

An Evaluation of the local ELT Coursebook in Kurdistan: Sunrise 7 based on the Checklist of McDonough and Shaw 1993

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Abstract

Textbooks play pivotal role in English language teaching and have a large number of advantages. The purpose of this research study is to scrutinize a local textbook, which is taught formally in state schools in Kurdistan "Sunrise 7". This study has endeavored to find potentials and shortcomings of the textbook in terms of level and age, fitting the context, communicativeness, authenticity and meeting needs. The analysis was supported by the principles and theories of FL/ SL learning and teaching and SLA. The checklist of McDonough and Shaw (1993) was adapted for collecting and analyzing data. The qualitative method was used in this research study to collect and analyze data in the coursebook. Sunrise 7 could have a lot of strengths and some weaknesses. One hand, the coursebook can fit context in Kurdistan, as it is EGP. It may realize the key tents of CLT paradigm. As well as, the language input may be semi-authentic. It could meet the learner's needs. What is more, it could suit the age of learners in Kurdistan. On the downside, the level of Sunrise 7 seems lower than 7 grader in Kurdistan schools.

1- Introduction

It is obvious that ELT coursebooks play pivotal role in the realm of English language teaching as they are considered the basis of ESL or EFL input which is acquired by learners in ELT classrooms (O'Neil 1982). This is why textbooks analysis is crucial in English instruction. The effective coursebooks can enable teachers to benefit their students in a language acquisition. Therefore, instructors should be a familiar with the importance of textbook appraisal to distinguish between strong and weak ones. It seems that coursebooks evaluation and selection are not easy processes. These processes may need different educational and academic skills. The selected textbooks must achieve the requirements of ELT programs and meet the needs of learners (Byrd 2001).

This research paper will investigate Sunrise 7 (McClever, Prowse and Sprenger 2007) to find out strengths and weaknesses of the textbook. Also, it seeks to diagnoses shortcomings and suggests some way to improve it. The instrument will be employed to collect data is the Checklist of McDonough and Shaw (1993). The checklist provide educators with a valuable tool for evaluating textbook. Also, it will propose some recommendation to overcome these limitations depending on language learning and teaching theories.

2- Literature Review

2-1 Evaluation types

These types of evaluations are related the accountability and development of program.

2-1- 1 the Formative Evaluation

This type of evaluation aims at scrutinizing to find out what are efficient aspects and to alter the ineffective ones in a program to meet learner's needs and to supply the necessary information to redesign a course. This analysis can be carried out while the course in progress in order to measure the affective needs of learners, the needs of language and learning needs to modify the course as appropriate to improve learning process (Grave 2000).

2-1-2 The Summative Evaluation

The purpose of summative evaluation is to make decision on the value or worth of various aspects in a curriculum. This appraisal is related to determination of efficiency and effectiveness of a program, whether the course must continue or stop (Richard 2001). It is usually conducted after the course has been performed. This evaluation measures the course achievement in order to provide information for redesigning a course (Grave 2000).

2-1-3 The Illuminative evaluation

The illuminative evaluation may not involve modifying the course necessarily but in order to discover the work mechanism of various aspects and how are performed in the program. The purpose of this evaluation to comprehend the learning and teaching process deeply that occur in the course (Richards 2001).

2-2 Schemes

There are a number of checklists designed by many famous evaluators to assess the suitability of ELT coursebook and to find out the extent to which textbook apply the principles FL/ SL learning and teaching and SLA. Some of them focus on general criteria and other focus on specific criteria in details. Initially, Skiers (1991) proposes a checklist for appraisal, starting by collecting data about the learning context, exercises and activities, the course syllabus and learners backgrounds. The framework consists of a number of criteria including: aims and goals, bibliographical data, structure and vocabulary, the physical makeup and subject matter.

Furthermore, Cunningsworth (1995) has another framework to appraise ESL/ EFL materials. The textbook evaluation tool includes language functions, the patterns of communicative interaction organization and language content, practical considerations, topics, skills and methodology. As well as, Garinger (2001) presents another checklist which focuses on three aspects to evaluate textbooks such materials breadth and depth, whether textbooks requiring supply or not and instruction objectives. Ellis (1997) recommends carrying out empirical investigation methodologies for evaluating coursebooks.

Moreover, McDonough and Shaw (1993) present another checklist to assess textbooks. This evaluative framework includes two stages in order to evaluate the materials, which are external evaluation and internal evaluation. In this evaluative study, this checklist will be adapted to conduct this research study.

2-3 An overview of previous evaluative studies

Hassan (2004) set up some criteria to opt ESP coursebook, discovering the extent to which the coursebooks meet these criteria at the colleges of Alazhar University. The results of this study revealed that the coursebook is not adequate and has shortcomings as they did not meet the learners need. Also, Vellenga (2004) evaluated a coursebook to find out the quality and amount of the pragmatic information. In this study, the focus of analysis was on the use of metalanguage explicit treatment of metapragmatic information and speech act. The researcher analysed politeness, register illocutionary force, usage and appropriateness. The finding revealed that coursebooks provide rare information for teachers in teacher guide and the textbook contained a rareness of clear metapragmatic information.

Moreover, Dominguez (2003) analysed The New Interchange Intro coursebook (Richards 2000). This evaluative study concentrated on men and women representation. In addition to, Kumaki (2003) sought to find out the intonational characteristics instructed Japanese high schools. The study showed that instruction of intonation has still adopted the grammatical methods and changed slightly.

Having reviewed the previous studies of evaluation, the evaluator become familiar with what evaluative researches have been conducted. So, the assessor intention was to analyse Sunrise (7).

3- Methodology

3.1. Research questions

The purposes of this evaluative study are the following:

- 1- What are the strengths and weaknesses of the coursebook?
- 2- Does it suitable for the learner's level and age?
- 3- Does it the textbook fit the teaching context in Kurdistan?
- 4- Does the textbook embody communicative tents?
- 5- Are the tasks of the textbooks are authentic?
- 6- Does the coursebook meet learners' needs?

3.2 Methodological approach

The qualitative method was used in this research study to collect and analyse data in the coursebook. The data was collected in non-numerical data and then was analysed qualitatively. Qualitative methods require "data collection procedures that result primarily in open-ended, non-numerical data which is then analysed primarily by non-statistical methods" (Dornyc 2007: 24). The qualitative methods can more flexible than quantitative ones. They are associated with subjective perspectives and individual's experiences. It is possible that the analysis of qualitative method may be interpretative that means findings of research are the results of what researchers interpret.

3-3 The Instrument

In this research study, it was recommended to use a checklist for collecting and analysing data. So, I adapted the descriptive checklist of McDonough and Shaw (1993) to conduct this study. I employed the checklist since frameworks have many potentials. First of all, they assist to decide if coursebooks are appropriate and they meet needs (Hammer 2007). Second, they provide economic and systematic

way to ensure criteria considered (McGrath 2002). They can be convenient and flexible as coursebooks evaluators can add or remove some criteria.

3-4 Data collection

The needful data for this evaluative research to be assessed was already available in Sunrise 7. The data was evaluated in terms of the pros and cons. In August 2021, the data of this research was collected to be investigated. This research just intended to assess the coursebook and did not recommend or criticise it.

3-5 Data analysis

In this evaluative study, the data was collected and analysed by using the framework of McDonough and Shaw (1993). The data was analysed to find out the limitations and potentials. The analysis was supported by the principles and theories of FL/ SL learning and teaching and second language acquisition.

5- Findings

The results of this evaluative study are presented in this chapter to find out the limitations and potentials.

The checklist of collecting and analyzing consists of two stages to evaluate the textbook comprehensively. The first stage is a brief external assessment and the second stage is an in-depth assessment (Macdonough and Shaw 1993). The framework includes 22 criteria.

4-1 The first stage: external evaluation

This stage is an overview of external assessment of Sunrise 7 (Sprenger, Prowse and Mclever 2007) to investigate what is written on coursebooks.

4-1-1 The Intended Audience

In spite of there is no age groups is stated explicitly in Sunrise in students book, it is obvious in the teacher guide that is for teenagers (see p.4). The characters of this coursebook can be the same ages of the coursebook users which range from 12 to 15. This coursebook shows young adults to be the intended audience and this could suit the ages in the context of teaching in Kurdistan. (see p.46)

4-1-2 The proficiency level

Sunrise 7 is the seventh coursebook in the series of Sunrise. The level is stated explicitly on the cover of the teacher book to be elementary level.

4-1-3 Teaching context

According to McDonough and Shaw (1993), ELT coursebooks can be designed for English for Specific Purposes (ESP) and English for General Purpose (EGP). Despite that there is no any explicit state in Sunrise, it is explicitly shown that it is English for general purpose. So, the textbook fit the teaching context as it develop general English.

4-1-4 Presentation of the language in teachable lessons and units

There are eight teaching units in Sunrise including Welcome Unit and each chapter has revision to recycle the previous information. The chapters from Unit 1 to Unit 7 are topic based (animals, free time, sport, things, and places). In each unit, the first three lessons introduce the new language to practice and the language relevant to the learners (see p.21&41&54). The language usually is presented in a texts or dialogues then followed by some task for practice and comprehension. These tasks allow personalization. Units usually end with writing tasks. There are usually Sound Files and Grammar Files in each lessons of each unit (see p.75)

4-1-5 The publisher views on methodology and language

The publishers claim that Sunrise embodies the communicative approach and integrate the four skills together which are speaking, listening, writing and reading (Sunrise 2020). It focuses clearly on grammar structures (see 30).

4-1-6 Are the textbooks taught as main course or supplementary of a course?

ELT coursebooks can be used as main course in a syllabus or they may be employed as supplementary to be followed by teachers in the whole academic year. Sunrise is used as main course which taught formally and basically through the academic year.

4-1-7 Are the teacher's guides printed and available?

The ministry of education in Kurdistan gives teacher's manuals free for teachers and supervisors. The teachers' books always are available electronically on the ministry websites and are downloaded freely.

4-1-8 Does the coursebook include Index/ vocabulary list?

It is obvious that Sunrise 7 includes an appendix of words list/ index at the end of the coursebook for each lesson and unit separately (see p.106). Meaning of each new word is given next to it.

4-1-9 Does a coursebook include illustrations/ visual materials, doe they integrate into texts?

The coursebook contain a lot of illustrations such drawings, photographs, graphs and cartoons. These visual materials can make the textbook interesting and motivating (see p.5). It looks that most of photographs are incorporated into reading and tasks (see p.12)

4-1-10 Is the textbook presentation and layout obvious or disorganised?

It seems that the layout of this coursebook is designed excellently, it may be tidy and every task is well organised. It is colourful, attracting and interesting. In terms of the font, it is black and almost the same size. The colour of the instructions are usually are different in order to be easily noticed (see p.71). The coursebook encompasses 8 units and each unit consist of eight lessons.

4-1-11 Is the textbook culturally based or present women or minority group negatively?

Sunrise seven is written especially for Kurdish students for the state schools. It seems that there is no basis and stereotyping in this coursebooks. Apparently, men and women are presented equally in the textbook (see p.14).

4-2 The second stage: internal evaluation

The internal evaluation means examining the consistency and organization of a textbook to find out the extent to which authors' claims on cover sheet trace with the internal content of a coursebook (McDonough and Shaw 1993).

4-2- 1 The skills presentation

The coursebook includes the four main skills which are listening, reading, speaking and writing. Each lesson usually starts with receptive skill (listening and reading) and ends with productive skills (speaking and writing). Most of the tasks in the coursebooks usually integrate more than one skill together.

4-2- 2 Sequencing and grading in the textbook

Grading can be defined that it is content of a textbook arranged from easy topics to difficult ones (Nunan 1988). In general, it looks that the coursebook is graded form simple to complex in term of vocabulary, grammar and so forth.

4-2- 3 If the coursebook includes reading skill, is there a proper text behind the sentences in that skill?

The coursebook includes reading skill as well and it extract from different sources. The reading styles may be extracted from the articles of magazines, advertisements, personal and commercial letter, brochures, books, stories, and biographies (see p.85)

4-2- 4 If the coursebook includes listening skill, are recoding tracks artificial or authentic?

Authentic material can be defined as the language materials which have not been especially prepared language education. It is that language that students will encounter in a real life (Nunan 1991). According to Willis (1996: 88), "hurly burly" of a native speech makes focusing on vocabulary difficult for students. As per (Cook, 1998), as a result, the language of coursebooks is simplified to make it more accessible to learners. They still provide natural input for students to acquire unconsciously. In accordance of the definition of Nunan, it seems that recording materials of Sunrise semi- authentic input for educational purposes (see p.9).

4-2- 5-Is the textbook is suitable for various learning styles? Does it motivate both learners and teachers?

In Sunrise (7), there are different learning styles such pair works and individual works (see p.9). It appears that the coursebook lacks of group work activities.

5- Discussion of Findings

The main focus of this evaluation is to find out the shortcomings and potentials. Sunrise (7) may need to be updated because it has been published in 2007. This looks a long period. The coursebook focuses on some machines which might no longer use. The most illuminated example of this is the cassette player in page 32. It is probably better to use mobile phones to listen to music instead cassette players (see p.32)

In terms of the proficiency level, Sunrise 7 is the seventh coursebook in the series of Sunrise. The level is stated clearly on the cover of the teacher book to be elementary level. One of the reading texts was chosen to be analysed to find the readability. Readability can be defined as the relative ease with which a text can be read or comprehending phrases, words, ideas in reading texts (Dale and Chall 1948)

The criteria for deciding the ease of texts depend on sentence structure or length. The longer sentences appear more difficult and vice versa. In addition to, the larger number of long and unfamiliar words means harder texts. What is more, the simpler sentences means easier text (Chall, 1974). The findings of the readability score 80.3 and show 'easy to ready' which suitable for grade 6th. The level may not be suitable for the learners according to this assessment. Therefore, it could be better to decrease readability to make it more motivating and challenging.

In terms of language presentation, all chapters have 'revisions' to recycle the taught information. Furthermore, all units are topic based (animals, free time, sport, things, and places). Therefore, meanings are put in the foreground in establishing themes or topic for all chapters and consequently adopt CLT tents.

As per White (1988), coursebooks can be divided into types which are A and B. The coursebooks (A) are that in which content and forms are predetermined and students' participation are not interactive in them. Whereas the textbooks (B) are in which learning processes and content become part of the language learning, they develop second language competence. So, Sunrise (7) can be regarded as the type (B) since it focuses on communications more than formal competence.

Communicative coursebooks encompasses communicative tasks, which concentrate on meanings more than forms (Nunan 1989). Communicative tasks look real world activities in which students use the target language freely (Estaire and Zanon, (1994). They can integrate the main language skills together like writing, reading, speaking and listening (Littlewood 1981).

Coursebook includes the four main skills which are listening, reading, speaking and writing. Each lesson usually starts with receptive skill (listening and reading) and ends with productive skills (speaking and writing). That is very useful arrangement because they begin with L input and L output. Most of the tasks in the coursebooks usually integrate more than one skill together such as in activities. There probably is a balance of the four main skills in the course. The integration and balance of main skills are considered the characteristics of CLT paradigm (Gower et al., 2005)

Authentic materials have a number of advantages to use the in coursebooks. First of all, they inform students with real information about what is happening worldwide. In addition, they could motivate learners extremely, give authentic information of a culture, meet students' needs and support a more creative approach to educate (Guariento & Morley 2001).

As per (Cook, 1998), the language of coursebooks is simplified to make it more accessible to learners. They still provide natural input for students to acquire unconsciously. In accordance of the definition of Nunan, it seems that recording materials of Sunrise semi- authentic input for educational purposes.

The absence of group work activities in Sunrise (7) is disappointing and frustrating since they are improve the communicative skills when learners interact on meaningful topics (Hiep 2007). In addition, group work activities can provide more opportunities for learners to practice the language, improve speaking skills and create a positive influential climate for learning in ELT classrooms (Long and Porter, 1985). They also might lead to increase motivation and reduce stress or anxiety (Pic, et al. , 1996)

6- Conclusion

This research has endeavoured to appraise "Sunrise 7". This evaluative study has attempted to find strengths and weaknesses of the textbook.

In this investigative study, the framework of McDonough and Shaw (1993) was adapted to collect and analyse the data to carry out this study. The qualitative method was used in this research study to collect and analyse data in the coursebook.

As it can be seen, Sunrise 7 has a lot of potentials and some of shortcomings. On one hand, the textbook can fit context in Kurdistan as it is EGP. As well as, it may embody the key principals of CLT method. Thirdly, the language input might be semi-authentic. It might meet the learner needs as task are similar to real life. What is more, it could suit the age of learners in Kurdistan. However, Sunrise 7 appears to have lower level than 7 grader in Kurdistan schools. It also does not cover many topics about Kurdish culture as the coursebook is written especially for Kurdish learners. It looks that the coursebook needs to be updated as it has been written long time ago. It is crucial to put more groups work activities.

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