

Retrospective Evaluation of Textbook “Summit 2B” for its Suitability for EFL Undergraduate Students

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Abstract: The literature of materials evaluation indicates the lack of the evaluation of the textbook “Summit 2B” for teaching purposes. This study aims to present the retrospective evaluation of this textbook for its suitability for Undergraduate University Students (UUSs). A survey using a checklist and a semi-structured interview were carried out. The data were collected from the TEFL instructors and students after one semester of using the “Summit 2B” as their textbook at Islamic Azad university, Tabriz branch, and Jahad daneshgahi in Urmia, Iran. Out of 150 participants of the study 10 were instructors and 140 were students. For the survey the checklist of Doaud and Celce-Murcia (1979) based on five criteria of subject matter, vocabulary and structure, exercise, illustration, and physical make-up was employed and distributed among the instructors and students; while, for the interview the researcher-designed questions were used for interviewing the instructors. The quantitative data obtained from the survey were analyzed using descriptive statistics and the qualitative data of the audio-recorded interview were analyzed using the descriptive interpretation of the responses given by the instructors. The results of the study, in general, revealed the suitability of the textbook for UUSs. The findings, in particular, indicated that there are some problems related to the criteria of vocabulary and structure, and physical make-up in relation to the over-loaded pages. The implications and necessary suggestions for strengthening the weak areas of the textbook are presented.

Keywords: EFL students, materials evaluation, retrospective evaluation, summit 2B, textbook

1. Introduction

Textbooks are the main sources that can convey the knowledge and information to the learners in an easy and organized way. Cunningsworth (1995), for example, identifies a textbook as a resource in presenting the materials and a source for learners to practice and do the activities. Hutchinson and Torres (1994) argue that the textbooks have a very important and positive role to play in teaching and learning. Sheldon (1988) suggests that “textbooks do not only represent the visible heart of any ELT program, but also offer considerable advantages” (p. 237). The most essential function of a textbook is to motivate students to learn (Mikk, 2000). For Dubin and Olshtain (1986) “the tangible element that gives a language course face validity to many teachers and learners is the textbook” (p. 167). With regard to the essential aim of the ELT textbooks, Byrd (2001) argues that ELT textbooks include two kinds of information which are topic content (e.g., Family, school, etc.) and linguistic content (e.g., grammar, vocabulary, skills) and that they help learners to learn the linguistic content through topic content. In fact, textbooks give learners and teachers enough confidence and security (Cunningsworth, 1995). It is agreed that textbooks are of great value in the processes of teaching and learning (e.g., Cunningsworth, 1995; Haycraft, 1998; O'Neill, 1982; Sheldon, 1988; Tanner, 1988). Studies which have been conducted in the area of textbook evaluation show that using textbooks is inevitable. Tyson (1997) expresses that for teachers who do not have enough time for lesson planning especially for inexperienced teachers textbooks are useful tools. For having a useful and effective textbook, evaluation is necessary. According to Robinson (1991) evaluation is the discovery of the value of something for a particular purpose. It is regarded as an interactive process (interaction between teachers, learners, and materials) which includes a profound analysis of the materials used. Evaluation in TESOL situations is a process which is used to collect, analyze, and interpret required information (Genesee, 2001). This process enables us to make informed decisions through which student achievement will increase and educational programs will be more successful. Grant (1987) states that although there is no perfect textbook, there is the best textbook that can

help teachers and learners. He points out that such a book not only matches the learners' needs, interests, and abilities but suits the teachers' needs and meets the officials' needs also.

Textbook evaluation is very important because it not only provides useful information for teachers, but also plans learning settings for students. In this regard, McDonough and Shaw (2003) believe that in two kinds of situations some degree of evaluation is needed. First, it is the situation when teachers are given the choice to adopt or develop their own materials. Second, it is when teachers are consumers and just use the products of other people. This is in line with what Cunningsworth (1995) and Ellis (1997) say that textbook evaluation helps teachers move beyond impressionistic assessments, systematic, and contextual insights into the overall nature of textbook material. They also suggest three different types of material evaluation (i.e., pre-use, in-use, and post-use). Pre-use or predictive evaluation is designed to examine the materials before they are used. In-use evaluation is intended to examine the materials which are currently being used. Post-use or retrospective evaluation is designed to examine the materials after they have been used. Mukundan (2009) points out that through retrospective evaluation teachers will be informed about the strengths and weaknesses of the textbook and involved in their own professional development. He further states that in this case teachers' knowledge will be increased and their potential for asking and investigating will be enhanced.

2. Studies on materials evaluation

Different studies have been conducted in the area of materials evaluation in the ESL and EFL situations. The use of *Spectrum Series* and *New Interchange Series* in Iran are so vast that most of the researchers' (e.g., Darali, 2007; Iraj, 2007, Riasati & Zare, 2010; Sahragard, Rahimy, & Zaremooayyedi, 2009) aim is to evaluate these Series to determine their suitability and appropriateness. Darali (2007) argues that valuable Metalinguistic information is provided by spectrum textbooks, but there is no explicit descriptions concerning *suitability, paralinguistic and contextual information*. Riasati and Zare (2010) using Litz's (2005) checklist evaluated *Intro, Interchange 1, Interchange 2, and Interchange 3*. They indicated that accessibility, teacher's guide, clear layout and design and activities of language skills are strong points of the series. However, they stated that some parts in the series do not match the learners' level and are not relevant because cultural differences in writing skills are ignored and there are not many testing exercises as well.

In this regard, Eslami, Esmaeli, Ghavaminia and Rajabi (2010) conducted an evaluation on four coursebooks "*Top Notch, Interchange, Head way, and On your Mark*" which are widely used in Iranian English institutes. McDonough and Shaws' (2003) model consisting of external and internal evaluation criteria was used in this study. In researchers' idea, "*On your Mark*" book is a unique and flexible series with multiple entry levels used for secondary students. "*Top Notch*" has a natural language that used by people with a learner- centered approach and provides students opportunity to confirm their own progress. "*Head way*" combines traditional methods of teaching with more recent communicative approaches which provides the L2 learners a comprehensive language. "*New Interchange*" is a successful book for adult and young adult learners at the beginning to intermediate levels. The researchers aimed to compare these coursebooks to find out which coursebook is better in the EFL situation of Iran. The results of their study showed "*Top Notch*" meets the most criteria than the other coursebooks. Ranalli (2002) also evaluated the "*New Headway upper-Intermediate*", one of the coursebooks taught at the foreign language Institute of Yonsei University in Seoul, Korea, using the general guidelines proposed by Cunningsworth (1995). According to Ranalli, although there are some shortcomings related to the methodology and speaking skill, the book is in general suitable for pedagogical purposes and the grammar of speech, vocabulary systems, and language input are useful and relevant.

Cakit (2006) and Aytug (2007), in Turkey, evaluated the effectiveness of the textbooks "*New Bridge to success 3*" and "*New Bridge to Success for 9th Grade New Beginners*", respectively. Different results were revealed in both cases. The former was not come up with the positive attitude of the teachers and students regarding the vocabulary and structure of reading passages; while, the latter was found to be effective in general.

Literature of materials evaluation shows that different textbooks or coursebooks have been evaluated in different countries including Iran (e.g., Right path to English and Graded English (Amirian, 1987); Dialogues of 3 English textbooks used in high school (Tavakoli, 1995); Spectrum series (Darali, 2007); New Interchange Series (Iraj, 2007; Riasati & Zare, 2010 ; Sahragard et al., 2009); Reading comprehension for university students (Rahimy, 2007); Reading through interaction (Karamouzian & Riazi, 2008); Four EFL text books used in high school (Jahangard, 2008); ESP textbook (Humanities) (Zanjani, 2009); ESP textbook Medical science (Razmjoo & Raissi, 2010); Comparison of Top notch, Interchange, Head way, on your mark (Eslami et al., 2010); Turkey (e.g., EAP textbook (BASE 3) (Ayman, 1997); ESP English for Law course (Kanik, 2002); English for Business Studies (Coskuner, 2002); New Bridge to success 3 (Cakit, 2006); Time for English 4 (Ozdmir, 2007); New bridges to success for 9th grade (Aytug, 2007); Spot on (Tok, 2010); Saudi-Arabia(e.g., Third- Grade secondary school (Al-Hijailan, 1999); Say it in English (Al-Yousef, 2007); Sixth grade

English language (Alamri, 2008); Korea (e.g., New Headway Upper-intermediate (Ranalli, 2002); and Canada (e.g., ESL textbooks (Hong, 2004).

The textbook "Summit 2B" which is used in some of the universities in Iran for undergraduate students is a newly introduced book and has not been evaluated in this context before. Therefore, this study aimed to determine the suitability and effectiveness of "Summit 2B" for Undergraduate University Students(UUSs) in the EFL context of Iran in terms of five criteria of subject matter, vocabulary and structure, exercise, illustration, and physical make-up). For this, the following research questions were posed:

1. Is the subject matter of "Summit 2B" suitable for UUSs?
2. Is the vocabulary and structure of "Summit 2B" suitable for UUSs?
3. Is the exercise of "Summit 2B" suitable for UUSs?
4. Is the illustration of "Summit 2B" suitable for UUSs?
5. Is the physical make-up of "Summit 2B" suitable for UUSs?

3. Methodology

3.1. Design of the study

The present study employed a survey research design and it was conducted among the instructors and undergraduate students in two universities in Iran.

3.2. Participants

The total participants who took part in this study were 150 including ten instructors (2 females, 8 males) with the teaching experience between two to twenty years and 140 students (80 females students and 60 males students). They were instructors and students in Islamic Azad University-Tabriz branch and Jihad daneshgahi in Urmia, Iran. The students' age ranged from twenty to forty one years. Their major was teaching English as a foreign language. They studied the textbook "Summit 2B", which is for advanced level, in their Laboratory course and the time allotted for the course to cover the textbook was two hours per week for one semester.

3.3. Instruments

In this study two instruments (i.e., checklist and interview questions) were used to collect the required information quantitatively and qualitatively.

- a) **Checklist:** The checklist of Daoud and Celce-Murcia (1979) (see Appendix A) was employed. It includes the five criteria of subject matter (4 items), vocabulary and structure (9 items), exercise (5 items), illustration (3 items), and physical make-up (4 items). These items were into the form of closed questions. The participants evaluated and answered the items based on the scales (i.e., totally lacking =0, weak = 1, adequate = 2, good = 3, excellent = 4) of this Likert-scale checklist.
- b) **Semi-Structured Interview Questions:** Six open-ended questions were devised by the researchers for interviewing the instructors. These questions asked for the different parts of the textbook under question in alignment with the research questions (e.g., what do you think about different topics of the textbook? Do they cover learners' interest and needs? Or what do you think about the clarity and comprehensibility of the pictures in the textbook? Do you have any suggestions?).

3.4. Procedure

The survey data were collected at the end of one semester of using the textbook "Summit 2B" in June 2011. This textbook, which is written for the advanced students, was covered in the laboratory course for two hours per week within the duration of 16 weeks. The quantitative data were collected through students' and instructors' responses to the checklist. The allocated time for answering the questions was about thirty minutes. The qualitative data were collected through interviewing the instructors. The instructors were interviewed individually and their responses were audio-recorded and then were transcribed for further analysis and interpretation.

3.5. Data Analysis

The collected data through the checklist were analyzed by SPSS 16.0. Descriptive statistics of Mean (*M*) and Standard Deviation (*SD*) were used in the analysis and interpretation of the survey data. The means more than 3 was regarded as the satisfactory response to the research questions. The means between 2 and 3 were the sign of moderate satisfaction and the means less than 2 were the indication of participants' dissatisfaction to the related item and criterion and as a result to the suitability of the textbook "Summit 2B". Cronbach's alpha was used to calculate the reliability of the checklist questions and they were found reliable with the Alpha coefficient of 0.85 which indicated a high internal reliability. The interview responses were also explained based on the frequency of positive/satisfied and negative/dissatisfied responses to the interview questions and discussed qualitatively.

4. Results and Discussion

In order to answer the research questions the Means and Standard Deviations of the participants' responses to the checklist questions were calculated. Table1 shows the Means and Standard Deviations for the five criteria (i.e., subject matter, vocabulary and structure, exercise, illustration, and physical make-up) of the checklist and their underlying questions (25 items in total, see Appendix A).

Table1. Means and Standard Deviations for the criteria of the checklist and their items

Criteria	Instructors		Students	
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Subject matter	3.30	.55	2.79	.59
Item1	3.50	.70	2.73	.93
Item2	3.00	1.05	2.82	.75
Item3	3.20	.78	2.54	1.04
Item4	3.50	.52	3.05	.87
Vocabulary and Structure	3.14	.41	2.65	.59
Item5	3.20	1.13	2.94	.95
Item6	2.90	.99	2.54	.88
Item7	2.80	.78	2.56	1.01
Item8	3.20	.63	2.64	1.04
Item9	3.10	.73	2.43	1.17
Item10	3.20	.77	2.60	.91
Item11	3.40	.69	2.78	1.04
Item12	3.30	.82	2.72	.87
Item13	3.20	.78	2.62	.96
Exercise	3.40	.41	2.70	.62
Item14	3.30	1.05	2.86	.93
Item15	3.30	.67	2.86	.86
Item16	3.20	.78	2.57	1.02
Item17	3.40	.69	2.62	.94
Item18	3.80	.42	2.60	1.00
Illustration	3.53	.50	2.79	.72
Item19	3.30	.82	2.74	.97
Item20	3.70	.48	2.74	.95
Item21	3.60	.89	2.87	.97
Physical make-up	2.67	.74	2.69	.84
Item22	2.80	1.03	2.93	1.15
Item23	2.90	.99	2.65	1.23
Item24	2.10	1.10	2.49	1.18
Item25	2.90	1.19	2.69	1.18

Note. $M < 2$ = Not Satisfied; $2 < M < 3$ = Moderately Satisfied; $M > 3$ = Satisfied

As the Table1 indicates, instructors were satisfied with four criteria of Subject matter, Vocabulary and structure, Exercise, and Illustration. They were also moderately satisfied with the Physical make-up of the book. This is while, students reflected moderate satisfaction for all criteria. The results revealed that out of five criteria, the instructors showed more satisfaction with the criteria of illustration ($M = 3.53$, $SD = .50$) (They were satisfied with the clarity, simplicity, and relevance of the illustrations to the content and their favorable atmosphere for practice in reading) followed by exercise ($M = 3.40$, $SD = .49$) (They were more satisfied with item18 that is related to the exercises that promote meaningful communication by referring to realistic activities and situations) and subject matter ($M = 3.30$, $SD = .55$) (Their high satisfaction, item 1 and item 4, indicated that the subject matter cover a variety of topics and arouse interest of the learners and that the material is accurate and up-to-date), and vocabulary and structure ($M = 3.14$, $SD = .41$) (They indicated their satisfaction more with item 11, i.e., the use of everyday language and the sentence structures that follow normal word order), respectively. They rated the criterion of physical make-up ($M = 2.67$, $SD = .74$) lower than other criteria and they were less satisfied (item 24, $M = 2.10$, $SD = 1.10$) with the size of the book. That is why Dougill (1987) argues that the physical appearance of materials should be appealing enough to motivate the learners.

The results indicated moderate satisfaction of the students with all criteria and their underlying questions. The students' higher ratings of satisfaction were related to the criteria of subject matter ($M = 2.79$, $SD = .59$) and illustration ($M = 2.79$, $SD = .72$) equally, followed by exercise ($M = 2.70$, $SD = .62$), physical make-up ($M = 2.69$, $SD = .84$), and vocabulary and structure ($M = 2.65$, $SD = .59$), respectively.

The highest satisfaction of both the instructors and the students was related to the criterion of illustration. This indicates that clarity, simplicity and appropriateness of illustrations are necessary to an effective learning and teaching situation because they increase learners' motivation (McDonough & Shaw, 1998; Tomlinson, 2001). The low satisfaction of the participants was related to the criteria of vocabulary and structure and physical make-up of the textbook. This view is supported by Griffiths (1995) who believes that interesting, attractive and well-illustrated materials are more favorable for learners.

The results of the checklist correspond with the interview results (see Table 2). Considering the criteria of subject matter, exercise, and illustration a majority of the instructors (8 and 9) had positive opinions which showed their satisfaction for each criterion in particular and the whole textbook in general. However, out of ten instructors four and three were dissatisfied with the criteria of physical make-up and vocabulary and structure, respectively.

Table 2. Frequency of the instructors' responses to the interview questions

Criteria	Satisfied (f)	Dissatisfied (f)
Subject matter	9	1
Vocabulary and structure	7	3
Exercise	8	2
Illustration	9	1
Physical make-up	6	4

They indicated that some pages of the book are over-loaded and are boring for the students. For example, one instructor said that *"I think the appearance of the textbook is not attractive and we should never ignore students' negative feeling about the loaded-pages, type size, and cover of the book. This negative feeling may demotivate students. These problems should be taken into consideration."* The other instructor explained that *"as you know every book contains linguistic items which equip the learners to learn language. I think linguistic aspects in "Summit 2B" are not clear enough to help learners to understand the text .I would like to add one point more about vocabulary , vocabularies are not appropriate to the students' needs level."* One of the instructors indicated that *"there are some exercises in unit eight which are not appropriate and they do not match the learners' interest. Let's be frank, some of the exercises are boring and can not motivate the learners."* Similarly, another instructor pointed out that *"in my opinion neither cover nor pages of textbook "Summit 2B" are attractive. That is why students always complain about cover and loaded pages."*

Regarding the subject matter one dissatisfied instructor stated that *"in my opinion, understanding all topics for students are not so easy; for example there is a topic in unit eight "Humor" is difficult for both instructors and students because of cultural differences."* In relation to the question about illustration one instructor expressed that *"in my opinion the only shortcoming of "Summit 2B" is that some of the pictures used in this book are not clear and suitable for our*

students' culture. I can say that on the whole, it is a useful book among all English textbooks which I have used during my teaching experience." For exercise part, one instructor stated that "during our break time when we talk about "Summit 2B" with each other we agree that some parts of this book especially exercises are boring."

The findings, in general, revealed that the illustrations, exercises, and subject matter in terms of topics and graded content in the textbook "Summit 2B" were more appealing to the students of this study and corresponded more with their needs.

5. Conclusion

The overall results of the study indicated that the textbook "Summit 2B" seems to be suitable for the undergraduate students in an EFL situation like Iran. However, the findings revealed a few shortcomings related to the criterion of vocabulary and structure in some units (e.g., unit 8, Humor) which does not meet the students' expectations and cannot equip the learners with the ability to do their tasks because of cultural differences. Another drawback of "Summit 2B" is related to its physical make-up due to some over-loaded pages with less white space (Tomlinson, 2003). It is hoped that these shortcomings would be taken into consideration in the next edition of the textbook.

The results of this study would be useful for the syllabus designers, ELT materials developers, and teachers. It is for the EFL teachers who use "Summit 2B" in their classes to adapt or omit the problematic areas of the book as their educational and cultural settings require. The findings would also be of high importance to educational settings whose aims are to select a suitable textbook with a high amount of educational outcome which would increase students' interest, motivation, and achievement.

Further studies needed to be conducted in the case of evaluating the use of four language skills in "Summit 2B". In addition, a comparative study is needed among all series of Summit textbooks.

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Appendix A

Checklist adopted from Daoud and Celce-Murcia (1979)

A. Subject matter	Excellent=4	Good=3	Adequate=2	Weak=1	Totally lacking=0
1. Does the subject matter cover a variety of topics? Appropriate to the interests of the learners for whom the textbook is intended (urban or rural environment, child or adult learners, male and or female students)?					

2. Is the ordering of materials done by topics or themes that are arranged in a logical fashion?					
3. Is the content graded according to the needs of students or requirements of the existing syllabus (If there is one)?					
4. Is the material accurate and up-to- date?					
B. Vocabulary and Structure					
5. Does the vocabulary load (i.e., the number of new words introduced every lesson) seem to be reasonable for the students of that level 3. Is the new vocabulary repeated in subsequent Lessons for reinforcement?					
6. Is the new vocabulary repeated in subsequent lessons for reinforcement?					
7. Are the vocabulary items controlled to ensure Systematic gradation from simple to complex?					
8. Does the sentence length seem reasonable for the students Of that level?					
9. Is the number of grammatical points as well as their sequence appropriate?					
10. Do the structures gradually increase in complexity to suit the growing reading ability of the students?					
11. Does the writer use current every day language, and sentence structures that follow normal word order?					
12. Do the sentences and paragraphs follow one another in a logical sequence?					
13. Are linguistic items introduced in meaningful situation to facilitate understanding assimilation consolidation?					
C. Exercise					
14. Do the exercises develop comprehension and test knowledge of main ideas, details and sequence of ideas?					
15. Do the exercises involve vocabulary and structures which build up the learners' repertoire?					
16. Do the exercises provide practice in different types of written work (sentence completion their spelling and dictation, guided composition)?					
17. Does the book provide a pattern of review within lessons and cumulatively test new material?					
18. Do the exercises promote meaningful communication by referring to realistic activities and situations?					
D. Illustrations					
19. Do illustrations create a favorable atmosphere for practice in reading and spelling by depicting realism and action?					
20. Are the illustrations clear, simple, and free of unnecessary details that may confuse the learner?					
21. Are the illustrations printed close enough to the text and directly related to the content to help the learner understand the printed text?					
E. Physical make-up					
22. Is the cover of the book durable enough to with Stand wear?					
23. Is the text attractive (i.e., cover, page appearance, binding)?					
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