Evaluating the textbook "English for engineering" for students at Hanoi industrial vocational college (HNIVC)\

Đánh giá giáo trình "Tiếng Anh chuyên ngành Cơ khí" dành cho sinh viên trong trường Cao đẳng nghề Công nghiệp Hà Nội. M.A Thesis Linguistics: \Hứa Thị Mai Hoa

1.1. Rationale of the study

In this thesis, we will look at the textbook which aims to suggest, to the teacher, ways of going about the task of materials evaluation. Generally, the textbook evaluation is so necessary for us as the teachers, because it can give us the chance to know whether the textbook we used is good enough for teaching and learning or whether it can be adapted something. Being aware of the importance of the English learning for their students, the Hanoi Industrial Vocational College (HNIVC) and the Faculty of Basic Sciences are always searching for the most suitable materials used as core material. And since 2007, the textbook English for Engineering (EFE) used in teaching ESP at the third semester for technical students. Though the material has been in use at HNIVC for 5 years and applied to technical students since 2007, it has never been formally evaluated. So, it is essential, therefore, that we should establish and apply a wide variety of relevant and contextually appropriate criteria for the evaluation of the textbook to assess its appropriateness against the learning purpose.

1.2. Aims of the study

An evaluation of teaching materials helps to identify particular strengths and weaknesses of the materials. The finding of the thesis will be very useful for both the researcher and the teachers, who are teaching the coursebook “English for Engineering”. It will provide the authorities and the teachers with scientific evidence to improve the quality of the current book used for the second-year students of HNIVC.

1.3. Research questions

The thesis will be conducted to answer the following research question:
How does the textbook, used for the second-year students at HNIVC, meet the course requirements in terms of the aims, the contents and the methodology?

1.4. Scope of the study

In this study, the researcher just focuses on three criteria which are stated in the requirements of the students at Hanoi Industrial Vocational College: in terms of the aims, the content and the methodology in the textbook ‘English for Engineering’.

1.5. Methods of the study

To collect the data, the methods used in this thesis are document analysis, survey questionnaires, and informal interviews.

Chapter 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Materials in language teaching and learning

According to Hutchinson and Waters (1987), textbook evaluation is basically a straightforward, analytical ‘matching process: matching needs to available solutions’. Our own view is that this issue is rather more emotive and controversial for teachers; many would agree with Swales (1980) that textbooks, especially course books, represent a ‘problem’, and in extreme cases are examples of educational failure. We would like to explore the reasons for such strong reactions, and to put forward possible evaluative solutions. Supplementary textbooks and materials on the other hand may not carry the same burden. The evaluative criteria for these can to some extent remain implicit, or be allowed to define themselves more informally in the local situation.

2.2.1. Roles of textbooks in EFL/ESL class

Back in 1934, McElroy stated that “the textbook is decidedly not the sole condition of an effective class; quality of teaching is more important”. 75 years later, an enormous body of research on the role of the textbook in EFL classrooms has accumulated around the globe, indicating that ‘successful’ learning and teaching in primary and secondary EFL school environments is dependent on a wider spectrum of factors, not only on the quality
(or quantity) of English language learning materials. The importance of the teacher is, of course, undisputed (see, for instance, Butzkamm 2005).

2.2.2. Types of textbooks

College textbooks come in a variety of shapes and sizes, paperback, spiral bound, or hardcover, but what is most important is finding used copies. The more students taking the same class, the easier it is to share the textbook. A new type of textbook is becoming readily available. Instead of purchasing expensive, heavy textbooks, some colleges and publishers are including free, downloaded textbooks. Students simply download the textbook to their computer and print out necessary pages or read the textbook online. This is helping students focus on the expense of tuition, room, and board without having to worry about finding inexpensive versions of the textbooks they need.

2.3. English for Specific Purpose (ESP)

ESP has had a relatively long time to mature and so we would expect the ESP community to have a clear idea about what ESP means. In short, the view gained ground that the English needed by a particular group of learners could be identified by analyzing the linguistic characteristics of their specialist area of work or study … became the guiding principle of ESP (Tom Hutchinson and Alan Waters (1987)

2.4. Textbooks evaluation

2.4.1. What is textbooks evaluation?

To make the most effective use of a textbook, however, teachers must decide which textbooks are appropriate for their needs. A teacher needs to determine the extent to which a textbook focuses on and is aligned with a coherent set of significant, age-appropriate student learning goals that the teacher, school, or district has identified as integral to the understanding of and progress in a particular academic subject. To evaluate a textbook, reviewers examine each content-matched activity in light of the instructional criteria and rate the set of activities according to a prescribed set of indicators and scoring scheme for each one. Their findings are presented as profiles of judgments for each learning goal across the set of criteria with evidence provided to support each judgment.
2.4.2. Why textbooks evaluation?

Sheldon (1988) has offered several reasons for textbook evaluation. He suggests that the selection of an ELT textbook often signals an important administrative and educational decision in which there is considerable professional, financial, or even political investment. A thorough evaluation, therefore, would enable the managerial and teaching staff of a specific institution or organization to discriminate between all of the available textbooks on the market. Moreover, it would provide for a sense of familiarity with a book’s content, thus assisting educators in identifying the particular strengths and weaknesses of textbooks already in use.

2.4.3. Models for materials evaluation.

Evaluation model by Hutchinson and Water (a macro – evaluation)

Hutchinson and Waters (1993) also propose their own checklist of criteria for objective and subjective analyses. The purpose of the checklist is for evaluating English teaching materials by focusing on such big issues as the audience, the aims, the content, the methodology, and other criteria including price, and availability.

Audience

According to Hutchinson and Waters (1993), one of the most important factors is learner. The overall aim of course or a program is to meet the needs of a particular group of learners. English teaching materials in general must be selected or designed based on those needs.

Aims

In any language course, the aims of the course must be defined clearly. At the same time, matching the aims of the materials and the objectives of the course is necessary to be carried out in materials evaluation process.

Content

Content is one of the most important elements of the materials. With the purpose of evaluating materials, Hutchinson and Waters (1993) state that it is necessary to examine if the content of the materials is suitable to the content prescribed in terms of
language points, macro-skills and their proportion, micro skills, as well as the kind of texts. In many cases, the aspects of subject matter areas, learners' level of knowledge, type of topic and how those topics are presented are also considered. Last but not least, the evaluation needs to learn about whether the way the content is organized and sequenced within the course units, throughout the course is appropriate or not.

**Methodology**

Hutchinson and Waters (1993) suggest many aspects dealing with material methodology that need to be evaluated. Firstly, the evaluation must indicate whether the theories of learning on which the course based on are in line with the ones of the materials. Secondly, the aspects of the learners' attitude to expectations about learning English should be considered. Thirdly, it is necessary to determine whether the kinds of exercises / tasks included in the materials are suited to the course requirements. Teaching-learning techniques are another aspect that needs to be evaluated. At this time, evaluators must decide whether the teaching – learning techniques that can be used with the materials are those required by the course and suitable to the learners. Moreover, the materials evaluation should take the aspects such as teaching aids, and guidance support for teaching. Finally, it is necessary to determine if the materials are flexible so that they can be used in different order to suit the teaching contexts.

**Chapter 3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

3.1. Introduction

In this chapter, some research methodologies are introduced for our project: document analysis and questionnaire. Then we describe the teaching and learning ESP and its objectives at Hanoi Industrial Vocational College (HNIVC). After that, this chapter says about data collection procedures: how to do the document analysis; and finally, we discuss
about questionnaires for the teachers and for the students to discover whether this textbook can be taught and learned.

3.2. Research methodology

**Document analysis:** Document analysis is use of “content analysis and other techniques to analysis and summarize printed materials and existing information” (Taylor & Steel, 1996).

**Questionnaire:** Questionnaire aims to seek evidence of the teachers’ and the students’ opinions about the aim, content and methodology of the material.

Chapter 4. DATA ANALYSIS

4.1. The realization of each criterion in the textbook “EFE”

4.1.1. Audience

At our college most students are age from 18 to 25, may be some is over, they are males and females. They all graduated High Secondary School. They have finished English course for 12th grade at school. After learning 60 lessons of General English at our college, they continue to learn ESP for their future career. For this research, 60 second-year technical students are required to participate in our survey.

4.1.3. The aims of EFE

The aims of the course for the second-year technical students at HNIVC are as follows:

- Getting students familiar with English as a Foreign Language;
- Practicing essential grammar; functional language; structures and vocabulary;
- Helping students to understand the specific fields, that they work for;
• Building up learners' confidence in using the four language skills of reading, speaking, writing, and listening to communicate in real life and work situations.

The essential grammar, functional language, structures and vocabulary that the aim of the course mentioned, were the content of grammar, structures, functions and the areas of vocabulary the students should achieve after learning the coursebook. In addition, they can use at least 400 basis ESP words in their career.

4.1.3. The contents of EFE

As required by the course, the coursebook should cover a fair range of language points and skills. Specifically, the coursebook should cover grammar, vocabulary, and four skills of reading, writing, speaking and a little listening because students only listen to their teachers. In addition, a variety of text types and topics should be introduced into the coursebook. Following is the specification of the content requirement of the course. This textbook is used for the students who know the basic English for communication and the basic specific knowledge about their career in Vietnamese so that they can catch ESP more conveniently and clearly.

4.1.4. The methodology

The English course at HNIVC aimed to teach the students to use English both accurately and fluently. The method of language teaching was combination of traditional and communicative approach. Throughout EFE, the students were presented with useful language and they had the opportunity to personalize the language they learned, made use of their own knowledge and experiences and expressed their ideas and opinions in their career. The teachers were also expected to make use of variety of teaching-learning techniques such as pair-work, group-work, and individual-work to develop different interactions in the language classroom.

4.2. Data analysis and discussion

4.2.1. The appropriateness of the material to the aims of the course
The data collected from the questionnaires confirmed the researcher's findings: 90% agreed that all four skills were presented in the coursebook. However, their confidence in using the four skills was different, and the reason may be that the number of tasks and exercises for each skill were not equal. Over 60% students and teachers agreed that the students were confident in using reading and writing skills as a result of learning the coursebook.

4.2.2. The appropriateness of the material to the content requirements of the course

The analysis have shown that the content requirements of the course in terms of grammar, structures, function, vocabulary, skills, text types, topic were met quite appropriately. It is possible to say that the amount of grammar, structures, function, and vocabulary presented in the coursebook met the course requirements. The number of grammar exercises was not enough for the students. The vocabulary was much but simple for the learners. Therefore, it is not necessary to adapt the area of vocabulary and grammar exercises in the coursebook. The language skills, including reading, speaking, listening and writing were covered in the coursebook. This is ESP textbook so that reading and writing skill were much improved than speaking and listening skills. The coursebok matched the course requirements in terms of the text types. It is possible to say that through the rich and varied texts, the coursebook provided much authentic input to the students.

4.2.3. The appropriateness of the material to the methodology requirements of the course

The data from the coursebook analysis, the students questionnaire, teachers questionnaire indicated that the coursebook met the methodology requirements of the course in terms of types or task/exercises and teaching-learning techniques. By analyzing the coursebook, the researcher realized that apart from the influence of behaviorist and cognitive views as the course required, the coursebook was contained the affective factor that encourage the learners' wants in learning. The researcher also thought that the combination of the learning theories presented in the coursebook was suitable with the students' learning styles in this study.
Chapter 5. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

On the topics of materials adaptation, Donough and Shaw (1993) indicate that adaptation should take place when

1. There is not enough grammar coverage in general;

2. There is not enough practice of grammar point of particular difficulty to these learners;

3. The reading passages contain too much unknown vocabulary;

4. The comprehension questions are too easy because the answers can be lifted directly from the text with no real understanding;

5. The listening passages are inauthentic because they sound too much like written material being read out;

6. The subject-matter is inappropriate for learner of this age and intellectual level;

7. The photographs and other illustrative material are not culturally acceptable;

8. The amount of material is too great or too little to cover in the time allocated to lessons;

9. There is no guidance for teachers on handing group work and role play activities with a large class;

10. There is too much or too little variety in the activities;

11. There are no accompanying.

Similarly, Gabrielator (2002) shows that what should be adapted in a materials are aims, topics, texts, visuals, guidelines and explanation, exercises, activities, tasks.

ESP needs to be emphasised and the teacher training to teach ESP needs to be developed. The preparation of students for their present and future needs in employment is
not adequate. Both the teachers and the students agreed that ESP courses had positive effects on students’ professional career and major studies though there were potential problems toward ESP. On the other hand, students also confronted some problems other than insufficient English language skills. Overall, ESP should be incorporated in subject courses. In this way, students’ English competence performance and subject knowledge can be achieved satisfactorily and contribute to the industry’s needs and the ultimate goals of Technological and Vocational Education can be implemented. Although there are some disadvantages, but this textbook is useful for the teachers and the students to teach and to learn; especially, when they want to refer to the specific knowledge to improve their work.