

## CHAPTER ONE

### Preliminaries

#### 1.1 Introduction

The role of textbooks in the realm of English Language Teaching (ELT) is a controversial issue. Some issues of controversy are

- whether these commercially-prepared materials meet the needs and preferences of the teachers and students who are using them,
- whether they foster and allow room for teachers' and students' innovation in teaching and learning processes,
- whether the language used in them is authentic and appropriate for the students,
- whether the layout, design, organization and progression of materials are clear, appropriate and effective,
- whether their subject matter and content is interesting, challenging, motivating and responsive to the students' needs,
- whether the tasks and activities in them are practical and methodologically valid, and
- whether gender, social classes and cultural components in them are presented appropriately and without any negative stereotypes.

Some ELT researchers and practitioners such as Riazi (2003) considered textbooks “the next important factor in the second/foreign language classroom after the teacher” (p.52). However, some others such as Block (1991) supported using teacher-made materials.

While the debates over advantages and disadvantages of using textbooks in TESL/TEFL classrooms continue, using them still maintains popularity and demands for

them continue to grow. Therefore, textbook evaluation is of great importance for the managerial and teaching staff of different language teaching institutions or organizations. It helps them to discriminate between all available textbooks on the market and to select the most appropriate ones for their specific teaching and learning context.

Textbook evaluators should either select and apply the most appropriate criteria or checklists from those previously proposed/published or develop their own criteria. In ESP courses learners' specific reasons for learning, needs and interests are the basis of making all decisions. Therefore, recognizing those needs is essential in developing some criteria to evaluate the effectiveness and usefulness of the teaching and learning materials used in these courses. According to Johnson (1989) learners' language needs are the language components that a group of learners from a certain discipline should know and the language skills they should be equipped with to function effectively in that discipline.

The present study is evaluation and comparison of two ESP textbooks available on Iranian market for teaching English to the students of medicine. This evaluative study is performed according to teachers' and students' views and the students' needs analysis. The researcher decided to evaluate and compare *Medical Terminology: An Illustrated Guide* (MT) which is a first Canadian edition with *English For the Students of Medicine II* (ESM)<sup>1</sup> which is an Iranian edition, for two reasons: first, to investigate the extent to which the textbooks address the students' specific needs and the teacher's expectations in Zanjan Medical Sciences University; second, to give more insights into the textbooks' strengths and weaknesses and make suggestions for their improvements.

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<sup>1</sup> MT and ESM are abbreviations used by the researcher for the names of the books

## 1.2 Significance of the Study

Textbook evaluation is an essential and challenging task that language teaching curriculum, course designers, institutions and teachers should undertake because it will help them make right decisions in selecting the most appropriate textbooks among those available on the market. Garinger (2002) asserts the importance of such decisions:

Decisions related to textbook selection will affect teachers, students, and the overall classroom dynamic. It is probably one of the most important decisions facing ESL educators. The use of an evaluation procedure or checklist can lead to a more systematic and thorough examination of potential textbooks and to enhanced outcomes for learners, instructors, and administrators. (Conclusion section, ¶1)

Textbook evaluation can also make language teachers aware of a textbook's weaknesses and strengths so that they can decide whether to make use of supplementary materials in some parts or to modify or eliminate some other parts. As Cunningsworth (1995) asserts, one of the main reasons for materials evaluation is "to identify particular strengths and weaknesses in coursebooks already in use, so that optimum use can be made of their strong points, whilst their weaker areas can be strengthened through adoption or by substituting materials from other books" (p. 14).

In addition, the evaluative criteria developed by textbook evaluators and the results of evaluative practices and research activities may enhance the material developers' insights into the type of materials that will most likely meet the intended learners' specific needs and the course designers' or teachers' aims and values and hence assist them in developing appropriate materials.

Furthermore, conducting a textbook evaluation is a professional practice that improves teachers' performance and fosters their professional growth because it increases their information about how to evaluate a textbook systematically and objectively rather than make subjective and impressionistic judgments.

According to Tomlinson, Dat, Masuhara and Ruby (2001), material evaluation is an applied linguistic activity through which teachers, supervisors, administrators and material developers can "make judgments about the effect of the materials on the people using them" (p. 15).

The present research evaluates two textbooks; therefore, its significance is generally due to all reasons mentioned above and specifically to that:

1. It investigates and analyzes the specific needs of a number of medical students at Zanjan Medical Sciences University in Iran for the first time.
2. It evaluates two ESP textbooks which have not already been evaluated on the basis of the students' and the teachers' viewpoints.
3. It compares an Iranian textbook with a Canadian one to see which one is more responsive to the students' needs. This is also performed for the first time.

### **1.3 Statement of the Problem**

According to Hutchinson and Waters (1987), "ESP is an approach to language teaching in which all decisions as to content and method are based on the learner's reason for learning" (p. 19). Recognizing the learner's reasons, purposes and needs regarding language learning gives insights into the type of materials that will equip them with the necessary tools to fulfill those purposes. Therefore, recognizing students' needs and viewpoints as well as their teachers' expectations of the appropriate type of materials to them can provide the basis for material evaluation in an ESP course.

Zangani (2009) evaluated some ESP textbooks used in Iran and found them inappropriate and in need of modification and improvement in terms of incorporating new approaches in language learning and teaching and responding to students' needs. He also emphasized on the necessity of frequent evaluation of ESP textbooks according to instructors or experts' comments to remove much of the burden and time involved in creating materials.

ESM is one of the series of textbooks compiled by professional experts and TEFL professors in Iran and published by SAMT Organization. The content of these textbooks is subject to criticism by researchers and practitioners now, therefore, evaluating them is essential to find their strengths and weaknesses. MT was also produced to meet the specific needs of Canadian students of medicine thus it seems necessary to investigate its effectiveness and usefulness in meeting the English language and language learning needs of the Iranian Students of medicine.

#### **1.4 The Purpose of the Study**

This study intended to evaluate and compare MT and ESM as two representatives of the textbooks available on the Iranian market for teaching English to the students of medicine. It was performed for two reasons: first, to investigate the degree of match between the materials covered in each textbook and the students' and teacher's specific needs and expectations; second, to give more insights into each textbook's strengths and weaknesses and make suggestions for its improvement.

The evaluation dealt with seven categories: practical considerations, layout and design, activities, skills, language type, subject and content and overall consensus or conclusion. That is, it investigated the teacher's and students' views regarding these aspects of the textbooks.

### 1.5 Research Questions and Hypotheses

The study aims to answer the following research questions about each textbook:

1. How satisfactory, appropriate, effective and responsive to the learners' needs and teacher's expectations is the textbook with respect to the seven categories of the study?
2. What categories of the study are perceived as strengths of the textbook?
3. What categories of the study are perceived as weak aspects of the textbook and required to be improved?
4. Is there a statistically significant difference between the students' attitudes towards each textbook with respect to the seven main categories of the study?
5. Is there a statistically significant difference between the teacher's attitudes towards each textbook with respect to the seven main categories of the study?

The researcher has made the following hypothesis about the probable results of the study:

H1: Medical Terminology and English for the Students of Medicine (II) satisfy the teacher's and the students' needs and expectations with respect to the seven main categories of the study.

H2: Medical Terminology and English for the Students of Medicine (II) do not satisfy the teacher's and the students' needs and expectations with respect to the seven main categories of the study.

H3: Medical Terminology satisfies the teacher's and the students' needs and expectations more than English for the Students of Medicine (II) with respect to the seven main categories of the study.

H4: English for the Students of Medicine (II) satisfies the teacher's and the students' needs and expectations more than Medical Terminology with respect to the seven main categories of the study.

### **1.6 Limitations of the Study**

It was possible to conduct the study with 50 students in one classroom because of the problem of convincing the students to take part in a research study and because of accessing a classroom where both textbooks were being taught.

### **1.7 Definition of Terms**

There are some terms used throughout the study. It will be of help if these terms are clearly defined prior to the body of the study:

**Communicative Language Teaching (CLT):** The Communicative Approach in language teaching originates from the purpose of language as communication. Howatt (1984) distinguishes between strong and weak versions of CLT. The weak version stresses the importance of providing learners with opportunities to use their English for communicative purposes: that is, 'learning to use English'. The strong version advances the claim that language is acquired through communication: that is, 'using English to learn it'.

**English for specific purposes (ESP)** is one of the approaches to English language teaching and learning as opposed to what others call "Teaching English for No Obvious Reason" (TENOR). According to Hutchinson and Waters (1987), "ESP is an approach to language teaching in which all decisions as to content and method are based on the learner's reason for learning" ( p. 19). Kennedy and Bolitho (1984) explain that ESP has two divisions: **English for Academic Purposes (EAP)**, which equips the students with

the skills needed to pursue their academic work successfully, and **English for Occupational Purposes (EOP)**, which focuses on the development of skills that various occupations require.

**Evaluation** is “the process of seeking to establish the value of something for some purpose”. (Brown & Rogers, 2002, p. 289)

**Foreign language** is “a language which is not normally used for communication in a particular society”. (Tomlinson, 1998, p. xi)

**Material** refers to “anything which is used to help to teach language learners. Materials can be in the form of a textbook, a workbook, a cassette, a CD-Rom, a video, a photocopied handout, a paragraph written on a whiteboard: anything which presents or inform about the language being learned.” (Tomlinson, 1998, p. xi)

**Material evaluation is** “the systematic appraisal of the value of materials in relation to their objectives and to the objectives of the learners using them. Evaluation can be pre-use and therefore focused on predictions of potential value. It can be whilst-use and therefore focused on awareness and description of what the learners are actually doing whilst the materials are being used. And it can be post-use and therefore focused on analysis of what happened as a result of using the materials”. (Tomlinson, 1998, p. xi)

**Objective** is “a statement of what the learners will be expected to do when they have completed a specified course of instruction, stated in terms of observable performances” (Glossary of Instructional Design Terminology).

**Second language** “is used to refer to a language which is not a mother tongue but which is used for certain communicative functions in a society” (Tomlinson, 1998, p. xii).

**Syllabus** is “a specification of what is to be taught in a language programme and the order in which it is to be taught. A syllabus may contain all or any of the following: phonology, grammar, functions, notions, topics, themes, tasks” (Nunan, 1988, p. 159).



**Abbreviations**

CLT: Communicative Language Teaching

EAP: English for Academic Purposes

ELT: English Language Teaching

EOP: English for Occupational Purposes

ESP: English for Specific Purposes

L2: Second Language

TEFL: Teaching English as a Foreign Language

TESL: Teaching English as a Second Language

## CHAPTER TWO

### Review of the Literature

#### 2.1 Introduction

The literature related to evaluation of language teaching material is vast, therefore, a selection of it under nine main topics have been reviewed in this chapter. The review deals with both theoretical and empirical studies as Tomlinson (2003) contended that “materials development is both a field of study and a practical undertaking” (p. 1).

#### 2.2 The Role of Textbooks in ELT

In ELT profession, there has been a lot of debate on the role of textbooks. Some specialists have considered them as valuable tools that are at the service of both teachers and learners to achieve their aims and objectives and some others have considered them as inflexible and biased tools and criticized too much dependency on them. According to Hutchinson and Torres (1994), “no teaching-learning situation, it seems, is complete until it has its relevant textbook” (p.315). They pointed out that textbooks might play a pivotal role in innovation by creating scaffolding upon which teachers can build a more creative methodology of their own or by guiding them how to use new and/or untried methodologies. On the contrary, Allwright (1982) viewed textbooks as being too inflexible and generally reflecting the pedagogic, psychological, and linguistic preferences and biases of their authors.

David Williams (1983) pointed out that “in situations where there is a shortage of trained teachers, language teaching is very closely tied to the textbook” and that in bilingual and multilingual situations “the textbook can present examples of common difficulties, but there are problems specific to different language groups which are left for

the teacher to deal with” (p.251). He suggested that any textbook should be used judiciously, since it could not cater equally to the requirements of every classroom setting.

Harwood (2005) studied various anti-textbook arguments in the literature and made a distinction between strong and weak anti-textbook views. The strong view advocates the abandonment of any type of commercially prepared materials in language classes while the weak view “finds materials in their current state to be unsatisfactory in some way, but it has no problem with the textbook in principle” (p. 150).

Teaching materials which are either teacher-made such as photocopied pamphlets or commercially prepared materials like textbooks, serve important multiple roles in ELT. Nunan (1988) referred to these roles:

Materials are, in fact, an essential element within the curriculum, and do more than simply lubricate the wheels of learning. At their best, they provide concrete models for desirable classroom practice. They act as curriculum models and at their very best they fulfill a teacher development role. (p.98)

On the other hand, some roles were specifically attributed to textbooks in ELT classrooms. Cunningsworth (1995, p.7) summarized these roles as follows:

1. A resource for presentation materials (spoken and written)
2. A resource of activities for learner practice and communicative interactions
3. A reference source for learners on grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation, and so forth

4. A resource of simulation and ideas for classroom activities
5. A syllabus (where they reflect learning objectives which have already been determined)
6. A resource for self-directed learning or self-access work
7. A support for less experienced teachers who have yet to gain in confidence

Richards (no date) mentioned some advantages and limitations of using textbooks.

The advantages were:

1. They provide structure and syllabus for a program by providing learners with a systematically planned syllabus.
2. They help standardize instruction by providing similar content for students in different classes.
3. They maintain quality by including valid, tried, tested and appropriately paced materials.
4. They provide a variety of learning resources if accompanied with teachers' guides.
5. They are efficient by saving teachers' time from looking for materials everywhere.
6. They can provide effective language models and input for non-native teachers.
7. They can train novice teachers.
8. They are visually appealing because they are usually well-designed and illustrated.

The limitations were:

1. They may contain inauthentic language if content and dialogues do not represent real language use.
2. They may distort content by presenting an idealized view of the world.
3. They may not reflect students' needs.
4. They may deskill teachers by presenting materials prepared by others.
5. They are expensive. (pp.1-2)

Whatever role was attributed to textbooks in TESL/TEFL classrooms, the textbooks have constantly been used by language teaching institutions and teachers. Garinger (2002) said, "Even with the development of new technologies that allow for higher quality teacher-generated material, demand for textbooks continues to grow, and the publishing industry responds with new series and textbooks each year" (Introduction section, ¶1).

We put an end to this part with a statement from Williams (1983) who said, "Textbook is a tool, and the teacher must know not only how to use it, but how useful it can be." (p.254)

### **2.3 Different Definitions of Material Evaluation**

Hutchinson & Waters (1987) defined evaluation as "a matching process designed to establish the degree of match between the needs and available solutions" (p.97).

Cunningsworth (1995) referred to evaluation as a fundamental action which should be performed to ensure "that careful selection is made and that the materials selected closely reflect the aims, methods, and values of the teaching program" (p.7).

Tomlinson (2003, p.16) contends that materials evaluation is a procedure that involves measuring some or all of the following:

1. The appeal of the materials
2. The credibility of the materials to learners, teachers, and administrators
3. The validity of the materials
4. The reliability of the materials
5. The ability of the materials to interest the learners and the teachers
6. The ability of the materials to motivate the learners
7. The value of the materials in terms of short-term learning
8. The value of the materials in terms of long-term learning
9. The learners' perceptions of the value of the materials
10. The teachers' perceptions of the value of the materials
11. The assistance given to the teacher in terms of preparation, delivery and assessment
12. The flexibility of the materials
13. The contribution made by the materials to teacher development
14. The match with administrative requirements

#### **2.4 Various Types of Material Evaluation**

Cunningsworth (1995) and Ellis (1997) referred to three different types of material evaluation:

1. 'Predictive' or 'pre-use' evaluation that is designed to examine the future or potential performance of a textbook.
2. 'In-use' evaluation designed to examine material that is currently being used.
3. 'Retrospective' or 'post-use' (reflective) evaluation of a textbook that has been used in any respective institution.

Robinson (1991) explained different types of material evaluation as follows:

There are three types of materials evaluation: preliminary, summative and formative, the first two being likely to focus on published or at least completed materials and the third to focus on in-house materials. Preliminary evaluation will normally take place before an ESP course begins and involves selecting the most appropriate from the publications that are available. It is obviously useful to have some sort of checklist of features which one wants the textbooks to have, and to rank these features in order of priority. No textbook is likely to be perfect, of course, and practical considerations, such as cost, may have to take precedence over pedagogic merit. (p.59)

Rod Ellis (1997) made distinctions between different types of material evaluation: predictive evaluation versus retrospective evaluation, impressionistic evaluation versus empirical evaluation and micro-evaluation versus macro-evaluation. He defined them as follows:

- Predictive evaluation is carried out by teachers for choosing the teaching materials available to them in order to determine which are best suited to their purposes;
- Retrospective evaluation is carried out once the materials have been used to determine whether it is worthwhile using them again, which activities 'work' and which do not, and how to modify the materials to make them more

effective for future use. It can be used as a means of testing the validity of a predictive evaluation and improving its instruments as well;

- Impressionistic evaluation is carried out during the course while teachers assess whether particular activities 'work' (usually with reference to the enthusiasm and degree of involvement manifested by the students), while at the end of the course they make summative judgments of the materials;
- Empirical evaluation is carried out through collecting information in a more systematic manner and making judgments on the basis of them;
- Macro evaluation calls for an overall assessment of whether an entire set of materials has worked while in a *micro-evaluation*, one particular teaching task is focused and is submitted to a detailed empirical evaluation.

Cunningsworth (1995) differentiated between 'impressionistic overview' and 'in-depth evaluation' similar to the distinction made between 'external' and 'internal' evaluation by Jo Macdonough and Christopher Shaw (2003). In their opinion the external or macro-evaluation was a brief 'overview' of a textbook from the outside by looking at its cover, introduction, the author/publisher's blurbs and table of contents and internal or micro-evaluation was a closer and more detailed evaluation.

## **2.5 Subjectivity and Objectivity in Textbook Evaluation**

Some experts such as Sheldon (1988) and Cunningsworth (1995) stated that teachers should look at the evaluation process from a more subjective view realizing that any checklist requires adaptation before being submitted to the personal requirements of individual teachers. Sheldon asserted "it is clear that coursebook assessment is fundamentally a subjective, rule-of-thumb activity, and that no neat formula, grid or



system will ever provide a definite yardstick” (1988, p. 245). Sheldon (1987) also referred to the influence of various theoretical approaches to language teaching on the formation of evaluators’ own priorities which would raise the important issue of subjectivity in the process of evaluation.

Chambers (1997) suggested an evaluation process based on explicitly stated criteria; however, he emphasized that the final judgments and decisions should be made intuitively. He said, “The final 'judgment' is on whether or not to accept the decision provided by the process; if it feels 'intuitively' wrong, and this feeling is strong enough, the option is to disregard the decision.” (p.35)

Richards (no date) asserted that two teachers might evaluate the same textbook differently because they might have different concerns and the textbook might totally match the requirements of their learning situation and their students’ specific purposes or it might be quite unsuitable. They suggested that questions specific to each situation should be generated for evaluating a textbook in that situation: questions related to the program’s/teacher’s/learner’s concerns, questions related to the content and organization of the materials and questions related to the pedagogical design of the materials including choice of activities and exercise types.

Jordan (1997) referred to some factors that could influence our choice in selecting a textbook. He mentioned some subjective elements that could attract us to a book in the first place such as its cover, publisher’s blurb, list of contents, appropriate language level, informative teacher’s notes, size, price, availability and so forth. However, in order to make as objective comparison between textbooks as possible, he proposed the evaluators to pose a number of questions, provide a list of headings, consider a checklist of features or note the absence or presence of some items and then assign some value or weighting to

the features. He maintained that the inevitable subjectivity would be reduced if this points-system or scale was arrived at by a consensus of a group of teachers.

Cunningsworth (1995) stated, “The selection procedure is intended as a ‘framework, not a straitjacket,’ and any procedure should be modified to suit personal circumstances.” (p. 5). However, some of the frameworks such as those offered by Cunningsworth (1995) and Harmer (1991) were criticized because “they usually involve making general, impressionistic judgments on the materials, rather than examining in depth what the materials contain” (Littlejohn, 1998, p.192). Therefore, some of the experts have tried to develop checklists which would help examine textbooks from every aspect.

In order to make evaluation a coherent, systematic and thoughtful activity, Nunan (1991) proposed an evaluator or assessor “to match the materials with the goals and objectives of the program, and to ensure that they are consistent with one’s beliefs about the nature of language and learning, as well as with one’s learners’ attitudes, beliefs and preferences” (p.209).

## **2.6 Similar Components of Textbook Evaluation Checklists**

Extensive checklists and frameworks have been proposed and presented by experts for textbook evaluation such as Tucker (1975), Williams (1983), Cunningsworth (1984), Hutchinson (1987), Hutchinson & Waters (1987), Breen and Candlin (1987), Harmer (1991), Nunan (1991), Skierso (1991), Cunningsworth (1995), Ur (1996) and McDonough and Shaw (2003). This implies that designers are striving for comprehensiveness in evaluation procedures.

Ansary and Babaii (2002) conducted a research to identify the elements which checklist producers introduced as important criteria for evaluating and selecting an

appropriate teaching text. They identified a set of characteristics that EFL/ESL textbooks must possess:

1. Dissemination of a vision (theory or approach) about the nature of language and language learning and putting theory into practice
2. Content Presentation: stating purpose(s) and objective(s) for the total course and for individual units
3. Selection of materials and rationale for grading, organizing and sequencing them
4. Satisfaction of the syllabus to the teacher: providing a guide book, key to the exercises, supplementary materials, advice on the methodology, and so on
5. Satisfaction of the syllabus to the student: providing piecemeal, unit-by-unit instruction, graphics (which are relevant, free from unnecessary details, colorful, etc.), periodic revisions, workbook exercise and activities, periodic test sections, accompanying audio-visual aids, and so on.
6. Physical Make-up including appropriate size & weight, attractive layout, durability, high quality editing and publishing, and appropriate title
7. Administrative Concerns: appropriate price and macro-state policies for what is appropriate for local situation, culture, religion and gender

Litz (2005) suggested that similar components of the most of the standardized evaluation checklists could be used as helpful starting points for ELT practitioners in a wide variety of situations. He mentioned some of these components as follows:

1. Physical characteristics of textbooks such as layout, organizational, and logistical characteristics
2. Textbooks' methodology, aims, approaches and the degree to which they conform to the individual teacher's approach as well as the organization's overall curriculum
3. The specific language, functions, grammar, and skills content that are covered by a particular textbook as well as the relevance of linguistic items to the prevailing socio-cultural environment
4. Representation of cultural and gender components
5. The extent to which the linguistic items, subjects, content, and topics match up to students' personalities, backgrounds, needs, interests and learning styles as well as those of the teacher and/or institution. (pp.9-10)

### **2.7 Some Textbook Evaluation Criteria Suggested by Specialists**

In this part the researcher has presented some of the checklists and frameworks proposed by experts for textbook evaluation.

Moore (as cited in Robinson 1991, p.61) offered six basic criteria for evaluation of the activities in the teaching materials:

- Purpose: Is the purpose clearly defined?
- Type: Dose the exercise type effectively and economically accomplish the purpose?
- Content: 1. Is the ratio of language given/student task economic?  
2. Are instructions to students clear?