

The Republic of Iraq
Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research
Mosul University / College of Arts
Adab Al-Rafidayn Journal



Adab Al-Rafidayn Journal

**A refereed quarterly scientific journal
Issued by the College of Arts - University of Mosul**

Vol. Eighty-seven / year Fifty- one

Jumada al-awwal - 1443 AH / December 20/12/2021 AD

**The journal's deposit number in the National
Library in Baghdad: 14 of 1992**

ISSN 0378- 2867

E ISSN 2664-2506

To communicate:

radab.mosuljournals@gmail.com

URL: <https://radab.mosuljournals.com>

Adab Al-Rafidayn Journal

**A refereed journal concerned with the publishing of scientific researches
in the field of arts and humanities both in Arabic and English**

Supplement Vol. Eighty-seven/ year Fifty- one / Jumada al-awwal - 1443 AH / December 2021 AD

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Editor-in-chief

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Analyzing English Textbooks Content for Primary Stage

In The Light of Prescribed Objectives

*Ayad Mohammed Salih **

*Shoaib Saeed Fahady **

تأريخ القبول: ٢٠٢٠/٢/٩

تأريخ التقديم: ٢٠٢٠/١/٥

Abstract

The present study aims to evaluate English curriculum for primary stage namely "English for Iraq". The study will provide evidence about strength and weakness points in the prescribed curriculum. So, the researcher will analyze the content of the English textbook for primary stage. Then, the researcher will make a comparison between the content and the prescribed objectives set for teaching English at primary stage.

To analysis the content of the English syllabus for primary stage, the researcher focuses on the three English textbooks for fourth ,fifth and sixth graders as it represents, the stages of focusing on the four linguistic skills (listening, speaking, reading and writing).

It is observed in this curriculum that it contains variety and frequent activities within a single unit without determining the type of aspects or items, which causes confusion to teachers and pupils as well. There is a single page containing lots of pictures that revolve around more than one topic, which affects negatively on pupils' ability of realizing the exercise.

It was clear from the analysis of the content that this curriculum focuses on the oral skill, more than the written one, and therefore the content of the curriculum applies and represents the objectives for which it was established.

Keywords: curriculum, skill, activity .

Master student/Department of English Language/College of Education for Human Sciences/Mosul University.

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Statement of the problem:

English is being treated as a world language because of its vast presence all over the world. Textbooks play an important role in the teaching / learning process as they convey knowledge to learners. The basic function of a textbook is to make knowledge available and clear to the learners in an organized way. It provides the necessary input into classroom lessons through different activities, reading and explanations. Textbooks are regarded as the obvious part of any ELT curriculum.

Evaluation is the final step of any curriculum, it enables us to know whether the objectives of the curriculum are achieved or not and to consider next objectives. There are different views concerning curriculum evaluation. It is an educational necessity as it shows how a textbook can improved.

Starting from a textbook the academic year 2013-2014 , the Ministry of Education put in use a new series for teaching English to primary stage " English for Iraq" . This series starts from first primary class and now after six years, the sixth graders completed the first series of "English for Iraq". This new series of ELT aims to engage pupils in learning language and having positive attitudes towards learning foreign language. Hence, after six years of application, ELT curriculum need to be evaluated and improved periodically, as many educators state that there is a need for revising and evaluating the curriculum and its content.

Majority of previous Iraqi graduated pupils find it difficult to understand English. Most of them are graduated from primary schools with a very weak background in English, although they could answer drills and exercises, but without understanding to what they read. They feel that it is not possible to achieve fluency or mastery in English.

The new English curriculum should give students the confidence to interact. There are many conversations and activities in the new series that should be performed by pupils in the classroom during lessons. The pupil starts at six years of age to study and learn various subjects concerning Arabic, mathematics, religion, and others including English. According to the new curriculum "English for Iraq" the pupil starts learning English from

the first grade till the sixth grade. She/he should learn various skills of writing, reading, listening and speaking.

Evaluation provides the necessary feedback to maximize the effectiveness of classroom learning. Thus, evaluating English syllabus is of an important value in the development of foreign language teaching curriculum. Hence, the researcher will analyse all the English textbooks prescribed to teach English for primary school pupils, to check if they full fill the objectives of teaching English. The researcher will also check the outcomes of English curriculum after six years of study.

Aim of the study:

The present study aims to analyze English curriculum for primary stage namely "English for Iraq" in the light of prescribed objectives set by the Ministry of Education. This will be done through investigates:

- Whether the content, presented in the English textbook, for primary schools, matches the objectives set by the Ministry of Education concerning English subject.

Limits of the Study:

The current study is limited to English curriculum namely "English for Iraq" Prescribed to primary stage English classes for the academic year 2018/2019, concerning the city of Mosul.

Significance of the Study:

The results of this study will provide the Ministry of Education with necessary information about the English syllabus for primary stage namely "English for Iraq". It will also be of value to those who are particularly interesting in designing English syllabus course and those who are concerned with teaching English. The study will provide evidence about strength and weakness points in the prescribed curriculum. This will give distinct points to those interested in curriculum designing to improve the English curriculum for primary stage.

Definition of Basic Terms:

Textbook:

Textbook has been defined by:

(Richards, 2001)"The true meaning of word "textbook" is to provide the complete material for a course, In many cases the term

“materials” used for in place of “textbooks”, which identifying anything that is used by teachers and students to keep continue the process of learning".

(The American Heritage® Dictionary of the English Language, 2011:311) "A book used in schools or colleges for the formal study of a subject".

(Cambridge Advanced Learner's Dictionary, 2011: 432) "a book that contains detailed information about a subject for people who are studying that subject".

(Webster's New World College Dictionary, 2014:356)"a book giving instructions in the principles of a subject of study, specif. one used as the basis or partial basis of a course of study."

(Oxford, 2014:813)" A book that teaches a particular subject and that is used especially in schools".

(Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2014,19)" A textbook is a comprehensive compilation of content in a branch of study. Textbooks are produced to meet the needs of educators, usually at educational institutions. Schoolbooks are textbooks and other books used in schools".

Operationally the researcher defines the textbook as:

A book used in the study of a subject: such as one containing a presentation of the principles of a subject or a literary work relevant to the study of a subject.

Objectives of Teaching English for Primary Stage:

The educational objectives, for a definite subject in any academic level, should be based upon the physical and psychological characteristics of children at that age level. Accordingly, it is essential to know these characteristics of pupils in the primary academic level, then

to be acquainted with the educational objectives of teaching English for primary stage. These characteristics can be summarized in the following points as set in (English for Iraq, Teacher's Book, 2018):

1. Pupils in primary stage are becoming increasingly adept with physical skills and more mature in their thinking and reasoning. They still support and security, and value and respect parents' and

teachers' opinions, though some children may begin to show irritation at adult-imposed restrictions.

2. In terms of physical development, by the age of eleven most children have good control of both large and small muscles (gross and fine motor skills) and may have a keen interest in activities that require coordinated physical skills. They should now be ready to learn to cross the street alone and may undertake simple journeys unaccompanied.

3. Increase control of hand movements enables more legible and even handwriting and more detailed artwork, and many children enjoy activities such as drawing, painting, sewing and similar activities.

4. In terms of cognitive and language skills, most children by age eleven have almost adult language skills in their mother tongue and can hold prolonged conversations both with other children and with adults outside the family. They may enjoy using their communication skills to write letters talk in telephone, use the internet and social media channels. In their mother tongue, children now can follow complex sentences in written material and read longer books with chapters in stages, being able to pick up threads where they left off. They may enjoy books and magazines on non-fiction topics that interest them. They can compose more complex stories.

5. Pupils seek patterns in the world around them and construct their identities and build cultural bridges.

In the light of these characteristics, specialists of English language set the following objectives for teaching English in the primary academic level:

1. Engage pupils in learning the language so that they enjoy it and want to continue learning it.
2. Give pupils the confidence to participant.
3. Provide pupils with opportunities to communicate in English.
4. Continue to develop pupils' exposure to the sound of English through recorded material.
5. Enable pupils to identify and name objects, communicate with the teacher and their peers to express simple ideas and needs,

preferences, ask questions, talk about friends and family, routines, and things they did and are going to do, etc., in English.

6. Expose pupils to longer sentences and utterances, allowing them to acquire these at their own pace.

7. Give pupil plenty of opportunities to use the language and to communicate with their peers and with you during controlled and free practice activities.

8. Build on basic reading skills using phonics and whole-word recognition.

9. Practice and develop pupils' confidence and competence in writing and spelling.

10. Creating positive attitudes towards learning foreign language.

Quoted from (**English for Iraq-teacher's Guide, 2018:11**)

Procedures:

To assess English syllabus for primary academic stage, It should be studied from three basic aspects; content, pupils, and teachers. Concerning the first aspect (content), it should be analysed in regards to skills and activities in English language and in the light of objectives of English syllabus set by the Ministry of Education.

Content Analysis:

To analysis the content of the English syllabus for primary stage, the researchers focus on the three English textbooks for fourth ,fifth and sixth grade as it represent, the stages of focusing on the four linguistic skills (listening, speaking, reading and writing), To perform the content analysis, the researcher has taken the following steps into consideration:

1. Read the modules very well in order to identify the content
2. Divide the unit into paragraphs within the four skills (Listening, Speaking, Reading and Writing).
3. Define the meaning of each field.
4. Determine the values and then classify them according to the classification used in the study.
5. Monitor the skills by giving one repeat for each value shown in the content.
6. The results are put in tables and then find out the percentages of iterations of each skill appeared in the content.

7. The results will be discussed in the light of what was recommended.

The following are results of content analysis for three textbooks; table 1, 2, 3, and figure 1.

Table 1
Content Analysis for Fourth Grade English Textbook

	Listeni ng	Speakin g	Readin g	Writin g	Total
Unit One	6	7	3	5	21
Unit Two	7	9	2	6	24
Unit Three	5	8	5	7	25
Unit Four	3	4	3	3	13
Unit Five	6	8	7	5	26
Unit Six	6	6	6	6	24
Unit Seven	4	4	5	4	17
Unit Eight	2	4	1	1	8
Total	39	50	32	37	158
Percentage	24.6%	31.6%	20.4%	23.4%	100%

Table 2
Content Analyses for Fifth Grade English Textbook

	Listening	Speaking	Reading	Writing	Total
Unit One	7	8	4	4	23
Unit Two	9	8	5	7	29
Unit Three	9	8	6	7	30
Unit Four	3	4	3	4	14
Unit Five	7	9	8	7	31
Unit Six	8	10	9	6	33
Unit Seven	8	11	7	8	34
Unit Eight	4	4	3	4	15
Total	55	62	45	47	209
Percentage	26.4%	29.6%	21.5%	22.5%	100%

Table 3
Content Analyses for Sixth Grade English Textbook

	Listening	Speaking	Reading	Writing	Total
Unit One	6	8	5	9	28
Unit Two	9	8	8	6	31
Unit Three	8	7	10	7	32
Unit Four	3	2	4	3	12
Unit Five	6	9	13	7	35
Unit Six	9	7	9	10	35
Unit Seven	7	8	18	11	44
Unit Eight	3	4	4	2	13
Total	51	53	71	55	230
Percentage	22%	22.2%	31.5%	24%	100%

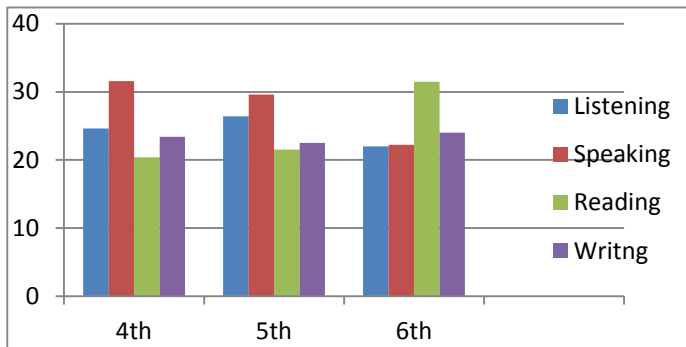


Figure 1

Content Analysis

Result Analyzes:

The result will be introduced according to the objective;
" Whether the content, presented in the English textbook, for primary schools, matches the objectives set by the Ministry of Education concerning English subject".

In order to verify this goal, the researcher has determined the objectives set for learning English language, designed by the curriculum designers at the Ministry of Education, These objectives have been set at the teacher's guide for EFL teachers.

The main ten objectives of this curriculum have been explained in previously. It is obvious through these objectives that the curriculum designers focus at this stage on developing pupils' listening comprehension.

It also creates opportunities for pupils to communicate with each other and with the teacher. The curriculum designers focus on the developing the skill of speaking by giving pupils opportunities to make short sentences that develop their talking and speaking skills in English, and then move to lengthy sentences that increase pupils' confidence to use the language in communication. It is clear from the objectives that the designers give less importance to the skills of reading and writing but focus upon oral aspects. It is obvious to the researcher that the curriculum designers focus on oral skills, which is represented by using the dialogues more than the skill of reading and writing. On the emotional side, we note that the curriculum designers emphasize on the creation opportunities for pupils through practicing English language, which leads to motivate them to learn English and build positive attitudes to learn foreign language.

In order to ascertain the extent to which these objectives represented in the content of the curriculum, the researcher conducted an analysis content of the books which are designed by the curriculum designers for the primary stage, concerning the first, second and third grades, the designers focus on developing listening skills only, So, the researcher has focused on analyzing the content of the other three books for grades four, five and six because

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they include all the skills of learning English concerning listening, speaking, reading and writing. Accordingly, the researcher has analyzed the content of the three books according to the skills and activities on which the book has been developed.

It is clear to the researcher that the fourth stage textbook focuses mainly on the skill of speaking, as the percentage weight recorded by the skill of speaking (31.6%) higher than other percentages. That is followed by listening (24.6%) then writing (23.4%), and the lowest percentage for reading (20.4%). It is clear that the curriculum designers start to transfer the student from the stage of listening and speaking to the stage of writing. The curriculum designers, in the first three grades, focus on developing the skills of listening and speaking, then in this grade, curriculum designers have begun to make pupils learn writing skill with a greater emphasis on speaking and listening.

For the fifth primary book, it is obvious to the researcher that the curriculum designers give the greatest focus on the skill of speaking and communication, which have taken the percentage (29.6%) with a focus on listening skills (26.4%). As for writing and reading skills, it is clear that the designers give them equal importance (22.5%) and (21.5%) respectively, this means that the designers continue presenting the skills of oral communication and developing pupils' listening with interest in accustoming pupils to writing skills and start accustoming them to reading through giving paragraphs in English language to develop reading comprehension.

For the sixth grade, the researcher has noted that the designers focus at this stage on the skill of reading and writing more than other skills (listening and speaking), and this indicates that the designers have begun in this book to transfer pupils from the stage of listening and speaking to the stage of written for the purpose of developing the skills of writing and reading. the researcher has also seen that the curriculum designers focus on developing reading comprehension of pupils, which scored (31.5%) with attention to writing skill, which scored (24%), while listening and speaking scored (22%).

Through analyzing the content of English curriculum for the primary stage, it is clear to the researcher that the curriculum

designers focus in the first three grades on oral skills by developing communication, listening and speaking. This will lead to create a good competence for pupils, which make them ready for the next stage of the curriculum, which begins in the fourth class. The focus, then, shifts to writing skill, giving appropriate importance to reading skill, and continue focusing on oral skills. The curriculum develops in the fifth and sixth grades focusing on writing and reading skills more than other skills. This means that the curriculum designers take into consideration the age of the pupils in the primary grade, where they focus on the oral skill rather than writing skill in the early years to concentrate the language proficiency of the pupils. Consequently, the focus turns to the written skill rather than the oral one in the last stage of the primary school as the pupil has reached the stage of cognition and the ability to use the language orally.

It is clear from the analysis above that the content of the six textbooks represents the objectives set by the Ministry of Education for English in primary stage. It was clear from the analysis of the content that this curriculum focuses on the oral skill, more than the written one, and therefore the content of the curriculum applies and represents the objectives for which it was established.

Discussion:

Through the result which has been presented, the researcher can give an integrated assessment for English language curriculum for primary academic stage in Iraq. He found positive points to strengthen this curriculum, and negative points which are considered as weaknesses.

One of the positive points that characterize this curriculum is that it is based on a logical and scientific basis that gives a sequence in the presentation of skills from simple to difficult and from part to all. This curriculum displays the language skills logically and its focus is on verbal skills in the early stages that work to form correct language proficiency for pupils. It moves, then, to present the written skills in the fourth, fifth and sixth classes.

We believe that the curriculum focuses in the sixth grade on reading comprehension considerably as the pupil has acceptable language proficiency over the previous years and mastered the basics of writing skill

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in the fourth and fifth years. So, the pupil can read paragraphs and understand what goes on in English textbook for sixth stage.

The researcher believes that the curriculum designers were creative in giving content that meets the objectives set for the teaching of English in primary school. This curriculum provides opportunities for students to practice language and communicate with peers and teachers, leading to enhanced acquisition of language skills.

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تحليل محتوى كتاب اللغة الإنجليزية للمرحلة الابتدائية

في ضوء الأهداف المحددة

إياد محمد صالح* و شعيب سعيد عبدالفتاح*

المستخلص:

تهدف الدراسة إلى تقييم منهج اللغة الإنجليزية للمرحلة الابتدائية وهي "English for Iraq"، ستقدم الدراسة دليلاً على نقاط القوة والضعف في المناهج الدراسية المقررة. لذلك سيقوم الباحث بتحليل محتوى كتاب اللغة الإنجليزية للمرحلة الابتدائية، ومن ثم إجراء مقارنة بين المحتوى والأهداف المحددة لتدريس اللغة الإنجليزية في المرحلة الابتدائية.

ولتحليل محتوى منهج اللغة الإنجليزية للمرحلة الابتدائية، يركز الباحث على الكتب المدرسية الإنجليزية الثلاثة للصف الرابع والخامس والسادس؛ إذ يظهر في هذه المراحل التركيز على المهارات اللغوية الأربع: (الاستماع والتحدث والقراءة والكتابة). ويلاحظ في هذا المنهج أنه يحتوي على أنشطة متنوعة ومتكررة داخل الوحدة الواحدة دون تحديد نوع العناصر أو الفعالية التي يدور حولها التمرين، مما يسبب الاريك للمعلمين والتلاميذ أيضاً؛ إذ يتبين أن هناك صفحات تحتوي على الكثير من الصور التي تدور حول أكثر من موضوع واحد، مما يؤثر سلباً على قدرة التلاميذ على تنفيذ التمرين.

وكان من الواضح في تحليل المحتوى أن هذا المنهج يركز على المهارة الشفهية، أكثر من المهارة المكتوبة، ولذا فإن محتوى المنهج ينطبق ويمثل الأهداف التي أنشئ من أجلها.

الكلمات المفتاحية: منهج، مهارة، نشاط.

طالب ماجستير/قسم اللغة الإنجليزية/كلية التربية للعلوم الإنسانية/جامعة الموصل.
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