

ADAPTED CRITERIA AND A MODEL OF EVALUATION CHECKLIST FOR ENGLISH COURSEBOOKS

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Abstract

Materials/coursebook evaluation is one of the features in materials development. It is imperative to conduct materials evaluation in order to examine whether the materials covered in the coursebooks are in accordance with teaching objectives, in line with learners' needs, suits the learners' background and above all, whether it is devised on the principles of language learning basis. Evaluation checklists—the instrument used to evaluate the materials—have been developed during the past few years; however, they might need revising as the items in the checklist have not represented aspects which should be assessed such as the incorporation local cultures. For this reason, the current study attempted to propose adapted criteria and a model of evaluation checklist which expectedly suit English coursebooks both local and international English coursebooks. 19 respondents were involved in this research to try out the adapted checklist. In addition, they were required to give some feedback on the items of the checklist. The results have indicated that evaluation checklist items embody the paramount aspects of English language teaching and learning and integrate items representing local English coursebooks written by Indonesian authors and those written by non-Indonesian writers. Although the reliability and the validity of the checklist were not investigated, the proposed checklist might be worth trying to evaluate both local and international English coursebooks.

Keywords: ELT, Materials Evaluation Checklist, English Coursebooks

Abstrak

Evaluasi buku ajar adalah salah satu aspek dalam pengembangan bahan ajar. Evaluasi ini penting untuk dilakukan untuk meninjau kembali apakah materi yang tercakup dalam buku ajar sesuai dengan tujuan pengajaran, kebutuhan peserta didik, sesuai dengan latar belakang peserta didik, dan yang paling penting adalah untuk mengevaluasi apakah buku ajar ditulis berdasarkan prinsip-prinsip pemelajaran bahasa. 'Evaluation checklist' — instrumen yang digunakan untuk mengevaluasi bahan ajar — telah dikembangkan selama beberapa tahun terakhir. Namun, 'evaluation checklist' ini perlu direvisi karena ada beberapa butir pernyataan dalam 'checklist' tersebut yang boleh jadi belum mencakup aspek aspek yang perlu dinilai seperti pengintegrasian budaya lokal. Oleh karena itu, penelitian ini bertujuan untuk megajukan kriteria dan model 'evaluation checklist' yang sudah diadaptasi dari kriteria sebelumnya dan disesuaikan dengan buku ajar bahasa Inggris lokal dan internasional. 19 responden dilibatkan dalam penelitian ini untuk menguji coba model 'evaluation checklist' yang sudah diadaptasi. Para responden juga diminta untuk memberikan balikan pada butir pernyataan dalam 'evaluation checklist'. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa 'evaluation checklist' ini telah mencakup aspek-aspek penting dalam pengajaran dan pemelajaran bahasa Inggris dan buku ajar bahasa Inggris yang ditulis oleh orang Indonesia dan orang asing. Meskipun reliabilitas dan validitas 'evaluation checklist' ini tidak diteliti, 'checklist ini' dapat diujicoba kembali untuk mengevaluasi buku ajar bahasa Inggris lokal dan yang diterbitkan atau dtulis oleh penulis asing.

Kata kunci: Pengajaran bahasa Inggris, 'Evaluation Checklist' buku ajar, buku ajar bahasa Inggris

Introduction

Materials/coursebook evaluation, an aspect in materials development, plays an important role in language teaching. Teachers need to evaluate the coursebooks they use to teach in order to ensure they serve their functions as language teaching materials. McGrath (2002) underline that coursebook evaluation is paramount as teachers occasionally use coursebooks without careful evaluation. This is in line with Tomlinson (2008) saying that teachers pick a particular one because of their own preference rather than whether or not it meets the criteria of a good language textbook.

To conduct the evaluation, we need an instrument called an evaluation checklist which contains particular criteria dealing with language aspects (grammar, vocabulary, and pronunciation) and language skills (speaking, listening, writing, and reading). According to McGrath (2002), studies on materials evaluation checklists have been conducted by Tucker (1975), Haycraft (1978), Daoud & Celce-Murcia (1979), Cunningsworth (1979,1984,1995), Williams (1983), Sheldon (1988), Harmer (1991), Skierso (1991), and Ur (1996). Other studies discussing the checklists were carried out by Nation & Macalister (2010), Littlejohn (2011), Mukundan et al. (2010, 2011, 2015), and Abdelwahab (2013). Of these, those proposed by Skierso (1991, as cited in McGrath, 2002) and Abdelwahab (2013) are the most detailed.

Most of the models and criteria of materials evaluation checklist assess the four basic language skills (speaking, writing, reading and listening skills) as well as language aspects such as vocabulary, grammar, and pronunciation. Cultural issues have also been incorporated, but they are not specific to each language skill. For example, the items denote cultures are 'The content involves culture-specific items' (Abdelwahab, 2013), 'Does the content serve as window into learning about the target language culture (American, British, etc.)?' (Demir & Ertaş 2014), 'They adopt English as a Lingua Franca (ELF) Approach.:', 'They do not aim at imposing target culture.', and 'They try to raise cultural awareness.' (Işık, 2018).

During the past few years, the items in the checklist have included ICT or Information and Communication Technology. The instances of the items are 'Class audio/VDO files and/or online resources needed are available for the students to

promote autonomous learning.’ and ‘Supporting learning materials encourage the use of teaching in learning English.’ (Wuttirisiriporn & Usaha, 2019).

In brief, myriad evaluation checklists have been developed, yet they need to be adapted in order to be able to be used to evaluate local and international English coursebooks.

Method

Document (checklist and English coursebooks) review was carried out to develop the evaluation checklist. The checklists devised by Cunningsworth (1995), Abdelwahab (2013), and Mukundan (2015) were examined and adapted. In addition, we carefully had gone through several English coursebook to suit the criteria of evaluation checklist adapted in this study. One of the data, taken from document/checklist review, was adapted in order to be able to develop the evaluation checklist. Having been adapted, expert judgment was conducted by involving 19 respondents who work as English teachers. They tried out the checklist and gave some feedback upon the try out completion.

Table 1 below describes the categories in materials evaluation checklists developed by language teaching experts since 1975.

Table 1: Categories of Materials Evaluation Checklists

No.	Author	Categories	Total Items
1.	Tucker (1975)	1. Internal criteria a. Pronunciation b. Grammar c. Content 2. External criteria	18
2.	Daoud and Celce-Murcia (1979)	1. Subject matter 2. Vocabulary and structures 3. Exercises 4. Illustration 5. Physical make-up	25
3.	Williams (1983)	1. General 2. Speech 3. Grammar 4. Vocabulary	28

		<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 5. Reading 6. Writing 7. Technical 	
4.	Sheldon (1988)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Rationale 2. Availability 3. User definition 4. Layout/graphics 5. Accessibility 6. Linkage 7. Selection/Grading 8. Physical characteristics 9. Appropriacy 10. Authenticity 11. Sufficiency 12. Cultural bias 13. Educational validity 14. Stimulus/practice/revision 15. Flexibility 16. Guidance 17. Overall value for money 	53
5.	Cunningsworth (1995)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Aims and approaches 2. Design and organization 3. Language content 4. Skills 5. Topic 6. Methodology 7. Teachers' books 8. Practical consideration 	44
6.	Mukundan (2011)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. General attributes <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. The book is in relation with the syllabus and curriculum b. Methodology c. Suitability to learners d. Physical and utilitarian attributes e. Efficient layout of supplementary materials 2. Learning-teaching content <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. General b. Listening c. Speaking d. Reading e. Writing 	50

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> f. Vocabulary g. Grammar h. Pronunciation i. Exercises 	
7.	Abdelwahab (2013)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Physical and utilitarian attributes <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. General appearance b. Layout and design c. Visuals 2. Efficient outlay and supplementary materials. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Book objectives b. Teaching aids c. Teaching methods 3. Learning-teaching content <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Subject and content b. Exercises c. Social and Cultural Context 4. Language skills <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Listening b. Speaking c. Reading d. Writing e. Vocabulary f. Grammar g. Pronunciation 	129
8.	Mukundan (2015)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1. General attributes <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. The book in relation to syllabus and curriculum b. Methodology c. Suitability to learners d. Physical and utilitarian attributes e. Efficient layout of supplementary materials 2. Learning-teaching content <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. General content b. Listening c. Speaking d. Reading e. Writing f. Vocabulary g. Grammar 	39

		h. Pronunciation i. Exercises	
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Findings

Below is the adapted checklist of Cunningsworth (1995), Mukundan (2015), and Abdelwahab (2013).

Instructions:

Read the items in the checklist. In the column opposite the items, indicate the level to which they agree with each statement by marking 1 to 4:

1 = Poor 2 = Satisfactory 3 = Good 4 = Excellent

DESCRIPTIONS	SCORE			
	1	2	3	4
1. The activities can work well in most classroom situation.				
2. The activities are compatible with the background knowledge and level of students.				
3. The activities address learning target.				
4. The textbook’s layout is attractive.				
5. The textbook indicates efficient use of text and visuals.				
6. The textbook is supported by suitable materials like a work-book, audio, teacher’s manual or multimedia.				
7. The textbook is supported by other materials like review and test units.				
8. There is a useful teacher’s guide to aid the teacher.				
9. Tasks move from simple to complex.				
10. Tasks are varied.				
11. Tasks support teaching objectives.				
12. The material is fairly recent.				
13. The textbook contains communicative activities that				

are effective in real-life situations.				
14. The activities promote creative, original and independent responses.				
15. The content serves as a window into learning about the target language culture (American/British).				
16. The contents enable students to use English outside the classroom situation.				
17. The materials emphasize on focus on form rather than focus on forms.				
18. The materials incorporates ICT (Information and Communications Technology) e.g. online resource and assignments.				
19. Tasks are authentic or close to real language situations.				
20. Various listening contexts such as formal vs. informal contexts are considered.				
21. Listening materials expose the students to voices and pronunciation of the native speakers of English.				
22. The listening text integrates local cultures.				
23. The conversations or dialogues in listening materials are not only among native speakers of English, but also among non-native speakers of English.				
24. Activities are developed to initiate meaningful communication.				
25. Individual, pair, and group work are given equal emphasis.				
26. The situations in the dialogue are natural and real.				

27. The topics for speaking activities integrate local cultures.				
28. The length of reading passage is appropriate.				
29. The reading passage suit students' level.				
30. The reading passage is authentic.				
31. Reading passage incorporate local cultures.				
32. Writing tasks are contextualized with real-life situations.				
33. Scoring rubric is available in the textbook to assess writing skills.				
34. The number of new words in each lesson is appropriate to the level of students.				
35. There is a good distribution (simple to complex) of vocabulary load across chapters and the whole book.				
36. New words are sufficiently repeated and recycled across the book.				
37. The vocabulary items are introduced in authentic context.				
38. Corpus (the frequency of words and how to use them) are available in each vocabulary lesson.				
39. Grammar is contextualized.				
40. Grammar items are repeated throughout the book.				
41. Grammar is introduced in authentic context.				
42. Grammar lessons are integrated in various context and situations.				
43. Pronunciation is built through other types of activities, such as listening, dialogue, etc.				
44. Pronunciation covers English as in international				

<i>language.</i>				
45. The language expressions are natural and real.				
46. The tasks of language expressions are contextualized (Ex: situations in the dialogue, etc).				
47. The language expressions preserve in the textbook are integrated in various contexts and situations.				
48. The exercises have clear instructions.				
49. The exercises are adequate.				
50. The exercises help students with mixed abilities.				

There are 9 items added in the adapted checklist because they were not incorporated in the checklists proposed by Cunningsworth (1995), Mukundan (2011, 2015), and Abdelwahab (2013).

1. The first one is ‘The materials emphasize on focus on form rather than focus on forms.’ This item examines whether the materials in the coursebook not only focus on grammar/structure, but they also focus on function and meaning. We need to ensure that students who use the book are exposed to how to use the language appropriately.
2. The second one is ‘The materials incorporate ICT (Information and Communications Technology) e.g. online resource and assignments.’ The objective of this item is to investigate whether the materials in the coursebook

are connected to online materials which can be downloaded by the students so it can foster autonomous learning.

3. The third item added is 'The listening text integrates local cultures.' It is imperative to evaluate the incorporation of local cultures in the materials of the coursebook as English now is not only used by monolingual speakers of English in English speaking countries, but it is also officially used by bilingual speakers of English in non-English speaking countries.
4. The next item is 'The conversations or dialogues in listening materials are not only among native speakers of English, but also among non-native speakers of English.' This item is in line with the previous item which deals with English as an international language. Therefore, many coursebooks now have been integrating conversations among native speakers of English (monolingual speakers of English) and non-native speakers of English (bilingual users of English) or among non-native speakers of English, e.g. between a Singaporean with a Vietnamese or between a Thai and an Indonesian.
5. The new fifth item added in the checklist is 'The topics for speaking activities integrate local cultures.' Back in 1990s, most of topics for speaking activities were related to English speaking countries culture such as, 'speed dating', 'SAD' (Seasonal Affective Disorder), British novelists, for example, Agatha Christie, or British artists such as, Sting, or Elton John. These topics are no longer relevant with the status of English as an international language (EIL). Thus, we need to evaluate the inclusion of EIL in current English coursebooks.
6. Regarding reading skills, a new item was added in the checklist. It says 'Reading passage incorporate local cultures.' Any reading text related to British or American cultures are no longer relevant with the current issue of EIL. As a consequence, we need to evaluate whether or not the reading texts in the coursebooks include the cultures other than British or American Cultures.
7. The next new item in the checklist is 'Scoring rubric is available in the textbook to assess writing skills.' Many current textbooks are fostering students to do self-

assessment using CEFR or Common European Framework. Having reviewed the previous checklists, none of the items in the checklist was concerned with scoring rubrics for writing skills whereas it might be applicable to assess students' writing especially in writing coursebooks. Thus scoring rubrics for writing skills should be included in the checklist.

8. Another new item in the checklist is 'Corpus (the frequency of words and how to use them) are available in each vocabulary lesson.' This is imperative to include in the checklist because corpus teaches language learners common words or expressions used in a particular language. Therefore, coursebooks should inform the users (students and teachers) language corpus.
9. The last new item in the checklist is 'Pronunciation covers English as in international language.' As explained earlier, English does not belong to English speaking countries anymore. Many English accents and varieties have emerged such as, Indian English, Singaporean English, or Malaysian English; thus, students need exposure of these accents through the coursebooks. For this reason, we should include the item regarding EIL pronunciation in the checklist.

Discussion

The following table (Table 2) shows the responses/feedback from the respondents.

Table 2: Respondents' Feedback

Subject	Responses/books evaluated
1.	In general the textbook is good./Face2Face
2.	No 17..a bit confused with the question/Face2Face Elementary (Student's Book)
3.	They fit what teachers need to assess from books teachers use in teaching language/Face2Face and Touchstone
4.	No. The checklist is already good/Cambridge Unlock Second edition
5.	The items of the checklist are acceptable./ English Pathway (Erlangga)
6.	It is ok. No revision.

7.	The comprehensive items of checklist/Business Plus: Preparing for the Workplace by Margaret Helliwell
8.	Good/English for second grade junior high school student of Kemendikbud RI
9.	It's good enough to represent the whole book, the language may be the attractive one for readers/English for Children 2
10.	None/Journey for Primary
11.	It's amazing book/Bahasa Inggris Think Globally Act Locally
12.	No I don't have/Business Plus 1 & 2 Cambridge University Press
13.	No comment
14.	It's good enough/Listening 1 (for self circle only)
15.	The title of the book should be mentioned at the beginning of this questionnaire as it will help the respondents giving more specific feedback./ Complete IELTS for Introduction.to IELTS program
16.	There are some words with wrong spelling/Face2Face
17.	None. All is well-prepared and good to go/Face2Face
18.	No comment
19.	Some questions are somewhat similar.
20.	<p>Tapi saya beri catatan dikit untuk kuesioner itu biar ketika dijadikan bukti lampiran instrumen riset lebih baik:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Kekeliruan butir kuesioner 12, 18, 29, 31, & 47 berkaitan dengan grammar: subject and verb agreement 2. Perlu konsistensi dalam menggunakan nama, yang mana istilah yang dipakai: book? Textbook? Atau Coursebook? Karena konsepnya beda. Ketiganya digunakan dalam kuesioner itu. 3. Nomor 15: widow, pasti window maksudnya 😊 4. Nomor 17: rather that, kayaknya rather than 5. Nomor 38: corpus atau corpora karena berkaitan dengan subject verb agreement

6. Nomor 39 dan 42 itu sama maknanya

Although there is some feedback from the respondents, most of them were of the opinion that the items of the evaluation checklist suit the coursebooks they were using. One of them is there are statements which look similar and there is one which is not understandable. For example, item 17 which says ‘the materials emphasize on focus on form rather that focus on forms.’ “Form” in that sentence deals with grammar, language function and meaning. On the other hand, “forms” is related to how we make grammatically correct sentences. Not all teachers know the differences between ‘form’ and ‘forms’, so it needs to be revised. In addition, item 39 and 42 have similar meaning. Both of them discuss contextualization. Therefore, one of the items should be omitted. Another feedback is there is an inconsistent use of the terms ‘textbook’, ‘coursebook’, and ‘book’. It is strongly suggested to choose one and use it consistently in the evaluation checklist.

To conclude, the items of the checklist developed in the present study should be re-examined and we need to investigate the reliability and the items’ validity. Furthermore, the checklist should include important and specific pragmatic aspects such as sociopragmatics and pragmalinguistics as well as particular items investigating ICT. These categories have to be taken into account since it is believed that the aims of language learning are to be able to communicate in the target language appropriately and ICT is paramount to facilitate language teaching and learning. Consequently, pragmatics and ICT should be evaluated through the evaluation checklist.

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