

Assessment on english for cambodian textbook uses



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The fall of the Pol Pot regime in 1979 contributed to a new step toward introducing new foreign languages-Vietnamese, and Russian, in Cambodian education system. However, at the end of cold war in late 1989, French and English were reintroduced once again at lower secondary school education after a long period of prohibition of teaching the two languages toward the end of Lon Nol regime in 1975 (Igawa, 2008). Although French and English have been taught ever since that time, English has become the first foreign language owing to the fact that there has been a switching allocation of language resources from French to English (Clayton, 2006).

Since English becomes more and more influential language in Cambodia, high attention has been drawn to make this language more and more communicable among school girls and boys at basic education level from grade 7 to grade 12. Meanwhile, the main the purpose of Lower Secondary School (LSS) is to have students fully participate in the society and become a productive citizen. In this regard, the objective of teaching foreign language at that level is set to serve basic communicative competence for the students (MoYES, 2004).

To serve the above objective, in Lower and Upper Secondary school levels from grade 7 to grade 12, MoEYS employs the book series named English for Cambodia to teach students, which was initially piloted in 1996-1997 academic year (MoEYS, 1999). Before the publication of English for Cambodia (EFC) series, many textbook series such as Headway, English for Today, and streamline, to name but a few, were utilized to teach Cambodian Secondary School students. Shortly after several projects had been conducted to develop an appropriate English textbook for Cambodia, EFC <https://assignbuster.com/assessment-on-english-for-cambodian-textbook-uses/>

textbook series were published with six levels in which one level is confined for the whole academic year of each grade at both Lower and Upper Secondary schools in Cambodia (Vira, 2002).

In grade 7, students are to take the first level of the book named “ English for Cambodia: Book 1”. The book is written in English including the explanatory part in the first section. The textbook content is organized on the grammar basis containing a number of chapters which each is subdivided into 4 or 3 units to explain the target grammar, some drills using the grammar, short dialogues with questions to check for comprehension, and reading texts. From the content, each chapter subsequently orientates students towards communicative goal (MoEYS, 1999).

English for Cambodia, book one, was developed in forms of teacher’s guide and student book in respect to MoEYS Textbook Master Plan (1996) and cooperated with Cambodian research institutions. This textbook was designed on the basis of MoEYS English Syllabus for grade 7 students and accompanied by the teaching methodology developed by teacher trainers during training course for Lower Secondary English trainees. In particular, the main features of teaching methodology in this book is characterized as: enhancing 4 language skill practices namely listening, speaking, reading, and writing; practicing grammatical structure and vocabulary and introducing systematic and appropriate means of communicative language function; various effective teaching and learning technique presented in each unit; and regular interaction between students and teachers (MoEYS, 1999).

1. 2 Research Problem

Three tables below show that teaching English is started at lower secondary school from grade 7. This means that from grade 1 to grade 6 Cambodian students who solely take primary education at state schools are not familiar with any of Basic English Alphabets.

Table1: (Curriculum for grade 1-3)

Table2: (Curriculum for grade 4-6)

Table3: (Curriculum for grade 7-9)

(MoEYS, 2004)

On the other hand, from observation on teachers and students, the majority of them seem to be out of their interests in the learning and teaching English due to the fact that content of textbook does not suit well with students' language learning ability. As demonstrated in three tables above, teaching foreign language begins in grade 7. However, the textbook that is used for grade 7 students tends to be higher in language introduction than real students' language learning abilities are. For instance, in the first chapter of ECF1 textbook, it begins with short dialogue and straight away gets students to introduce themselves to their friends in the classroom (English for Cambodia: Book1, chpt: 1). This significantly drives grade 7 students' attention away from learning English at school. Paul Morris suggested that the best criteria for content selection shall respect to learners' ability. However, this criterion is not carefully considered (Morris, 1996).

Particularly, Cunningsworth (1995) proposed that best criteria for selecting a good textbook is to analyze if the textbook content responds to learners' needs and also the objective of language program (Cited in Richards, 2001). In this regard, there comes the question, “ Does English for Cambodia book 1 fit well with and correspond to grade 7 students' needs and their learning abilities?”

1. 3 Objectives of the Study (Research objectives)

To refine the current EFC textbook content, this study aims at evaluating both strengths and weaknesses of the existing textbook and shed light on how to improve the textbook contents by employing some theories of textbook evaluation from previous studies abroad to build up logical frameworks for the research findings.

Moreover, this study will compare textbook content used in Cambodian lower secondary school to some other English textbooks used in some other private institutions-whether the textbooks contain the element of communicative language teaching objective set by the Cambodian Ministry of Education. In this regard, the refined qualities of textbook can be developed to help grade 7 students who learn English to improve their language performance in Cambodian high schools.

1. 4 Research Questions

What are the strengths and weaknesses of EFC 1 textbook perceived by teachers and students in grade 7 English classes?

Are there any significant differences of English textbook content used in Cambodian secondary school and those used in private schools?

1. 5 Hypotheses

Strengths and weaknesses of EFC 1 textbook are perceived by teachers and students in grade 7 English classes.

There are significant differences of English textbook contents used in Cambodian secondary school and those used in private schools.

1. 6 Significance of the Study

This study will contribute to establishing guideline for grade 7 textbook review aiming at enhancing qualities of the existing EFC textbook series. This study will serve as a tool to facilitate grade 7 students with appropriate learning English as second language materials at Cambodian lower secondary school. The result from this study will offer recommendation to curriculum developer to reconsider the current textbook content in the view to making it relevant to the Cambodian grade 7 students and adherent to general objectives of foreign language teaching curriculum set by the Ministry of Education, Youth, and Sports in Cambodia.

1. 7 Definition of Key Terms

The assessment on EFC1 textbook will be done through examining the internal features and external features of the book. The term internal features refer to physical appearance, layout, pictures, and printing quality, while external features specify the language contents and skill development of the book.

1. 8 Proposed Chapter Organization

This research study is organized in five chapters. Chapter 1 is introduction dealing with background information of the study, problem statement, research objective, research question, significance of the study, and proposed chapter organization.

Chapter 2 is literature review which makes use of many studies oversea to construct a logical framework for textbook evaluation. This review of literature will lead to structural features of textbook evaluation consisting of internal and external features, and draw up some characteristics to achieve the goal of communicative language teaching.

Chapter 3 is research methodology which deal with research design, instruments for data collection, setting, data collection procedures, plan for data analysis, ethical considerations, and limitation of the study.

Chapter 4, finding and discussion, will present the findings related to the strengths and weaknesses of EFC1 textbook, and pose recommendation for textbook review to make it an appropriate material for grade 7 students in Cambodian lower secondary school.

Chapter 5 is conclusion.

CHAPTER 2:

LITERATURE REVIEW

Since there are limited previous studies concerning textbook evaluation in Cambodian context, this study will base largely on related studies oversea to draw the theoretical framework to textbook assessment. And the review of <https://assignbuster.com/assessment-on-english-for-cambodian-textbook-uses/>

literature begins with the description of general features of textbook evaluation, and is followed by textbook content evaluation for communicative purposes, related study in EFC textbook evaluation, and finally conclusion.

2. 1 General Feature of Textbook Design Evaluation

Textbooks are teaching materials generally used in many teaching programs. In order to measure the strengths and weaknesses of any textbooks used in Second Language Teaching program many criteria have been set to carry out the framework of evaluation. In 1982, David William in his position as Senior Lecturer and the head of Language Art Section at Ahmadu Bello University of Nigeria proposed the evaluative scheme through his work: *Developing Criteria for Textbook Evaluation*. His evaluative scheme is based on four criteria namely linguistic, pedagogical, general, and technical principles. These principles provide up-to-date teaching methodology to teachers, especially those whose native languages are not English, to benefit from appropriate guidelines introduced by a particularly chosen textbook. Moreover, the needs of second language learners shall be carefully considered especially when pupils in the same class have many different backgrounds of English capacity. What's more, introducing vocabulary and grammar shall be conducted in respect to students' socio-cultural norms so as to relate students' native language with the introduced target language. As the result of these principles, David William suggested a checklist in which ESL textbook should be included such as guideline for teaching language items and skills, supplementary materials for pronunciation, provision of variable techniques for teaching grammar and

vocabulary, guideline for teaching reading comprehension and writing, and technical aspects of language presentation textbook should have such as appropriate pictures, diagrams, table... (William, 1983)

Cunningworth (1995), on the other hand, proposed four criteria for textbook evaluation. First, textbook should correspond to the need of learners and fit well with the aims and objectives of the programs. Secondly, textbook shall shape students learning purposes for effective language learning outcome. Thirdly, they should facilitate students with learning process, hence increasing a good flow of learning-teaching activities. Fourth, textbooks should serve as a supporting tool to accommodate students' learning and target language. In addition, Cunningsworth also recommended a checklist for textbook evaluation which bases on 9 categories: aims and approaches, design and organization, language content, skills, topic, methodology, teacher's guide, and practical consideration (Cited in Richards, 2001).

Another systematic evaluation proposed by Byrd (2000) also recommended practical textbook analysis before putting it into use for English class. He addressed the three fits that can be the keys to assessing an effective textbook use in general: the Fit between curriculum and text, the Fit between students and text, and the Fit between teacher and text. The first fit analyzed the consistency between curriculum set and materials used in order to reach the commonly achievable goals. The second fit served as a link between students' needs and textbook. For this purpose, textbook should combine three key elements including content explanation, examples, and exercise or tasks. The three keys should be of students' interest and use, of appropriateness to target students to be explained, and <https://assignbuster.com/assessment-on-english-for-cambodian-textbook-uses/>

of help in explaining to them about what they need to know in order to learn. More, different kinds of students should get benefit from varied activities the book presents in order to meet their own needs. And of course, to enhance the three key elements textbook should employ physical make up including graphics, arts, print size, as well as attractive illustration. Last but not least, the third fit provides benefit to teachers in which he/she can make use the teaching textbook to help them solve problem related to teaching language within their classrooms. From the textbook teachers should be equipped with guidelines, extra materials, activities, and methods to extend their language teaching in their assigned classroom (cited in Celce-Murcia, 2001).

Although no textbook is perfect in language teaching class, there are universal characteristics of textbook that can be used as format for textbook reviews. In a journal article by Hansan Asary and Esmat (2002), they drew up universal features of textbook analysis by selecting 10 ESL/EFL textbook evaluation schemes and 10 ESL/EFL reviews as collections to develop their study. From their analysis, the authors come up with universal characteristics of EFL/ESL textbooks which are outlined as: 1) approach which is related to theory of nature of language and learning; 2) content presentation referring to purpose and objective as well as sequences of presentation and consideration on students part as well as teaching syllabus; 3) physical make-up which refers to the appropriate layout, pictures, and publishing quality; and 4) administrative concern which involves cultural and social aspects of the texts (Ansary & Babii, 2002).

To assess the quality of textbook of grade 6 English Language class in Saudi Arabia, Abdulrahman Ali M. Alamri (2008) conducted one research study to <https://assignbuster.com/assessment-on-english-for-cambodian-textbook-uses/>

evaluate the newly published textbook, named Sixth Grade English Language, which was used in Saudi Boys' Schools. The selected criteria to evaluate the textbook in question was similar to what have been mentioned in the above theories of textbook evaluation including the general appearance, design and illustration, accompanying materials, objectives, topic appropriateness, learning components, socio-cultural contexts, skills development, teachability, flexibility, teaching methods, and practice and testing. The result from this study showed that Sixth Grade English Language Text really satisfied all 104 participants, but there were some comments suggested by the author in order to improve quality of textbook include adding appropriate glossary to facilitate teachers and learners, incorporating attractive illustration to encourage more creativity, encouraging more critical thinking through interesting topics, introducing more authentic themes to get students more active in class, including life-like interaction to encourage more flexibility of language practices, and finally providing more effective teaching methods that make students more communicative in class (Abdulrhman, 2008).

2. 2 Textbook Content for Communicative Goals

In general principle, Communicative Language Teaching consists of two key components. The first component is based on the idea that language is not solely pieces of grammars, but is involved with language functions.

Therefore, students should learn how to use language appropriately in a context of (formal, informal, tentative, technical...) writing and speaking.

Second component stems from the idea that learning language can take place only if students have adequate chance to expose to language use

(Compiled by Rath Hok, 2002). In this regard, textbook shall integrate skill development, language function, and appropriate topic for authentic language use (Cunningsworth, 1995; Sharma, 2005; Madhi, 2006; Abdulranhman, 2008)

To assess if textbooks serve as communicative language teaching tools in junior high school of Japan, one research study conducted in Japan by Bal Krishna Sharma (2005) attempted to analyze textbooks series used in Japanese junior high school on two broad criteria: physical feature and internal feature. From internal feature, Bal Krishna Sharma posted criticism on textbook design for Japanese junior high school that the textbook emphasized more on grammar, hence lacking of communication skills, various tasks and activities (Sharma, 2005).

Similarly, in order for the textbook content become more communicative in lower secondary school, textbook content shall emphasize more on communicative role of language rather than more on structural methods. In a research report conducted in 2006 by Mahdi Dahmardeh in an effort to expand the constructive change in communicative textbook design in Iranian Lower Secondary school and to cater for teachers' and students' needs and expectation, he analyzed the current textbook use in Iran by categorizing it into 7 aspects: teaching vocabulary, reading comprehension, speaking out and write it down, language function, pronunciation practice, teaching listening and writing, and teaching culture. From these categories the author found that Iranian textbook design for lower secondary school cannot meet learners' and teachers' needs owing to the fact that the textbook still

emphasized more on structural methods and ignored communicative roles of language (Madhi, 2006).

Social cultural aspect of language also plays important role in extending the authentic language function. In Cunningsworth checklist of textbook evaluation, topic selection for textbook design shall be various to expand student's awareness and experiences, meet the students' language level, and represent the socio-cultural context which related to students way of life (cited in Richards, 2001). Moreover, Abdulranhman (2008) also stressed the importance of socio-cultural aspect which is familiar by students. Students are likely to instill positive attitude with the language they learn. In this case the term lingua franca starts to take its effect in teaching language, which means that language is adopted widely to make its communicable among the speakers whose native languages are different from each other. It is, therefore, concluded that foreign language taught in a particular country shall insure its variety to make it learnable and teachable.

2. 3 EFC textbook evaluation in Cambodian Secondary School

Though there have not been many studies concerning Cambodian textbook evaluation, Neau Vira (2002) conducted his study on English Language Teaching in Cambodian Secondary school in his effort to seek significant domain in renovating successful teaching profession. However, one section of his study covered EFC textbook evaluation which he sought the answer to the quality of EFC textbook through questionnaire, and in-person interview. 39 participants were selected to express their judgments on the currently used textbook quality. Surprisingly, all the respondents expressed their

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satisfaction on the EFC textbook because this textbook series was interesting, appropriate to students' levels, relevant to Cambodian daily lives, and various in activities for students to practice in their class (Vira, 2002).

2. 4 Theoretical Framework

From frameworks found in the above articles, it can be concluded that two broad criteria should be categorized to measure the strengths and weaknesses of EFC textbooks: external features and internal features.

External features refer specifically to physical make-up of textbook including font size, layout, quality of printing, weight and size, and illustration. On the other hand, internal features take underlying teaching approach and language content into consideration. The latter features examine the language skills, presentation of grammar and vocabulary, language function, teachable language activities, teaching methods and objectives, and topic appropriateness.

Moreover, the previous finding concerning EFC Textbook evaluation cannot cover broad array of textbook evaluation criteria mentioned above.

Therefore, further study need to be analyzed to assure more valid result.

CHAPTER 3:

METHODOLOGY

3. 1 Research Design

To discover general perceptions of teachers and students on the strengths and weaknesses of EFC textbook, as well as comparing EFC textbook content with those of textbooks used in private language school, this study will use <https://assignbuster.com/assessment-on-english-for-cambodian-textbook-uses/>

quantitative method. Since the purpose of this study intends to assess the perception of students and teachers on strengths and weaknesses of textbook contents in question, this type of research is classified as survey research (Gay, Geoffrey, & Peter, 2009). In this regard, a number of teachers and students will be allowed to voice their personal judgment on the targeted areas of textbook qualities the study focuses on.

3. 2 Research Instrument

This research study will employ checklists of textbook evaluation from previous studies. These checklists are incorporated into a single questionnaire which categorized into 2 major areas of textbook evaluation: internal and external qualities.

In external quality evaluation, 7 items of statements will be included to measure overall appearance of textbook design such as quality of cover page, pictures, table of contents, layout, and printing. Anyway, to assess external quality, 20 items of statements under the internal quality are used to get general perceptions of teachers and students on textbooks' aims and objectives, content organization, language content, skills, topics, and teaching methodology.

All items in questionnaire are organized in Likert-like scale in which all participants are to respond to a number of statements on scale values ranking from: 1) strongly agree, 2) disagree, 3) agree, and 4) strongly agree.

In addition, to ensure clear content of questions and to be easily answerable by participants, questionnaire needs to be translated into Khmer to suit

grade 7 students learning competence, while teacher can answer the questionnaire with their own choice in Khmer or in English version.

Moreover, pilot testing needs to be carried out one month before the real survey begins to guarantee the validity and reliability of the questionnaire. From this pilot testing, it can help improve questionnaire contents and its prospective score results.

3. 3 Population and Sample

Site of this study is small, which cover only on the target area of Phnom Penh where a number of both state and private schools are located. Questionnaire will be used as a survey to get personal judgment from target population of 60 Grade 7 students and 40 teachers of English who teach them in 10 different secondary schools. Other 20 teachers from 5 different private language schools will be also invited to answer the questions related to the features of beginner textbook content used in their institutions.

The sampling design for this population follows clustering procedure in which 60 students and 40 teachers will be randomly selected from 10 secondary schools where EFC1 textbooks are used in Phnom Penh, and 5 private language schools where their particularly chosen textbooks are used. First among each 10 secondary schools, all number of grade 7 classes are selected. Then only 2 or 3 classes will be selected for the questionnaire participation. Teachers who teach in those classes are asked for answering the questionnaires. Meanwhile, around 6 to 10 students of those teachers' classes are also selected to answer the questionnaires.

For private language schools, all number of beginner classes are selected. Then only 1 or 2 teachers who teach beginner classes are requested for their participation.

3. 4 Description of Variables Derived from the Research Tools

EFC textbook content is judged through the teachers' and students' perception with questionnaires. The participants involved will rate a series of statements in scale value ranking from number one (the most disagree) to number four (the most agree).

To seek the answer to the first question of this research, students' and teachers' perception on strengths and weakness of textbook contents are assessed with each statement in the questionnaire. Item 1 to 7 under external quality section are used to evaluate the overall textbook appearances, while item 1 to 20 under internal quality section are used to evaluate textbook content organization, language content, skills, topics, and teaching methodology.

To find the differences of textbook contents employed by some private schools and those used in Cambodian secondary school, the answers from questionnaires that will have been given by all participants are compared and contrasted to discover commonalities and differences of all textbook contents being assessed.

Therefore, from the survey, if higher percentage of participants rate on the higher scale of each statement, this will tell that textbook contents being assessed have their strengths. In contrast, if higher percentage of

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participants rate on the lower scale, it will interpret that textbook contents have their weaknesses.

3. 5 Data Collection Procedure

In order to have access to the target population, permission need to be sought from school principles for a number of available grade 7 teachers and students at each school. After having accessibility to the school, all grade 7 classes will be selected. But we need to limit the number of students to get involved in answering the questionnaires. This means that only roughly 2 to 3 students that represent the whole class will be chosen to answer the questions.

Meanwhile, to assess the qualities of textbook used in private language schools, permission is also sought for one beginner teacher from several private schools. This means that 5 different textbooks from 5 different private schools will be assessed.

Additionally, the detail explanation needs to be made at the target areas just in case the participants have any misunderstanding over the questions. We will keep doing with this procedure until 25 target participants can be assessed.

3. 6 Plan for Data Analysis

Data analysis is conducted in the follow steps:

First step: collect all answers from the participants involved in answering the distributed questionnaires.

Second step: analyze respondents' answers if their answer is bias or non-bias on the ground of textbook contents.

Third step: prepare for data entry

Fourth step: the data will be analyzed using SPSS to see the percentage of respondents who agree or disagree on the EFC 1 textbook design quality.

Fifth step: present the result and discussion.

3. 7 Ethical Consideration

All participants will be informed in advance that schools', teachers', and students' names will not be revealed to ensure validity and reliability of their answers. Before conducting the survey, the participants need to be ascertained that their answers do not harmfully affects their current teaching careers, their school reputations, or students learning process. The participants should be clearly informed that their answers will be kept confidential and will not be used for other purposes. All data collected will be used for the purpose of this research finding only. Moreover, their contribution of answers will be worthwhile to the development of effective teaching materials for beginner language learners.

3. 8 Limitation

This study will target at the population in Phnom Penh where all selected private language schools and public high school are located. With time and financial limit this research can not reach the target population in the rural area, hence having difficulty getting the answer that represent the whole country demand for EFC 1 textbook evaluation as needed.