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EVALUATING ENGLISH FOR IRAQ TEXTBOOK GRADE 5 IN TERMS OF TEXTBOOK QUALITY STANDARDS

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Abstract:

This study attempts to evaluate English for Iraq textbook grade 5 and compare English for Iraq 5 Pupil's book and Activity book in light of the American Council for the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL) Standards. The study approach is descriptive as the researcher uses content analysis to analyze the activities of all 8 units in English for Iraq textbook and then determine the availability of ATCFL standards in the textbook. The collected data were analyzed statistically. The results of this study indicated that English for Iraq textbook grade 5 matches the ATCFL five main standards (communication, cultures, connections, comparisons, and communities) moderately since English for Iraq textbook grade 5 matches cultures and connections standards largely whereas it matches communications, comparisons, and communities moderately.

Key words: Evaluation, English for Iraq Textbook, Grade 5, Textbook Quality Standards.

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Introduction

The strength of education systems all over the world is the real secret for leading developed countries. Therefore, Ministry of Education worldwide seeks to evaluate their teaching programs continuously to maintain up-to-date and effective education. Teaching curricula, accordingly, should be regularly and carefully evaluated and improved (Jahangard, 2007). Evaluation is a process of collecting and assessing data to make judgments lead to improving decisions (Allen, 1998). Tomlinson (2011) states textbook evaluation seeks to measure how well a book is .This study focuses on evaluating English For Iraq textbook Grade 5 in terms of international textbook quality standards. Here, the researcher uses the American Council for the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL) standards.

Textbook evaluation

Evaluation is the way to improve and textbook evaluation is an institutional and pedagogical need. Evaluation helps teachers and program designers in making decisions towards quality education. Mahmood (2016) says:

[Textbook evaluation is...important... for the development and administration of language learning program. The main purpose of evaluation studies is to obtain information useful in improving the curriculum and textbooks. Therefore, teachers as well as material designers have to make use of the area of textbook evaluation ...to..... form their opinions about textbooks](p. 83).

There are several reasons why evaluating teaching materials is of high importance. It is, first of all, a reliable method to indicate the appropriateness of certain teaching pedagogies. Moreover, and beyond improvement purposes, textbooks evaluation provides essential data and either quantitative or qualitative leads to deep textbooks understanding which helps teachers carefully present and teach them. Ornstein and Hunkins (1998:320) cited in Mahmood (2016:89) state curriculum evaluation as "a process or cluster of processes that people perform in order to gather data that will enable them to decide whether to accept, change, or eliminate something- the curriculum in general or an educational textbook in particular". Tomlinson and Masuhara (2004:1) state "English materials....have to be measured by making judgments about the effectiveness of the materials".

Çakit (2006) states two major ways of evaluating a language textbook: macro and micro. Macro evaluation is the holistic assessment of a textbook in terms of certain criteria while micro evaluation is an in-depth analysis of particular activities for particular learners. Macro evaluation is for the textbook itself which can be accomplished by examining the claims made on the front or the back of teachers' and learners' book or in a table of content. Tomlinson (2001) states that evaluation seeks to discover the extent the program meets its requirements and the extent the program can be improved. Williams (1983:251) says "The ESL (English as a second language) textbook should be consistent ... (with the) psychological and linguistic principles underlying current accepted methods of second-language teaching", and this needs to be checked through careful evaluation. 12

English for Iraq

Teaching English in Iraq has been changing rapidly over the last ten years. Before that time, Iraqi textbooks were merely about the Grammar-Translation method and had no cultural variety (Akef, 2011). Then came Iraq Opportunities series which was revolutionary at that time. It incorporated new teaching methods especially the Communicative approach.

"all Iraqi textbooks espoused Grammar Translation and Audi lingual Methods as the main approaches in learning ... The main emphasis was on grammar, and vocabulary was presented by using Arabic translations or memorizing .. the whole emphasis was put on Iraqi and Arab culture, whereas English culture remained outside of the classroom. ... Later, the Ministry of Education adopted the Iraq Opportunities series ... It is co-produced by York Press and Pearson Education Ltd in the United Kingdom and the Educational Research Center in Lebanon. Iraqi schools (used that) series in 2012. ... Iraq Opportunities series embraced Communicative Language teaching..." (AlAkraa, 2013:5).

Then, just recently in 2017, the new series English for Iraq has present to the educational system. It is mainly authored by Sarah MacBurnie and produced by Garnet Education Publishing Ltd. under the supervision of the General Directorate of Curricula in the Ministry of Education. It consists of five main components: Pupil's book, Activity book, Dictionary (English- Arabic), Teacher's book, and two posters (MacBurnie, 2017).

The American Council for the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL) standards

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The American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL) seeks to improve teaching and learning of all languages. It helps in meeting the needs of language professionals (Al-Aqad, 2017). Having quality standards for language programs helps in evaluating teaching and textbooks effectively is an effective way for textbook evaluation (Blaz, 2013).

Al-Aqad (2017) and El Shawa (2011) both used the American Council for the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL) standards to evaluate English textbooks. These standards are communication, cultures, connections, comparisons, and communities. Communication standard leads to engage students in conversations to express feelings and emotions and exchange opinions on a variety of topics. Cultures standard leads students to demonstrate an understanding of the relationship between the practices in different cultures. Connections standard leads students to reinforce their knowledge of other disciplines through the foreign language. Comparisons standard seeks to figure out students' ability to demonstrate understanding of the nature of language through comparisons of the language studied and their own linguistically and culturally. Communities standard is for checking students' ability to use the language both within and beyond the school setting and in life-like situations.

Literature Review

There are many studies on the evaluation of English textbooks. Some are about Iraqi texts and others discussed other countries' curricula. Akef (2011), AlAkraa (2013) and Mahmood (2016) evaluated Iraqi English teaching programs throughout teachers' perceptions. However, AlAkraa (2013) and Akef (2011) studied the old curricula IRAQ OPPORTUNITIES and Mahmood (2016) studied new English for Iraq. Akef (2011) also evaluated the previous IRAQ OPPORTUNITIES for the second Intermediate stage using a checklist to investigate the perceptions of (60) English teachers working in the public and private intermediate schools at Baghdad. Results revealed IRAQ OPPORTUNITIES was very poor in most domains: general shape, teaching aids, and book content. AlAkraa (2013) evaluated the old fifth grade English textbook Iraq Opportunities 3, The researcher used a questionnaire to study the perspectives of English teachers. The findings were in favour of the textbook in terms of grammar and vocabulary, yet the study criticizes the limited role and the poor representation of culture.

Mahmood (2016) evaluated the first-grade intermediate textbook English for Iraq (student's book) from the view of 62 teachers in Baghdad. He used a checklist to collect data, and the responses indicated that the textbook met the criteria in the checklist. It was found that there were no differences in responses related to gender. Awad (2013) evaluated the Palestinian 12th grade English textbook from teachers' perspectives using a questionnaire (checklist) to examine 26 teachers in Nablus. The researcher found out that these books are suitable for the Palestinian students, their culture and religion. Akbari and Pourabbas (2015) evaluated the Iranian English textbook using a questionnaire based on students' language needs. They examined (120) high school students. The results revealed3 all language abilities and elements were approximately significant for most of the learners, but the textbook did not meet the students' foreign language needs. They, therefore, recommended textbooks be improved.

All previous studies used a questionnaire to investigate teachers' perceptions like Akef (2011), AlAkraa (2013), Mahmood (2016) and Akbari and Pourabbas (2015), however, this study uses a content analysis card to analyze the English for Iraq. Also, the new English for Iraq has only evaluated by Mahmood (2016), and therefore, this study seeks to spot the light on this new curriculum.

Study main questions

This study will discuss the results in light of the following questions:

1. To what extent does the content English For Iraq Textbook Grade 5 Pupil's book match the ACTFL five main standards (Communication, Cultures, Connections, Comparisons, and Communities)?
2. To what extent does the content English For Iraq Textbook Grade 5 Activity book match the ACTFL five main standards (Communication, Cultures, Connections, Comparisons, and Communities)?
3. Are there statistically significant differences between the content English For Iraq Textbook Grade 5 Pupils book and Activity book regarding the ACTFL five main standards (Communication, Cultures, Connections, Comparisons, and Communities)?

Methodology

Research Design

This is a descriptive quantitative content analysis study for English for Iraq 5 content analysis to investigate the extent to which the book's activities match the (ACTFL) standards .

Participants

The population of this study is English for Iraq 5 which consists of 8 units, and the sample is the all the units. These units include activities in reading, writing, speaking, listening, vocabulary and grammar. The study covers all different activities.

Table (1): Content of English for Iraq 5 (Books and Units)

BOOK	No. of Units
Pupil's book	8
Activity book	8

Instrument

The researcher adopted a content analysis card made by Al-Aqad (2017) and also by El Shawa (2011) in similar studies sought to evaluate English for Palestine. Mahmoud, A. (2008) states that content analysis is a good research tool that focused on the actual content and internal features of the book. The card aimed to collect and analyze data regarding both English for Iraq 5 Pupil's book and English for Iraq 5 Activity book. The modified card included 32 assessing statements for 9 sub-standards based on the five main standards: Communication, Cultures, Connections, Comparisons and Communities. The card has a scale of four degrees: considerable (4), satisfactory (3), insufficient (2), almost none (1).

Table (2): Classification of standards, sub-standards and assessing sentences

No.	Standards	Substandards	Items
1.	Communication	3	12
2.	Cultures	2	8
3.	Connections	1	3
4.	Comparisons	2	5
5.	Communities	1	4
Total	5 standards	9 Sub-standards	32 statements

Procedures

1. Reviewing many studies in curricular evaluation.
2. Reviewing relevant literature.
3. Reviewing the units and activities of English for Iraq 5 accurately.
4. The researcher and another co-researcher analyze the STUDENT'S BOOK and ACTIVITY BOOK using Al- Aqad (2017) modified content analysis card.
5. Find out Ratio of agreement between the analysts.
6. Discussing results and findings.
7. Making suggestions and recommendations.

Study Limitations

This study was limited to evaluating the content of English for Iraq Textbook Grade 5 in the light of the ACTFL standards and took place during the year 2018. The evaluation covers English for Iraq Textbook Grade 5 (Pupil's book) and (Activity book).

Results

To answer the study questions, the researcher used content analysis card of Textbook English for Iraq 5 under a treble scale to determine the availability of ACTFL five main standards (Communication, Cultures, Connections, Comparisons, and Communities) and their sub-standards (largely, moderately, little) then calculating the mean, std. deviation and percentage.

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Table (3): Mean, Std. deviation and Percentage of the ACTFL Five Main Standards (Communication, Cultures, Connections, Comparisons, and Communities)

#	Standards	Sub-standards	Mean	Std. Deviation	%	الموافقة
1	Communications	A	3.17	0.34	0.79	Medium
		B	3.27	0.33	0.82	Medium
		C	3.19	0.54	0.80	Medium
		Total	3.19	0.28	0.80	Medium
2	Cultures	A	3.34	0.28	0.84	Large
		B	3.49	0.20	0.87	Large
		Total	3.39	0.23	0.85	Large
3	Connections	A	3.34	0.62	0.84	Large
4	Comparisons	A	2.89	0.80	0.72	Medium
		B	2.94	0.70	0.74	Medium
5	Communities	Total	2.91	0.73	0.73	Medium
		A	2.96	0.44	0.74	Medium
	Total		3.19	0.33	0.80	Medium

Table (3) shows the results of the content analysis card of English for Iraq 5 in light of the ACTFL five main standards (Communication, Cultures, Connections, Comparisons, and Communities) as follows:

Communication standard in English for Iraq 5 places a medium percentage (80%) since all the three sub-standards have a medium percentage. The first sub-standard (A) got a percentage of (79%), the second sub-standard (B) got a percentage of (82%), and the third sub-standard (C) got a percentage of (80%). As for the availability of cultures standard in English for Iraq 5, it places a large percent (85%) as the two sub-standards have a large percentage. The first sub-standard (A) got a percentage of (84%) whereas the second sub-standard (B) got a percentage of (87%).

As for the availability of Connections standard in English for Iraq 5, it has only one standard and places a large percentage (84%).

Concerning the availability of comparisons standard, it places a medium percentage (73%) as the two sub-standards have a medium percentage. The first sub-standard (A) got a percentage of (72%) whereas the second sub-standard got a percentage of (74%).

The fifth main standard is communities. Communities standard in English for Iraq 5 has a medium availability percentage (74%).

Besides, the total percentage of the availability of the ATCFL main five standards in English for Iraq 5 is (80%) as shown in table (1). This percentage is considered a medium.

1) Communication**A) O**

Table (4): Mean, Std. Deviation and Percentage of the first sub-standard of Communication

#	Content	Mean	Std. Deviation	%	Ranking	
1	Encourages students to interact with each other verbally, in pairs or groups.	3.14	0.38	0.79	3	Medium
2	Encourage students to provide details of their own lives.	3.14	0.38	0.79	3	Medium
3	Talks about topics that are age- appropriate.	3.29	0.76	0.82	2	Large
4	Provides a variety of forms and structures (grammar).	3.00	0.58	0.75	5	Medium
5	Simulates a real-world context or task	3.43	0.53	0.86	1	Large
Total		3.17	0.34	0.79		Medium

(1) Almost none, (2) Insufficient, (3) Satisfactory, (4) Considerable

Table (4) shows to what extent the first sub-standard of communication are available in English for Iraq 5. Table (4) consists of (5) statements. Statement (3&5) have large degrees whereas statements (1,2, 4) have medium degrees. Statement (5) got the first place since it has a percentage of (86%), followed by statement (3) with a percentage of (82%), followed by statement (1&2) with a percentage of (79%) and the last grade is statement (2) with a percentage of (77%), and the lowest one is statement (4) with a percentage of (75%). The total percentage of this table is medium since it reached (%79).

B) O

Table (5): Mean, Std. Deviation and Percentage of the second sub-standard of Communication

#	Content	Mean	Std. Deviation	%	Ranking	
6	Presents information in logical thematic units.	3.43	0.53	0.86	1	Large
7	Provides guidance to facilitate comprehension.	2.86	0.69	0.71	5	Medium
8	Uses language that is authentic and accurate	3.29	0.76	0.82	4	Large
9	Appeals to students' interests	3.43	0.53	0.86	1	Large
10	Addresses student's needs	3.43	0.79	0.86	1	Large
Total		3.27	0.33	0.82		Large

(1) Almost none, (2) Insufficient, (3) Satisfactory, (4) Considerable

Table (5) shows the availability of the second substandard (B) in English for Iraq 5. Table (5) consists of (5) statements (6, 7, 8, 9, 10). Four statements of this table are considered large (6,8,9,10) and one statement (7) is a medium. Statements (6,9,10) got the first place with a percentage of (86%), followed by statement (8) with a percentage of (82%), and followed by statement (7) which got the last grade with a percentage of (71%). The total percentage of this table reached (82%) and it is a large percentage.

C)

Table (6): Mean, Std. Deviation and Percentage of the Third Sub-Standard of

Communication

#	Content	Mean	Std. Deviation	%	Ranking	
11	Demonstrates mastery of the vocabulary and structures clearly and thoroughly.	3.57	0.53	0.89	1	Large
12	Provides criteria for written work evaluation through rubrics, visual scales, etc.	2.86	0.90	0.71	2	Medium
	Total	3.19	0.54	0.80		Medium

(1) Almost none, (2) Insufficient, (3) Satisfactory, (4) Considerable

Table (6) shows the availability of the third sub-standard in English for Iraq 5. Table (6) consists of 2 statements (11&12). Statement (11) has a large percentage (89%) whereas statement (12) has a medium percentage (71%). The total percentage of this table reached (80%) and it is considered a medium percentage.

1) Cultures

A) O

Table (7): Mean, Std. Deviation and Percentage of first Sub-Standard of Cultures

#	Content	Mean	Std. Deviation	%	Ranking	
13	Attractive and inviting	3.29	0.76	0.82	4	Large
14	Up-to-date	3.57	0.53	0.89	1	Large
15	Authentic	3.43	0.53	0.86	3	Large
16	Age-appropriate to stimulate interest	3.57	0.53	0.89	1	Large
17	Depictions of a variety of peoples and cultures that speak the target language	3.00	0.00	0.75	5	Medium
	Total	3.34	0.28	0.84		Large

(1) Almost none, (2) Insufficient, (3) Satisfactory, (4) Considerable

Table (7) shows the availability of the first sub-standard of cultures in English for Iraq 5. Table (7) includes (5) statements related to the first sub-standard of cultures. There are four large statements (13,14, 15, 16) and one medium statement (17). Statements (14&16) got the highest percentage (89%). Statement (15) got the third grade with a percentage of (86%). Statement (13) got the fourth grade with a percentage of (82%). As for statement (17), it got the lowest (75%) percentage. The total percentage of the table (7) reached (84%) and it is considered a large percentage.

B) O

Table (8): Mean, Std. Deviation and Percentage of Second Sub-Standard of Culture

#	Content	Mean	Std. Deviation	%	Ranking	
18	Depicts a variety of peoples and cultures that speak the target language.	3.57	0.53	0.89	2	Large

19	Includes practices such as games, songs, celebrations, stories, sports, and entertainment representative of target language culture(s).	3.57	0.53	0.89	2	Large
21	Identifies products: toys, dress, foods, art, songs, literature.	3.86	0.38	0.96	1	Large
	Total	3.49	0.20	0.87		Large

(1) Almost none, (2) Insufficient, (3) Satisfactory, (4) Considerable

Table (8) shows the availability of the second sub-standard of cultures in English for Iraq 5. Table (8) includes three statements (18, 19, 20). All the three statements are large since they have a percentage of (96%, 89%, 89%) respectively. The total percentage of this table reached (87%) and it is considered a large percentage.

2) Connections

Table (9): Mean, Std. Deviation and Percentage of Connections

#	Content	Mean	Std. Deviation	%	Ranking	
21	Provokes opportunities to use (or discover more about) other subject areas: math, science, history, geography, art, literature, music, health, and others.	3.86	0.38	0.96	1	Large
22	Provokes opportunities to build upon prior experiences or existing knowledge.	3.43	0.79	0.86	2	Large
23	Includes projects that require learners to use technology (print, search on Google, etc)	3.29	0.95	0.82	3	Large
	Total	3.34	0.62	0.84		Large

(1) Almost none, (2) Insufficient, (3) Satisfactory, (4) Considerable

Table(9) shows the availability of connections standard in English for Iraq 5. Table (9) includes three statements (21, 22, 23). All the statements in the table (9) have large degrees. Statement (21) has the first grade with a percentage of (96%), followed by statement (22) which places the second grade with a percentage of (86%), and the third grade is a statement (23) with a percentage of (82%). The total degree of the table (9) has a large percentage (84%).

4) Comparisons

A)

Table (10): Mean, Std. Deviation and Percentage of the First Sub-Standard of Comparisons

#	Content	Mean	Std. Deviation	%	Ranking	
24	To look at their language and compare it linguistically to the target language.	3.00	1.00	0.75	1	Medium
25	To investigate or discuss cognates, idioms, and "borrowed words" in both English and the target language	3.00	0.82	0.75	1	Medium
	Total	2.89	0.80	0.72		Medium

(1) Almost none, (2) Insufficient, (3) Satisfactory, (4) Considerable

Table (10) shows the availability of the first sub-standard in English for Iraq 5. Table (10) includes two statements (24 &25). Both statements place the first grade since they have the same percentage (75%). The two statements are medium. The total percentage of this table reached (72%) and it is considered a medium percentage.

B)

Table (11): Mean, Std. Deviation and Percentage of the Second Sub-Standard Comparisons

#	Content	Mean	Std. Deviation	%	Ranking	
26	To promotes cross Cultural communication.	3.14	0.90	0.79	1	Medium
27	To invite explore aspects of their own culture further (surveys, research, etc.).	2.86	0.90	0.71	3	Medium
28	To demonstrate knowledge of the difference(s) between their culture and that of target language speakers.	3.00	0.82	0.75	2	Medium
	Total	2.94	0.70	0.74		Medium

(1) Almost none, (2) Insufficient, (3) Satisfactory, (4) Considerable

Table (11) shows the availability of the second sub-standard of comparisons in English for Iraq 5. Table (11) includes three statements (26, 27, 28) with medium degrees. The first grade is a statement (26) with a percentage of (79%), the second grade is a statement (28) with a percentage of (75%), and the third grade is a statement (27) with a percentage (71%). The total percentage is medium since it reached (74%).

3) Communities

Table (12): Mean, Std. Deviation and Percentage of Communities

T	Content	Mean	Std. Deviation	%	Rankin	g
29	Identifies careers or situations in which proficiency in the target language is useful or required.	2.86	0.69	0.71	3	Medium
30	Identifies famous people who speak the target language.	2.29	0.76	0.57	4	Medium
31	Suggests and encourages participation in opportunities for leisure activities that use the target language (media, sports, games, travel, music, reading).	3.29	0.49	0.82	1	Large
32	Incorporates technology, for example, suggest engaging, worthwhile Internet activities.	3.29	0.49	0.82	1	Large
	Total	2.96	0.44	0.74		Medium

(1) Almost none, (2) Insufficient, (3) Satisfactory, (4) Considerable

Table (12) shows the availability of communities standard in English for Iraq 5. Table (12) includes four statements (29, 30, 31, 32). Of the four statements, there are two large statements (31, 32) and two medium statements (29, 30). Statements (31&32) have the highest percentage (82%). Statement (29) got the third place with a percentage of (71%) whereas statement (30) got the last place with a percentage of (57%). The total degree of this table is a medium with a percentage of (74%).

Discussion

In light of the study results, cultures standard is the dominant one as it is the highest degree of all standards in English for Iraq textbook grade 5. Connections standard ranks a close second. As for communication standard, it places the third grade. Communities standard places the fourth grade and exists moderately in the book. The least dominant standard in Iraq textbook grade 5 is comparisons standard.

The researcher sees that cultures standard is of great importance and deserves this area in the textbook. Having a large percentage of cultures standard enhances the information and knowledge of other cultures in varied fields.

Since the availability of communication is medium, the researcher recommends some improvements to increase the availability as it plays an important role in producing a successful educational process. The more the activities allow students to interact with teacher and classmates, share their interests, and use language to communicate, the better the learning will be. Since knowledge is constructive and integrative, activities should be connected to prior knowledge or similar topics in other materials. Therefore, having a large percentage of connections standard in English for Iraq 5 is a good indicator since students can learn and construct knowledge effectively. As for comparisons standard, it deepens the higher thinking skills among students and makes them discover new things. From the researcher perspective, the area comparisons standard has covered in enough to achieve its goal. Communities standard is significant at which it helps students to use the English language effectively in situations inside and outside the school and thus staff concerned should take a step and improve this standard.

However the availability of the ATCFL five main standards have different percentages since there are some medium degrees and some large degrees, there are not any standard of low percentages. The researcher attributes this point to that curriculum designers eager to consider the ATCFL five main standards. On the other hand, a moderate percentage is neither a bad indicator nor a good one. in this spirit, the researcher recommends all officials to consider the results of this study and make the needed improvements.

Conclusion

Evaluating English for Iraq textbook grade5 is of great importance since it provides feedback and enables the staff concerned to support the strength and improve the weaknesses. The researcher investigated to what extent the activities in English for Iraq match the ATCFL standards. The researcher used content analysis to collect data and analyzed it statistically. The results show the availability degree of each standard separately and all standards together. In light of the study results, the researcher recommended making some improvements in English for Iraq textbook grade to match the ATCFL five main largely.

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