> Arnold (1985) asserts that ,

> …If you teach in a secondary school, you have little or no way of knowing the purposes for which your present students will need to use their school English- or indeed whether they will ever have a reason to use it at all. It seems sensible, therefore to aim to lay a solid foundation in all four skills from which the students can later proceed according to their individual needs. Many elementary textbooks concentrate heavily on oral and aural skills and neglect the development of reading an writing. It shouldn't be forgotten, however, that in all examinations the students are tested on their ability to read and to write. (p.204).

Students should be equipped with all of the language skills with the help of coursebook which do not ignore the importance of language skills.

Reading

Reading is a skill that require diligency and attention. Davies (1995) points out that it requires hard effort for people to learn from a text which is usually neglected in many coursebooks (p.9). Reading texts should be enriched via visuals or activities that catch attention of the students, in coursebooks. Besides, students' language levels should be taken into consideration when selecting coursebooks. If a reading passage is far beyond the level of the learners, it is highly possible to lose interest and concentration for them.Again Davies (1995) notes that systematic analysis of needs, perceptions and background of learners should determine the organization of a reading programme, general prescriptions about reading should be avoided and students should be given the chance of working on a variety of reading types for different purposes (p.166). Reading texts should be enriched through visuals or activities that catch attention of the students. Davies (1995) emphasizes this point by saying, "The reading tasks used in the classroom should be activities which encourage active engagement with and analysis of texts rather than be passive 'testing' exercises." (p.166). In this way improvement in reading becomes inevitable since motivating students to participate in the lessons actively will provide

them with a better learning atmosphere. Activities related to reading texts in the coursebooks should motivate students read the passages critically and deeply. Williams (1989) explores that,

> With each change of topic there is a process of recycling, as the learner will practice similar reading skills involving similar tasks, but upon different texts. As the programme goes on the texts can become more complex in language and in the way they are developed, so that the learner is going through a real progression (p.22).

In the coursebooks the variety of reading texts make the EFL learners more and more proficient.Cunningsworth (1995) believes that students have the chance of reading texts at their own speed and without stress that is sometimes endured in the process of listening and speaking. In reading ,the foreign language learners can maintain their speed which is an important feature , beside these, it is liable to link the reading with the other skills especially writing and listening. There exist textbooks which have reading texts with tape records and expect learners to listen to when they read, this help learners develop their pronounciation and makes the text lively (p. 73).

Writing

Coursebooks should cover writing activities which show variety in their types which help the students use the language they learn actively. Cunningsworth (1995) examines that "The types of writing task given can be quite varied and include writing factual accounts such as a report for a newspaper, filling in grids, writing notes to others, making lists, filling in forms,writing a diary , writing formal and informal letters, summarizing texts,an many others" (p.80).

To make use of a variety of writing styles in the process of teaching a foreign language is extremely effective. As Cunningsworth (1995) advocates, A textbook should include as many different types of writing as possible because of the reason that they show differences in terms of their design and it should be suitable for learners' aims and levels (p.80).

Listening

To become proficient in language, students, in most cases, need to develop learning strategies peculiar to them. For this reason, students with different learning strategies can face difficulties if they are obliged to do activities in the same way everybody does. Individuality of the students should be taken into account in coursebook. EFL learners' having lots of problems related to listening tasks may result from their learning styles' being neglected.Students can be motivated to do listening tasks with their peers collaboratively which give them a chance of being aware of their deficiencies and discovering the best way to become a successful listener. Coursebooks should be organized taking this point into consideration. Djiwandono (2006) affirms that teachers can make use of advantageous sides of different learning styles through informing the students about the aim of cooperative listening which is bringing up different learning strategies in order to complement each other instead of regarding the differences in students' learning styles as obstacle. Therefore, analytic learners can get an idea about types of strategies like guessing, inferring and predicting used by global learners and adopt these strategies to use as well as their own strategies. In the same way, a solitary learner can understand the importance of strategies based on group work via their friends more sociable. The variety in learning styles can be eluded from being a problem if this is applied (p.36).

In the coursebooks, to make listening process effective, students can be asked to do exercises while they are listening to a tape recorder. Hutchinson (1994) notes that when we read

or listen to sth we have an aim. Learners should be provided with a task to do with listening and reading which decrease the difficulty in understanding as it is not necessary to understand everything. It is important for the learners to know what to do before beginning to the task clearly because their listening and reading will improve on the condition that they are given a motive. Consequently, learners should be encouraged to predict firstly what they will hear or read, in this way, they will look for the information besides listening an reading to find out whether their predictions were right (p.3). So, coursebooks should include pre-listening activities as well. Lerarners' knowledge of the world plays a very important role in terms of their comprehension in the process of listening. Cunningsworth (1995) stresses that,

> It is usually impossible to understand much of what is being said because of elliptical references to items of shared information that the outside listener has no knowledge of. We often underestimate the difficulty our students experience in listening to such material, and we should expect the coursebook to give as much background information as possible to make comprehension easier (p.68).

Existence of shared knowledge plays a vital role in this respect.

Speaking

It is better for EFL teachers to choose coursebooks which include activities related to speaking as well as the other skills. Students can be encouraged to speak through dialogues existing in coursebooks. Learners may start a conversation with their friends with the aim of practising the dialogue given. Rivers (1978) emphasizes the importance of dialogues by stating,

> Dialogues, which we shall call conversation- facilitation dialogues, are intended primarily to provide students with a stock of useful expressions (cliches of conversation, frequently used expressions, conventional greetings, expletives and rejoinders) with which to practice conversing , while the teaching of grammar proceeds as a parallel but distinct activity (p.25).

The more the students practice speaking especially through dialogs, the more confident they become in terms of using a foreign language effectively. According to Rivers (1978), we must never forget that our aim is to enable our students to communicate comfortably with the other people, to understand what they say in general and to explain what they themselves want to convey , when we choose learning exercises. (p.3). Coursebooks should motivate the learners to practice speaking in foreign language as much as possible.

Validity Of Contents In Coursebooks

Tomlinson (1998) emphasizes the validity of the coursebooks stating that textbook's showing correlation with deeper concerns about education like the importance of learning skills, younger learners' development of concepts, world knowledge are among determiners of validity of concepts in coursebook . In addition it is important to figure out whether the opportunities are adequate to benefit from when using and practising communication styles and skills, moreover extensive reading should be encouraged for a full exposure to language data (p.54). In order to render a foreign language teaching- learning process efficient, the contents included in a coursebook should meet fundamental needs of the learners. Cunningsworth (1995) acknowledges that " Although the coursebook may not seek to impose a rigid methodology on learners and teachers, nevertheless the way it organizes its material and the kind of activities it promotes can have a profound influence on what happens in the classroom"(p.97).

Authenticity

Authenticity is a rather important factor which should be taken into consideration by EFL teachers when they choose a coursebook.Williams (1989) insists that learners have the chance of benefiting from actual instances of language which make using authentic texts advantageous. If learners are good at working on the text , they experience confidence and success. In addition , if the learners are to face the real language in places other than classroom, to be able to get ready for this situation , inside the classroom use of real language should be encouraged (p.25).

In classroom climates, learners should be motivated to accomplish using real language. Ya- ni (2007) advocates that authentic materials are of great importance in foreign language teaching, language teachers do not use them everyday but those materials show their effectiveness on the objectives and techniques of particular learning situations. (p.28). Coursebooks should be assisted with authentic materials.

Litz (2000) observes that,

> … Since the advent of the 'communicative approach' to language teaching in the 1970's and 80's, there has been a growing school of thought that says that authentic reading, speaking, listening and grammatical language models should be used to teach English language skills as long as the activities or tasks associated with them are also authentic and suitably graded to the level of the students with whom they are being used" (p.30).

authenticity helps EFL learners increase their proficiency in English on a vast scale.

Guidance

There exist crucial points which make a coursebook flawless in terms of EFL teaching on the condition that those points are dealt with carefully. Cunningworth (1995) states that, presentation of language should be controlled, learners should be encouraged to participate in the lessons actively, activities should not be of the same type, Furthermore objective learning atmosphere ought to be provided and errors should not be treated in a negative manner (p.99). Even a coursebook which completely fulfills the needs of the learners as well as the teachers cannot be effective in an EFL course unless the learners are provided with the opportunities required to use a foreign language which brings minds the concept of 'guidance'.

Learner Needs

Cunningsworth (1995) expresses that five important points have been identified by the authors in terms of the needs faced by students who begin to learn a new language with a instructor and a textbook in classroom which are the need to interact efficiently, having a knowledge about the systems of language, struggling for working on tasks a bit far from their levels, taking more responsibility in the process of learning, having an awareness about culture differences (p.97). Beside these factors, practice in EFL courses ought to be regarded as an important need .

Yilmaz (2005) indicates that practice and instruction should complement each other with the aim of accomplishing aims prepared by the teacher. If the courses based heavily on theory, it is possible for the students to lose their interest (p. 268).

Method

Setting and Participants

A questionnaire about coursebook selection strategies was applied to instructors of preparation classes of language teaching institution at Baskent University on May 12, 2008. Thirty English language instructors who teach in preparation classes were the participants of the research study.

Research Instruments

A questionnaire was conducted in this study to gather data from the teachers of English philology preparation classes.The questionnaire included thirty questions. In this questionnaire, firstly, the participants were informed about the purpose of it. They are asked to give a point from '1' to '3' for each criteria according to their importance. The response options were 'not important', 'important' and 'very important'.

Questions from the first to the third, aim to find the degree of importance given by teachers to layout and design of the coursebooks. The fourth , fifth and seventh questions are directed to learn the distribution of the importance in terms of material organization. Questions from eight to ten were asked to learn about the same objective for proficiency in language, eleventh, twelfth and thirteenth questions were asked for reading comprehension; questions fourteen and fifteen for writing; questions from sixteenth to twentieth were for grammar and vocabulary; ones in twenty one and twenty two for listening comprehension; ones from twenty three to twenty seven for oral skills and lastly the questions twenty eight and thirty were asked to reveal the responses given by English language instructors for exams.

Data Analysis Procedures

This study examined how teachers in philology of English language department at Baskent University perceive the criterias before selecting an appropriate coursebook for EFL learners. The aim of the study is to assess the importance of criterias that need to be followed by EFL teachers.The study addressed the following question:

Before choosing a coursebook what are the most important criteria for EFL teachers or which criterias are of little or no use for them in terms of lay-out / design materia organization, language proficiency, reading comprehension,writing, grammar and vocabulary, listening comprehension, oral skills,content and exam practice.

Results

The results obtained from the analysis of data are presented in percentage in the tables below. Each question will be discussed elaborately in this part of the study.

Table 1. *Layout and design in the coursebooks*

Statement	Not important	Important	Very important
1) appropriateness of layout and design for students	-	43.5%	56.5%
2) pictures' being clear and interesting	16.5%	60%	23.5%
3) pictures serving their aim	-	40%	60%

Considering the three criteria, the majority of EFL teachers regard the appropriateness of layout and design and pictures' serving their aim as 'very important' whereas this is not the case when we see the percentage of the responses given for the criteria which is 'pictures' being clear and attractive ." Table 1 indicates that , although second criteria is perceived as 'important' by many participants, a minority of teachers (16.5%) thinks it is not important at all

Table 2. *Material Organization*

Statement	Not important	Important	Very important
4) materials being clearly organised	-	20%	80%
5) materials' providing a balance and variety of activities	-	26.5%	73.5%
6) clear section headings,indexes, vocabulary lists and other methods of making the material	-	20%	80%
7) sufficient supporting materials (e.g. recordings) that accompany the textbook		26.5%	63.5%

Table 2 shows that while distribution of the percentage of the responses given by the participants are approximately equal, coursebooks' including clear section headings,indexes, vocabulary lists and other methods of making the material organisation student and teacher friendly gets the highest percentage, 80%, as being 'very important'.

Table 3. *Language Proficiency*

Statement	Not important	Important	Very important
8)appropriateness of language proficiency for the students	-	13.5%	86.5%
9) tasks' being too difficult at the beginning of the book	-	26.5%	73.5%
10) progression of "new" language being appropriate for the students	-	16.5%	83.5%

According to the results in Table 3, there is nobody among participants who views the criterias asked about language proficiency in coursebooks as 'not important'. On the other hand, the eight criteria is perceived as the most important on efor EFL teachers among others.

Table 4. *Reading Comprehension*

Statement	Not important	Important	Very important
11) textbooks' developing reading skills and strategies (e.g. skimming and scanning), and not	-	30%	70%
12) reading texts being authentic (orauthentic-like) and up-to-date	30%	30%	40%
13) texts being interesting and thought provoking	-	26.5%	73.5%

Table 4 indicates that, responses given the criterias eleven and thirteen (11) textbooks' developing reading skills and strategies (e.g. skimming and scanning), and not just the ability to answer reading comprehension questions and 13) texts being interesting and thought provoking) are very close to each other, 26.5% and 30% percentage of participants regarded those two criteria as 'important' and 70% - 73% responded for 'very important" . When it comes to the criteria twelve which is 'reading texts being authentic (orauthentic-like) and up-to-date' there is not much difference in the responses given by EFL teachers in terms of their level of importance which shows that this criteria do not carry a vital role while selecting a coursebook

Table 5. *Writing*

Statement	Not important	Important	Very important
14) textbooks' giving practice in using language appropriate to, say, a transactional letter, a composition, a narrative on all the different types of topics and language functions	-	43.5%	56.5%
15) providing models of different types of written texts	-	36.5%	63.5%

When we examine the table 5, we see that nearly half of participants support the statements ,fourteen and fifteen, which recommend providing students with a variety of written texts to encourage practice.

Table 6. *Grammar and Vocabulary*

Statement	Not important	Important	Very important
16) books' covering the major grammar areas and essential vocabulary	-	23.5%	76.5%
17) books' focusing attention on potential difficulty areas and common errors	-	26.5%	73.5%
18)providing enough exercises revising grammar and vocabulary	-	30%	70%
19) grammar and vocabulary exercises' providing students with the meaningful context?	-	33.5%	66.5%
20) grammar and vocabulary being practised in an interesting way	-	36.5%	63.5%

According to the table 6 the statement sixteen receives the highest importance,76.5% , by teachers of EFL when compared to the other statements included in the table and especially with the last one, 63.5%, it can be inferred from the results of percentages that in coursebooks it is more important to cover major grammar areas and essential vocabulary than their being practiced in a way that arouse interest in the students.

Table 7. *Listening*

Statement	Not important	Important	Very important
21) technical quality of the recordings	-	43.5%	56.5%
22)listening comprehension exercises' teaching how to extract the main points of information from the	-	30%	70%

Table 7 indicates that when choosing a suitable coursebook, listening comprehension exercises' teaching how to extract the main points of information from the text is more important for EFL teachers when compared to the other statement related to the technical quality of the recordings.

Table 8. *Oral Skills*

Statement	Not important	Important	Very important
23) providing the students with the sufficient speaking practice in expressing their personal views	-	23.5%	76.5%
24)providing sufficient communicative practice, for example, through role- play, pair work or group	16.5%	33.5%	50%
25)speaking practices' being interesting and motivating for students	-	16.5%	83.5%
26)book's teaching everyday English in real-life situations	20%	36.5%	43.5%
27)paying attention to pronunciation in coursebooks	23.5%	36.5%	40%

In the table 8, Although we see that a slight number of EFL teachers consider the statements "twenty four (6.5%) , twenty six(20%) and twenty seven (23.5%) as being 'not important', their responses for the option 'very important' entails most of the percentage with the twenty fifth criteria being perceived as the most important one by most of the participants.

Table 9. *Content in Coursebooks*

Statement	Not important	Important	Very important
28) appropriateness of the materials in the book for your students' age, background, needs and interests	-	76.5%	23.5%
29) instructions and explanations' being simple and explicit	-	23.5%	76.5%
30)inclusion of exam-like exercises in coursebook	43.5%	36.5%	20%

As can be inferred from the table 9, teachers of English give great importance to the statement related to instructions and explanations' being simple and explicit in coursebooks, participants view this statement as being 'important' with a percentage of 76.5% ; and as 'very important' with 23.5% percentage. When we compare this statement with the one in 'twenty nine' the situation for the distribution of response percentages is just opposite which proves that appropriateness of the materials in the book for student's age,background, needs and interests are not perceived as of paramount importance by teachers. Apart from these, the thirtieth and the last statement, 'inclusion of exam-like exercises in coursebook', unlike the previous ones are regarded as being 'not important' by majority of the EFL teachers if we examine the distribution of percentages: '43.5%' for 'not important'; 36.5% for 'important' and responses of a percentage of 20% are given for the option 'very important'.

Discussion

As a result it can be deduced from the results of the questionnaire that EFL instructors,when choosing a suitable coursebook for their students, regards the following criteria as being most crucial which are; pictures serving their aim, clear section headings, indexes, vocabulary lists and other methods of making the material organisation student and teacher friendly,materials being organised clearly, appropriateness of language proficiency for the students, texts being interesting and thought provoking, providing models of different types of written texts, books' covering the major grammar areas and essential vocabulary, listening comprehension exercises' teaching how to extract the main points of information from the text, speaking practice being interesting and motivating for students,instructions and explanations' being simple and explicit.

Stated in the article of Razmjoo (2007), Richards adapts several important strategies beneficial in language teaching as follows:

*Create opportunities for communication, interaction and negotiation of meaning through activities such as information sharing, problem solving and role play
*Provide opportunities for learners to experiment and try out what they know
*Provide opportunities for learners to develop both accuracy and fluency
*Link the different skills of speaking, reading, listening, and writing
*Link the learning of grammar to communicative tasks
*Choose content that relates to students' lives and interests
*Encourage students to personalize learning by applying what they have learned to their own lives (p.9).

When we examine the strategies mentioned above, it becomes much more clear that an effective language learning-teaching process cannot be accomplished if they are neglected by EFL teachers. Those strategies reveal a considerable degree of correlation with the criteria found as being most crucial to be followed while selecting coursebooks according to the verified results of analysis in questionnaire conducted. As long as these strategies are adopted as being fundamental by teachers, they will get rid of the liability of making inappropriate judgements when selecting coursebooks.

Conclusion and Suggestions

This study was conducted to figure out the features crucial to be considered by English language teachers when trying to select the most suitable coursebook for their students.

In the first part, information about choosing a proper coursebook and its importance for learners in EFL classrooms, main contributions supplied by textbook selection, evaluation process which includes useful criterias and goals to follow as well as information about organization of coursebooks were presented respectively. Next, language content and four main skills besides validity of contents in coursebooks were presented. In the following parts, a method, analysis and results of it were provided.

According to the overall results, a teacher should not choose a coursebook without evaluating it thoroughly for the rason that neglecting the important criterias results in decreasing the success of EFL learners. This result proves the how important a coursebook for EFL learners as long as it is selected and evaluated appropriately according to the criterias mentioned previously, therefore a suitable coursebook will certainly make students skillful in using foreign language. We can understand clearly that success will be inevitable when we dwell on the perfect benefits brought by a textbook chosen appropriately.

All in all, it can be said that, textbook evaluation and selection should be a concept that needs to be given diligency and attention by teachers of EFL to accomplish choosing the most suitable coursebook for their students.

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