Shiraz University

Faculty of Literature and Humanities

M.A. Thesis in Teaching English as a Foreign Language (TEFL)

DEVELOPING A PATTERN BASED ON SPEECH ACTS AND LANGUAGE FUNCTIONS FOR DEVELOPING MATERIALS FOR THE COURSE "THE STUDY OF ISLAMIC TEXTS TRANSLATIONS"

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September 2012

In the Name of Allah

In the Name of God

Declaration

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

ABSTRACT

DEVELOPING A PATTERN BASED ON SPEECH ACTS AND LANGUAGE FUNCTIONS FOR DEVELOPING MATERIALS FOR THE COURSE "THE STUDY O F ISLAMIC TEXTS TRANSLATIONS"

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This study aims at constructing a pattern for developing materials for the course 'The Study of Islamic Texts Translation'. In this pattern, Austin's (1962) speech acts levels, Searle's (1976) speech acts categories, and Halliday's (1978) language functions are applied, in order to develop more interesting and engaging materials, in contrast to the available textbooks. For this purpose, 54 holy Verses were chosen from different parts of holy Quran. The above-mentioned three frameworks were applied to qualitatively analyze these holy Verses. The results indicated that developing materials for the course 'The Study of Islamic Texts Translations' applying the above-mentioned Speech acts models and language functions results in more interesting, engaging, and congruent materials for the intended course. Finally, some implications for textbook developers of the course 'The Study of Islamic Texts Translations', textbook evaluators, critical discourse analysts, and Quran interpreters and translators were proposed.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.0. Introduction

This chapter begins with a background and explanation of textbook/course/curriculum design and development, textbooks/materials and their expected features, and a brief background of textbook evaluation. The frameworks of this study including Austin's (1962), Searle's (1976) and Halliday's (1978) models are then discussed. Finally, the intended objectives of the study, the research questions and the significance of the study are presented.

1.1. Preliminaries

In recent decades, there have been many discussions about how to consider textbook/course/curriculum in a more professional way. Numerous suggestions and recommendations of several scholars are published and spread over educational settings all over the world in order to help material designers and educators to choose the best textbook and to design the effective course taking their local factors, namely, course objectives and learners' needs, into account. Textbooks as the basic educational tools along with their included materials have always been a subject of investigation by textbook evaluators, textbook/course designers and publishers. The local educational goals and perspectives determine the purpose of scrutinizing

courses and textbooks. Some investigations are motivated in order to guarantee educational value of textbooks. Others, still, are triggered by financial and profit considerations. Every situation and any particular classroom require certain criteria for textbook considerations, i.e. evaluation and development. Since students are different in terms of backgrounds, abilities and needs in any classroom setting, the criteria of textbook investigation inevitably vary. Whatever the reason, no one can deny the importance of textbook in educational settings. In this regard, the usefulness of course books, in Wild's (1991) words, cannot be denied, since the materials they contain entail large amount of effort, time and expertise. Landrum, et al. (2012) also believe that given the magnitude of textbook investments, it is worth seeing how students utilize them to determine if these expenditures are wise investments in student learning.

From a different point of view, Wolfe (2005) considers course materials and textbooks as the tone of the course. He sees choosing a textbook as a crucial factor in course development and the observation of course objectives as the most critical element in textbook analysis. Wolfe believes that students are more textbook dependent rather than being instructor oriented. As indicated by the literature, it is not only students who are dependent on textbook; many teachers also feel strong reliance on textbooks. They see course books as vital and inevitable tools for their course and teaching purposes. Sheldon (1988, p.237) also puts emphasis on this point that " course books are perceived by many to be the route map for any ELT program, laying bare its shape, structure, and destination, with progress, program, and even teacher quality being assessed by teachers in terms of sequential , unit-by-unit coverage". In addition to the perceived importance of textbooks in terms of teachers and students' reliance on them, course books play a crucial role in the very setting of education. Advocating this view, Riazi (2003) emphasizes the important role that textbook plays in the realm of language practice. He reminds us of the central role of textbook in classroom after the important role of teachers.

Many scholars argue that teachers should not choose a textbook and use it in their classroom without checking the appropriateness of that textbook. Using a

textbook, in Grave's (2000) point of view, teachers should consider two facets. First, in order to recognize how the textbook is constructed, they should get familiar with the materials inside it. Second, teachers should go beyond the textbook and consider everything other than textbook itself including context, students and the teacher him/herself. Based on the local and situational factors, textbooks, sometimes, require modification or at least adaptation. It makes teachers more aware of and cautious about what they teach. In this regard, Nation and Macalister (2010) see textbooks adaptation as a way for teachers to develop professionally through a gradual action research. One additional support of textbook evaluation in the literature refers to Cunningsworth (1995) and Ellis (1997) suggestion that textbook investigation is so useful in teacher growth and professional development. They believe that textbook evaluation equips teachers to go beyond impressionistic assessments acquiring accurate, effective, systematic and contextual insights into the overall nature of textbook materials. In Cunningsworth's (1995, p.7) idea, textbook is "a resource in achieving aims and objectives that have already been set in terms of learners' needs".

Sometimes, in the literature, the emphasis that is put on the textbook may cause another problem as overreliance on textbook. To warn us against this problem, Brown (1995) argues that textbooks should not necessarily specify the aims and objectives of language programs or become the aims but they should be constantly at the service of students and learners specifying aims and objectives according to learners' needs. In line with Brown (1995), Cunningsworth (1995) also adds with emphasis that textbooks should be selected through a careful selection process and we should ensure that selected materials closely reflect learners' needs, methods and values of the teaching program.

A careful selection process investigates the appropriateness of the intended course book in an evaluative fashion. Textbook evaluation paves the way for textbook development and vice versa. Mirza-Suzani (2006), in this regard found a mutual relationship between material development/evaluation and materials selection. He believes that, in academic atmosphere, textbook selection is closely related and entailed with textbook evaluation and different circumstances of materials selection

influence the nature of evaluation. Cunningsworth (1995), as an advocate of textbook evaluation, stresses the importance of identifying strengths and weaknesses in textbooks. He believes that optimum use can be made of understood strong points, while weak points can be adapted or substituted from other books.

According to Nation and Macalister (2010), a course book chosen for teaching a course is worth careful considerations, since evaluation of course books seems as important as developing courses. They (p. 165) believe that in a systematic approach to course book evaluation, some essential features should be sought and the following elements should be taken into account:

- Does the course book suit the environment in which it will be used?
- Does the course book meet the needs of the learners?
- Does the course book apply sensible principles of teaching and learning?
- Do the goals of the course book match the goals of the course?
- Does the content of the course book suit the proficiency level of the learners and reflect

  sensible selection and sequencing principles?
- Is the course book interesting and does it use effective techniques?
- Does the course book include tests and ways of monitoring progress?

Moreover, the essential elements of any course book include

- The book should be at the right vocabulary and grammar level for the learners.
- The book should focus on the language and skills that are the goal of the course.
- The book should be below a certain price.
- The book should be readily available.
- The size and number of lessons in the book should suit the length of the course.
- The book should not include behavior and topics that would offend the religious or cultural sensitivities of the learners and their parents.

Therefore, it is necessary for teachers to broaden their view more critically toward potential materials (Hajizadeh, 2008).

The literature places strong emphasis on the objective of the course and learners' needs that curriculum or course book developers should take into account. Shkedi (2009) speaks about curriculum and its related task as context-dependent since most of the teachers follow curriculum/textbooks based on students' needs and local questions raised in the classroom. He concludes that these contextual elements affect curriculum almost automatically. As Gudmundsdóttir (1990, p. 108) emphasizes, the curriculum story plays an important function "… since it is one of the devices teachers use to organize content into a form that is meaningful for them and accessible for students…". Therefore, it seems that most teachers consider curriculum as adaptable suggestion without perceiving it as compulsory. According to West (1994), the findings of need analysis processing should be translated into course objective and material development. Bruner (1985, 1996) also objects to the curriculum development procedures in which objectives are not the starting points. Nation and Macalister (2010, p.3) mention that "the aims of curriculum design are to make a course that has useful goals, that achieves its goals, that satisfies its users, and that does all this in an efficient way". They then suggest the following principles of content and sequencing of language course design:

> 1- A language course should provide the best possible coverage of language in use through the inclusion of items that occur frequently in the language, so that learners get the best return for their learning effort.
>
> 2- A language course should train learners in how to learn a language, so that they can become effective and independent language learners.
>
> 3- Learners should have increasingly spaced, repeated opportunity to give attention to wanted items in a variety of contexts.
>
> 4- The language focus of a course needs to be on generalisable features of the language system.
>
> 5- A language course should progressively cover useful language items, skills and strategies.

6- The teaching of language items should take account of the most favorable sequencing of these items and should take account of when the learners are most ready to learn them.

7- The course should help the learners to make the most effective use of previous knowledge.

8- The items in a language course should be sequenced so that items that are learned together have a positive effect on each other for learning, and so that interference effects are avoided (p.40).

The literature of textbook development has witnessed the lack of attention and reflection of course/materials developers and teachers regarding what materials to bring to the classroom. Swales (1980) complains about the lack of attentiveness of teachers and material designers of what is brought to the classroom and what is taught. He believes that teachers unfortunately tend to be less reflective about what is happening when one textbook is used. Swales values teachers as textbook users, evaluators and adaptors. He is against the idea that considers teachers as mere users. As far as textbook effectiveness is concerned, Tomlinson (1998) complaining about the negligence on the part of textbook developers asserts that almost all material developers "follow their intuition" designing their materials. They, most of the time, do not sit with a list of objectives, principles and optimum criteria to be applied in their textbooks. Shkedi (2009) provides evidence that teachers in classrooms do not always follow the imposed curriculum by institution. He believes that it is because of the differences that exist between what institution sees right and what the teacher thinks as appropriate. He quoted from some of his interviewees as (p.15):

- The truth is that I don't keep to the curriculum or the teachers' guide.
- I feel quite free to do what I want.
- I am not interested in what the curriculum writers expect from me. … I never consider what they intended.

Opposed to the above-mentioned problems of curriculum development activities, McDonough and Show (1993) discuss two developments and progressions in current materials writing. The emergence of multifunctional syllabus has changed

the trends greatly. Instead of relying on structural and non-communicative approaches to material development, the multifunctional syllabuses are taken as the starting points. The fact that today more emphasis is put on psychological and affective aspects of learning regarding material design is the other promising development in the field of curriculum development.

This study, in its attempt of constructing a new pattern for materials development for the course 'The Study of Islamic Texts Translation' tries to be in line with the above-mentioned backgrounds. The problems existing in the available textbooks and the course raise the necessity of constructing the new pattern. The researcher elicited some of the problems evaluating the available textbooks and interviewing twenty-two B.A. students of the above-mentioned course. The problems include:

- Available textbooks are not compatible with the present level of learners. In other words, the content of the available textbooks is not at the same level as that of the learners' present competence. Learners complain that they are not ready enough to analyze and compare the translations of the presented Verses.

- In line with the above-mentioned problems of the available textbooks, learners complain that they do not feel at ease and confident analyzing and comparing translations of the holy Verses.

- No creativity exists in the tasks and activities presented in the available textbooks. These textbooks provide learners with holy Verses and their English translations, and then learners are asked to provide their own translations of different chunks of holy Verses. Students complain that classroom discussions and activities are boring, since their lack of knowledge of the content of the book does not allow them to have an active participation in classroom discussions.

By virtue of the above-mentioned existing problems in the available textbooks and classroom discussions, this study makes use of the following theoretical frameworks.