An Evaluation of the Functional English Language Textbook for the Commercial First Secondary Class in Jordan

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Abstract

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The purpose of this study is to evaluate the Functional English Language textbook for the commercial first secondary class. The study consists of three distinct populations: a population of teachers, a population of supervisors and a population of students. The sample of the study consists of all members of the three populations: 6 teachers, 5 supervisors and 81 students in Jerash Directorate of Education.

To achieve the purpose of the study, this researcher has developed a questionnaire which consists of two evaluative scales, one for teachers and supervisors and another for students. The students’ scale was adapted from the teachers’ and supervisors’ scale. The teachers’ and supervisors’ scale consists of 88 Likert type items covering the points of strength and weakness in 13 major characteristics of good textbooks. These characteristics are: 1 rationale, 2 user definition, 3 layout / graphics, 4 accessibility, 5 linkage, 6 physical characteristics, 7 appropriacy, 8 sufficiency, 9 stimulus / practice / revision, 10 flexibility, 11 guidance, 12 language skills, and 13 clarity of concepts.
The students' scale contains 45 items regarding the following characteristics of the textbook: 1 sufficiency, 2 accessibility, 3 linkage, 4 appropriacy, 5 stimulus/practice/revision, 6 flexibility and 7 technical elements.

The study attempts to answer the following questions:

1. What is the rank order of the domains in the teachers’ and supervisors’ scale?
2. What is the rank order of the items within each domain in the teachers’ and supervisors’ scale?
3. What is the rank order of the domains in the students’ scale?
4. What is the rank order of the items within each domain in the students’ scale?
5. Is there a difference between the teachers’, supervisors’ and students’ perspectives about the Functional English Language textbook?
6. Is it a problem to teach business English using general English as opposed to English for specific purposes?
7. What do the teachers and supervisors of English suggest to improve the Functional English Language textbook for the commercial first secondary class?

The students’, teachers’ and supervisors’ responses to the textbook evaluation questionnaire were analyzed using the following statistics: 1 rank order, 2 means, 3 standard deviations and 4 t-test statistics.

The findings of the study had revealed that:

1. the material is interesting and logically sequenced according to the teachers and supervisors.
2. the exercises are related to the students’ level and interests.
3. the content is easy and attractive for the teachers.
4. the vocabulary is written in lists.
5. the typing and illustrations are clear.
6. the size of the book is convenient.
7. the rationale of the book is based on teaching English for a clear purpose.
8. the writing skill is emphasized.
9. the introduction is clear.
10. the textbook lacks the teaching aids such as cassettes, pictures, teacher’s manual and workbook.
11. colors, grammar, role-play, punctuation, spelling, phonetic transcription of the words, tests, visual aids and dialogue, are not available as part of the textbook.
12. the textbook does not reflect the culture and values of the Jordanian society such as honesty.
13. Many misprints are in the textbook.
14. the guidelines are not enough and the concepts are not suitable for the students’ proficiency level.
15. the time allocated for covering the material is not enough.
16. the material does not encourage problem-solving and critical thinking attempts.
17. the material does not match the students’ needs from their point of view.
18. the meaning of vocabulary items is given in Arabic. However, a number of the words are missing in the glossary.
19. there is no reference to the unit number in front of the words in the glossary.

In light of the findings of the study, the researcher recommends that the Ministry of Education provide the teachers of English with a teacher’s manual, workbook, cassette and visual aids, and that it make the necessary modifications to the book.

TEFL researchers are also recommended to conduct research in areas that cover wider geographic territories. The teachers of English are recommended to make content analyses in order to be able to select, omit or make modifications. Also, they are recommended to vary the techniques of teaching. Moreover, the supervisors of English are recommended to make regular visits to schools to provide teachers with help.