

A Practical Evaluation of <i>English for Iraq: Pupil's Book (4th Primary): Designing and Planning</i>			Linguistics
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Abstract			
<p>In 2016, the Directorate of Curriculum and Methodology in the Ministry of Education in Iraq altered the old English textbook allocated for the forth-primary class with a new textbook called English for Iraq: Pupil's Book. After implementing this new textbook, the teachers, who are teaching this material, addressed a set of criticisms stating that the design and structure of this book does not fit the comprehensive levels of the pupils. As teachers emphasized that they encountered difficulties in teaching this material because they should have joined an intensive session for how to teach the new textbook before teaching it in the schools. Investigating the opinions of the teachers about the contents of the book, they believe that the grammatical topics apportioned for the forth grade are beyond the pupils' grasp where the writers set down rules of comparative and superlative degrees which pupils cannot perceive and should be given for the high school classes. Consequently, the teachers are obliged to choose simple and recognized topics and leave the topics – especially grammatical ones which confuse their minds if they are given to them. Thus, the initiative evaluation shows that the textbook contains difficult modules as it lacks practicing the four skills of the English language, in addition to the insufficiency of using the illustrative aids in the classroom.</p>			

1. Introduction

The writing of any English Course for primary and secondary stages requires a good design and well-planned units which suit the scientific level of each stage. The designed textbook should cover the four levels of language, which compromise reading, writing, speaking and listening. To enable the learners develop their level of comprehension of the English language, the teacher should operate and activate these skills and not focus on one or two and leave the others. Before the campaign of changing the curricula in Iraq which started five years ago, the Iraqi pupils have studied old curricula without changing them since 1970s which adopted the Grammar-translation Approach which is no longer effective. Consequently, Kerr (1968:16) defines curriculum as "all the learned which is planned and guided by the school, whether it is carried on in groups or individually, inside or outside the school".

Cunningsworth (1995:22) ensures that the analysis and evaluation of course book are useful in developing the teachers' capabilities of teaching and knowledge and helping teachers to gain good and useful insights into the nature of the material. The opinions of the teachers who teach the new textbook are important and valuable because through the process of teaching, they can reveal the weaknesses and strengths or they can criticize the design and structure of the textbook negatively or positively and even they can write down a report containing some recommendations or suggestions to the concerned committee which wrote and supervised the material.

Language is simply speaking a means of communication among people, but the concept today has a wider perspective because linguists emphasize that language is not only used for the purpose of communication but also used to practice certain professions –including translators and to get knowledge and technology from other countries having a different language other than the source language. Accordingly, Simpson (2011:164) states that the reason behind studying a language is often due to a particular goal, which results in their study of language for a specific occupational, technical, or academic purposes.

2. Review of Related Literature

Evaluation is an important and useful method of assessing the validity and reliability of a given course book or curriculum. As it discovers the weaknesses and strengths of this material, which in return, helps the teachers or curriculum designers to reconsider the material that they wrote or prepared for a given stage or group of students.

Furthermore, evaluation is a systematic determination of a subject's merit, worth and significance, using criteria governed by a set of standards (Wikipedia, 2017). To be more specific, Richards and Schmidt (2010:97) present a method of assessing any material which they call it collaborative evaluation which means the assessment and evaluation of a curriculum or program that is carried out jointly by classroom teachers, researchers, or other trained educational experts, (ibid.).

Many people fumble some confusion over the difference between the two concurrent terms 'curriculum' and 'syllabus'. According to White (1988:5) who points out that in Britain "syllabus refers to the content or subject matter of an individual matter, whereas "curriculum" refers to the totality of content to be taught and aims to be realized within one school or educational system. In America, "curriculum" tends to be synonymous with syllabus in the British sense, (ibid.).

Likewise, Richards and Rodgers (1986:21) shed some light upon the difference between curriculum and syllabus in stating that a curriculum often is the plan and the philosophy, while a syllabus contains the details of the content to be taught and the methods to be used. Curriculum may, of course, encompass syllabus, but traditionally the term syllabus has been used to refer to the form in which linguistic content is specified in a course or method.

Kerr (1968:16) defines curriculum as "all the learned material which is planned and guided by the school, whether it is carried on in groups or individually, inside or outside the school". In Iraq, the Ministry of Education is responsible for preparing new curricula or revising any textbook through a specialized committee. The ministry decided to change all the timeworn textbooks starting from the primary stages ending with the secondary stages. Nevertheless, this campaign needs monitoring accurately to avoid any weaknesses in the process of writing of the book.

3. Statement of the Problem

To design a course or textbook for teaching English, one should take into account the scientific level of those pupils who will study it whether it suits their linguistic capabilities and designing it according to the principle of simplicity including grammatical issues and vocabulary items, which should simulate their apprehension. The Higher English Curriculum Committee in the Ministry of Education was charged with setting up English for Iraq 4th primary class. As it was designed by the Editorial and Adaptation Committee which issued its first edition in 2016 and was published by Garnet Publishing Ltd. The teachers who are teaching this material for the study year (2016-2017) faced difficulties in teaching it because they say that its contents are beyond the pupils' recognition and the modules of this book contains hard grammatical topics that should not be given to such grade; rather they should be to 6th primary classes or high school levels. As they say it has difficult words and the listening skill is not available because there are no visual or audio aids to make the pupils listen or watch such things. Moreover, the pupils cannot grasp some vocabulary because they cannot perceive their denotations or the ideas conveyed through such words, do not suit their age.

4. Objectives

This study aims at evaluating the Forth Primary **English for Iraq: Pupil's Book**, which was approved by the Iraqi Ministry of Education in 2016 and replaced by the old one and to be taught for the 4th primary grades of the whole primary schools of the country. The process of evaluation rests upon showing the weaknesses of that textbook and displaying to what extent it is reliable for teaching very young pupils which is surely beyond their level of comprehension of its contents.

5. Sampling

The samples of the study consist of (12) primary school teachers who are teaching *The English for Iraq: Pupils' Book* who were selected from different primary schools in Ramadi Downtown. The number of the schools was six; three schools for boys and the rest three schools were for girls. They are AL-Sadoon, AL-Esraa, AL-Sahaba, AL-Eskan, Suhaib AL-Rumi, and Dejlal. The Spring second course of the academic year (2016-2017) was selected for doing the test. The mechanism of doing the test depends on addressing (10) questions to the sample group of teachers by giving them a sheet paper having these questions, in return, they answer these questions in YES-NO Response Method where every teacher should place the ticket mark in the box of yes or no. The testers have paid visits to all these six schools in different dates; the first group had a morning duty, while the second one had a noon duty. The testers visited the first group at (10) pm and the test was done at (10:30) and longed for (15) minutes. The second group received us at (1:30) pm and the test started at (2) pm. The researchers spent around (10) minutes to explain the nature of their topic and the mechanism of doing the test, meanwhile, they were

very happy and made use of the explanations given to them about the topic as they showed high cooperation and interaction with the questions that the researchers addressed to them.

5.1 Instrument

As for the period of setting any evaluation, Cunningsworth (1995:22) states that evaluation can take place before a course book is used, during its use and after its use, depending on circumstances and the purposes for which the evaluation is being undertaken. To evaluate the book of the forth-primary stage, a questionnaire should be done to the teachers who teach this book. The type of the test follows the Close-ended Questions, which according to McKay (2006:37) require the respondent to choose one of several specified answers and can take a variety of forms. One possibility is an *alternative-answer* question in which pupils have to select from one of several options such as yes or no, or true or false. Therefore, ten questions are addressed to the teachers of the English language where they should choose yes or no. The researchers through doing the questionnaire and gathering tips of information as well as reading the whole new book thoroughly detected the weaknesses in the layout of the textbook.

6. Data Analysis

The analysis depends on reading the answer of each question and determine the teachers' points of view about the book which include the type of the grammatical matters found in the text, vocabulary including simplicity and familiarity of words used in the textbook. The teachers' responses are statistically analyzed in tables in order, then, to build up a complete view about weaknesses and strengths of the new curricula.

The results of the questionnaire are analyzed in the table below which are counted mathematically throughout using a certain equation in order to get the real percentage of each question has been addressed to the teachers which, in return, enabled us to evaluate the book appropriately.

Table (1) Statistical Analysis of the Questionnaire's Questions

No	QUESTIONS	YES Responses	NO Responses	Rate of Yes	Rate of No
1.	Do you think that the Book meet the four language skills?	X	12	Zero%	100%
2.	Are some of the grammatical topics complex and difficult to understand?	12	X	100%	Zero%
3.	Are the pupils interplayed with the topics of the Book?	3	9	25%	75%
4.	Are you (as teachers) interplayed with the content of the Book?	12	X	100%	Zero%
5.	Is the Book well designed that it meets the basics of the English language?	2	10	16.6%	83.33%
6.	Is it well planned and organized	12	X	100%	Zero%

	linguistically?				
7.	Do you use the illustrative aids when explaining some lexicons?	X	12	Zero%	100%
8.	Are there CDs or aids or listening programs attached with the Book?	X	12	Zero%	100%
9.	Do you submit your pupils to the listening skill found in the Book?	8	4	66.6%	33.33%
10.	Do you think that this Book need some changes?	12	X	100%	Zero%
11.	Do you think that the Book's contents are beyond the pupils' apprehension?	10	2	83.33%	16.6%

7. Results and Discussion

The results obtained from the bundle of questions which were directed to (12) primary teachers in different schools have manifested that the grammatical subjects found in this book are difficult and are incomprehensible because they are not mature enough to let their minds grasp them. All the teachers agreed that some structural subjects should not be taught in the forth stage. In addition, most of the teachers with percentage of (83.33) believe that the book is well designed concerning the book's cover, paper, arrangement, etc. As for the planning of the contents of the book, all the teachers agreed that really it was not appropriately planned because some subjects were badly schematized which should not to be taught for the forth primary stage, but the real problem lies in choosing the topics which do not commensurate their apprehension.

After making the questionnaire with the teachers one by one, the testers found that it is a good opportunity to make an interview with them and take detailed answers and some of them requested to clarify certain objects to us. Thus, it was the researchers' pleasure to make some interviews to enquire of certain issues about the book. Therefore, the following weaknesses have been observed in the ad hoc book. They are explained below:

1. Regular and irregular verbs are given to the pupils in unit (6) and they do not understand them especially the irregular ones, which deal with vowels being short or long, or diphthong, and already they do not know the English vowels.

2. The pupils are committed to deal with the comparative and superlative degrees in unit (1) specifically in lessons (5) which are beyond their comprehension.

3. Wh questions should be explained to them in order to let them make questions. They are found in unit (6) in lesson (1), but they have no ability to make questions even the teachers explained them easily.

4. Simple past and simple present continuous tenses are found in some units, which must be taught to the pupils where the teachers found that the pupils have never grasped them at all.

5. Structurally, how to use "must" and "mustn't" in verbal or written situations in unit (7) in lesson (5) which should not be within the syllabus of the fourth primary stage.

6. The process of writing an e-mail should be taught to the pupils in order to make the pupils write emails via computer and even they are not able to use the internet and the question that should be raised: How can they write an email and they do not know the word order of the English sentence?

7. Some of the words used in the textbook are very complicated where vocabulary should be simple and familiar to them.

8. There is no focus on using the demonstration tools such as pictures, screens, data show, or audio aids. Not using such aids weakens the pupils' levels of the four skills.

Some teachers provided the researchers with important information stating that it is known that before issuing any curriculum, the Education Directorate holds a training session in Summer Holiday to train the teachers about how to teach this new book, but a few teachers have been submitted to such a session in Lebanon, while the majority have not been submitted to this session and that's why they face difficulties in teaching the fourth primary English Book. In addition, Anbar province was invaded by the terrorist organization 'Daesh' which destroyed the education and decelerated it, after the people went back home in 2016, they were surprised that the curricula started to be changed by the ministry of Education. In fact, this is not the suitable time to make any change unless the province's conditions get settled.

8. Conclusions

The evaluation of *English for Iraq: Pupil's Book* assigned for the 4th primary grade in (2016-2017) has shown up that this book comprises topics which are not absorbed by the mind of the child who studies English at the fourth primary stage. Theoretically, these topics are not planned for such stage; rather they should be planned for 6th primary stages or intermediate stages. Such topics encompass the comparative and superlative degrees (-er +est, and the ephemeral intensifiers more and most) in unit (1) in lesson (5), which operate with adjectives where the pupils do not know the adjectives or the other parts of speech, such as nouns, adverbs, demonstratives, articles, conjunctions, and prepositions.

Another weakness perceived in this book, it is not plausible to teach the pupils of such a stage the Wh-Questions and how to form questions in unit (6) in lesson (1) because the pupils will not understand them because their stage is specified for knowing and memorizing words in different situations but not to make sentences or questions. Moreover, teaching the pupils the present continuous, simple past, and "going to" in some units is not possible because they are above their level of comprehension.

In unit (7) specifically in lesson (4), the pupils are given the topic of obligation "**must**" positive form and "**must n't**" negative forms and they have to know the difference between them.

Another defect that can be noted in this book is that the pupils should know how to write an email to a friend and send it through the internet service.

However, the teachers told us through the interview that "when we explain these topics [mentioned above], we see that the pupils are surprised or shocked which is an indicator that they could not understand them; therefore, we try simplifying them, but they could not make it, too." Therefore, some topics set out in this book are beyond them.

Lexically, some words used within the sentences are difficult – especially some of them have more than two syllables which constitute two problems, the difficulty of pronouncing them and the difficulty of storing them in the mind. Words such as 'Mountain Range', 'Zargos', 'Halgurd', 'Cheeka Dar', Euphrates, 'Kilometers', Challenge", 'Bracelets' etc.

As regards English for Iraq: Activity Book (4th Primary), it has arduous planning because it contains difficult words and having complicated exercises, such as the exercise of pronouncing of the three forms of (-ed) in different verb endings which the pupils do not grasp them at all. The exercise (Read): Use past verbs to make the story in unit (6) in lesson (5) where the author has given the pupils a story in the form of paragraph containing eleven blanks with eleven choices of regular and irregular verbs in the box, and the pupils should fill in the blanks with the correct answers. In fact, these comprehensive questions should not be given to such level of pupils because simply they cannot recognize them.

9. Recommendations

Based on the results got from the approach of analysis and the conclusions reached, the following recommendations are formed which are useful for the Iraqi Ministry of Education and the Committees of Curriculum and Educational Supervision. They are explained below:

1. *English for Iraq: Pupil's Book* needs to be revised with making some changes throughout removing some structural topics which are ineligible for the 4th primary stage. (See the conclusions).

2. Forming a new committee to review the contents of the book to do the necessary changes.

3. Focusing on developing the pupils' skills (listening, reading, writing and speaking words or phrases) and let them practice these skills orally

4. Providing the schools with the illustrative aids including display screens, data show, and letting the teachers use color cards dramatizing certain objects, for example, using a color card having an apple drawn on it and beside it the word (Apple) which helps them keep it in their memory.

5. Provoking the teachers to activate the listening lessons found in the textbook and repeat them several times which assists in developing their snatching of words.

6. Removing the complex or unfamiliar words which in a way or another will not acquire them.

7. Holding training sessions for teachers in the Summer Holiday in order to train them how to teach this book and the method to be adopted in teaching it to the pupils.

8. *The English for Iraq: Activity Book (4th Primary)* needs to be revised and removing the difficult exercises coping with the basic book. It needs to be simplified where it can meet the pupils' level of comprehension.

Appendix (A)

Appendix (A) shows the type of questions addressed to the teachers who are teaching English Book of the forth-primary stage for the academic year (2016-2017).

Dear teachers,

We are doing a questionnaire test in order to evaluate the weaknesses and strengths of *English for Iraq: Pupil's Book* taught in the forth primary stage which was devoted this year (2016-2017). Therefore, we need you to answer the questions given in the sheet below in terms of **YES-NO RESPONSES**. Tick (√) for the appropriate answer.

Table (2): Questionnaire Form Presented for Teachers

No.	QUESTIONS	YES	NO
1	Do you think that the Book meet the four language skills?		
2	Are some of the grammatical topics complex and difficult to understand?		
3	Are the pupils interplayed with the topics of the Book?		
4	Are you (as teachers) interplayed with contents of the Book?		
5	Is the Book well designed that it meets the basics of the English language?		
6	Is it well planned and organized linguistically?		
7	Do you use the illustrative aids when explaining some lexicons?		
8	Are there CDs or aids or listening programs attached with the Book?		
9	Do you submit your pupils to the listening skill found in the Book?		
10	Do you think that this Book need some changes?		
11	Do you think that the Book's contents are beyond the pupils' apprehension?		

Appendix (B)

Samples of Some Topics in *English for Iraq: Pupil Book (4th Primary)*

Bigger and smaller

A ruler is longer than a pen,
And number 12 is bigger than 10.
A giraffe is taller than a bee,
And my mum and dad are older than me.
So I am younger than them, you see!
A car is smaller than a van,
And I am shorter than that man.
Let's say these words together again:



looked had quickly was helped saw

1 Yesterday, you _____ an old lady
crossing a busy road.
"Can you help me?"
"Of course! Here, look right."



2 The children _____ the old lady to cross
the road.
"You must speak loudly, but you mustn't shout."



3 They crossed the road _____ but quickly.
They were near to an ice-cream shop.
"Thank you for your help, old lady."
"You're welcome."



4 The children _____ of all the ice-cream
flavours. What do you think they will choose?
"I'm going to buy ice-cream with fruit."
"You're right."

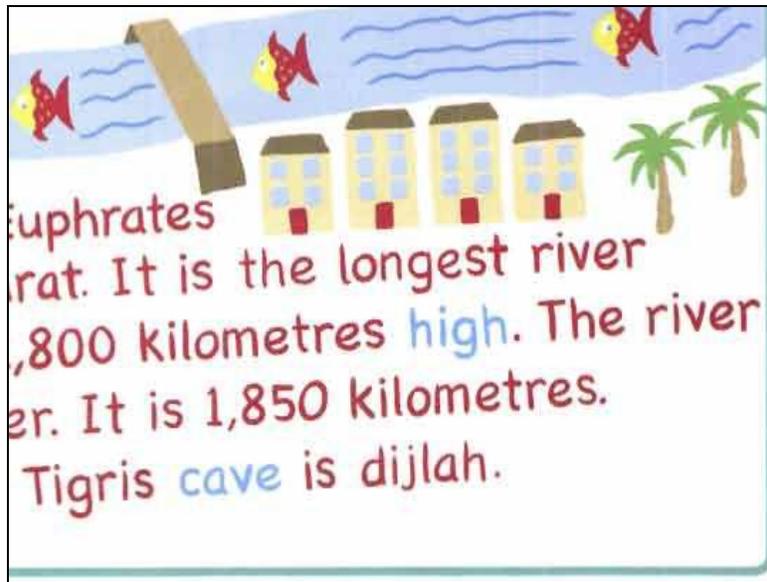


5 They _____ an apple ice-cream. You will
remember a chocolate one.
"That's great!"



6 They will _____ chocolate ice-cream.
"You'll love yours and mine."
"We're going to make
everybody and
have fun with it!"





Appendix (C)

Samples of Some Topics in *English for Iraq: Activity Book (4th Primary)*

► Write the correct verbs in Nadia's email.

arrived ate bought had played
stayed swam was went

I had a great weekend. I _____ to the seaside with my family. We travelled by bus. We _____ with my aunt and uncle and our cousins. The beach was lovely and the sand _____ soft. We _____ in the sea. I _____ lots of presents. We _____ a meal in a café. I _____ soup and fish. It was yummy! The next day, we _____ games on the beach. We did running and skipping races. We _____ home at 6 o'clock. I am very tired. I'm going to bed now.

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