

Evaluating the Outcomes of the English Curriculum for Primary Stage in the Light of Prescribed Objectives

Asst. Prof. Dr. Shoaib Saeed AL-Fahady

Ayad Mohammed Salih

College of Education

College of Arts

University of Mosul, Iraq

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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. This will be done through investigating the outcomes of the instructional process concerning English language and see whether it fulfil the objectives set by Ministry of Education. The study population of this research includes Primary academic stage pupils who distributed among primary schools in the city of Mosul, for the academic year 2018/2019. In order to achieve the purpose of the study, fifteen primary schools in both sides of the city of Mosul have been chosen randomly. The total number of pupils in those schools was (1020); (514) male and (506) female pupils. For the purpose of collecting data and achieve the aims of the study, the researcher prepared an achievement test. This test is designed for sixth grade pupils to assess students and determine their level.

تقييم مخرجات منهج اللغة الإنجليزية للمرحلة الابتدائية في ضوء الأهداف المحددة

الملخص:

تهدف هذه الدراسة إلى تقييم منهج اللغة الإنجليزية للمرحلة الابتدائية "English for Iraq". حيث ستقوم الدراسة ببحث نقاط القوة والضعف في المنهج المقرر. وسيتم ذلك من خلال التحقيق في نتائج العملية التعليمية المتعلقة باللغة الإنجليزية ومعرفة ما إذا كانت قد تحققت الأهداف التي وضعتها وزارة التربية. يشمل مجتمع البحث في هذا الدراسة تلاميذ المرحلة الأكاديمية الابتدائية الذين وزعوا بين المدارس الابتدائية في مدينة الموصل، للعام الدراسي 2019/2018. من أجل تحقيق الغرض من الدراسة، تم اختيار خمسة عشر مدرسة ابتدائية في كلا جانبي مدينة الموصل بشكل عشوائي. إجمالي عدد التلاميذ في تلك المدارس كان (1020)؛ (514) تلميذا و (506) تلميذة. لغرض جمع البيانات وتحقيق أهداف الدراسة، أعد الباحث اختبار تحصيلي، حيث تم تصميم هذا الاختبار لتلاميذ الصف السادس لتقييم الطلاب وتحديد مستواهم.

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 evaluate the 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 outputs of the instructional process concerning English language fulfil the objectives set by the Ministry of Education.

1.3. 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.

The study will also check the outcomes of that curriculum after six years of application. This will give evidences whether the English syllable for primary stage fulfil its objectives and if primary stage pupils have positive or negative attitudes towards learning English. Hence, this will help planners and planners and design-makers to have appropriate decision concerning teaching English.

Definition of Basic Terms:

1. Evaluation:

Evaluation has been defined by:

(Brown, 1995:218) " a procedure of collecting data for the purpose of decision making. It is "the systematic collection and analysis of all relevant information necessary to promote the improvement of the curriculum and

assess its effectiveness and efficiency as well as the participants within a context of a particular institution involved”.

Vedung (1997:15) "a careful retrospective assessment of the merit, worth and value of administration, output and outcome of government intervention, which is intended to play a role in future practical situations".

Brown & Rogers(2002:289) " The process of seeking to establish the value of something for some purpose".

(Rerve,2007,2) "The critical assessment, in as objective a manner as possible, of the degree to which a service or its component parts fulfills stated goals" .

(Oxford , 2014:271) "To study the facts and then give your opinion about the meaning of something or about how good something is."

Theoretically, the researcher defines evaluation as:

The judgment of the value of something, or the importance of a particular idea, personality, or influence.

Operationally, the researcher defines evaluation as:

The process of analysing content, comparing content to the objectives, and check its outcomes.

2. Curriculum:

Curriculum has been defined by:

(Braslavsky, C. 2003, 25) "the program of instruction. It should be based on both standards and best practice research. It should be the framework that teachers use to plan instruction for their students."

(Adams 2003, 33) " the combination of instructional practices, learning experiences, and students' performance assessment that are designed to bring out and evaluate the target learning outcomes of a particular course."

(Kelly, A. V. 2009, 55) " a course of study that will enable the learner to acquire specific knowledge and skills."

(Oxford , 2014:197) " All the subjects that are taught in a school, college or university, the contents of a particular course of study".

Operationally the researcher defines the textbook as:

The academic content and lessons taught in program or a school or in a specific course, It also includes all aspects related to pupils, teachers and methods of teaching.

Curriculum and Syllabus:

Educators have introduced many definitions to explain what the curriculum is but some of them failed to include all the aspects in the teaching-learning process, the essential goal of curriculum. Accordingly, there are traditional and modern definitions of curriculum. The traditional ones look at curriculum as "a group of teaching materials or syllabuses taught to students" , While the modern concept looks at curriculum as "the number of experiences the school prepares for its students inside and outside school to provide them a comprehensive growth from all sides (Al-baker and Al-Mahawas:2001:18).

Curriculum is regarded as "all educational plans carried out under the auspices of the school, inside or outside, in order to comprehensively develop students mentally, physically, psychologically and socially".(Fayadh:2017:5). So curriculum has the wider scope as it doesn't only contain academic course outline. It also has plans for physical and mental exercises, different activities, with the aim to build confidence and let students behave in the best possible way.

Syllabus is the subset of the curriculum. It is the educational

document that is descriptive in nature. It is the summarized form of the academic course outline. The syllabus also tells about the test schedules, assignments, projects and other such key educational techniques.(Cele-murica:2014).

Reviewing Literature, we can differentiate between curriculum and syllabus in the following points:

1. The syllabus is the summarized form of the academic content to be taught in an academic year or for the specific time. On the other hand, the overall course content and its implementation to gain certain objectives using specific methodology are called curriculum.
2. The curriculum has the wider scope as compared to the syllabus.
3. Curriculum is set by jury of experts based upon the educational philosophy of the Ministry of Education and also based upon a definite approach in teaching foreign language. On the other hand, syllabus is set by specialist designers in the light of the curriculum objectives (Richard, J.C.:2009).

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. The second aspect concerning pupils, the outcomes of the English syllabus should be tested to find out if it fulfils its objectives with those pupils or not.

Population:

The research population is "the wider group of individual about which the researcher wants to make statements" (Ladico et al.,2006:140). The population of this research comprises the following:

1. English syllabus for primary stage which has presented in (6) English textbooks taught to pupils from first to sixth class in primary schools.

2. Primary academic stage pupils who distributed among primary schools in the city of Mosul. Their number is (106286); (69102) male and (57184) female pupils. The total of primary schools in the city of Mosul is (440) schools; (175) schools for boys; (95) for girls; and (170) for boys and girls.

Sample:

Sampling refers to " the method that the researcher uses in order to choose a given number from a population" (Mertens, 2010:309). So, the researcher chooses randomly (15) primary schools in both sides of the city

of Mosul. The total number of pupils in those schools is (1020); (514) male and (506) female pupils.

The achievement test:

Savage (1979:1) States that achievement test is a measuring instrument used to determine the level or the amount of learning that an individual has acquired. According to **Verna & Bearl (1981:178)** an achievement test is an instrument designed to know the extent to which a learner has attained certain skills or concepts in a given content area, usually as an outcome of specific teaching.

This test is designed for sixth grade pupils to assess students and determine their level. The test questions cover many different topics that test the linguistic outcome of students and their knowledge of synonyms and an understanding of the rules and skills of reading and writing. The test also focuses on the listening skill.

The test has the ability to identify the strengths and weaknesses of students, some of them are distinguished in the grammar but have difficulties in writing, and others understand the vocabulary but have difficulty with grammar, In fact, investigating pupil's attainment helps to know what to focus on.

Initially, the test has been divided into two versions (oral / written). The score was divided into oral and written, with 75 for written and 25 for oral, in the written test, five questions were designed to be diverse to cover all subjects in the curriculum.

The first question for reading comprehension (do as required) consists of six points; the pupils should answer five points only; three marks for each correct answer.

The second question is about the grammar and functions (choose the correct answer between brackets). The question consists of five points; each point has given three marks.

The third question is about vocabularies. It consists of six points and the students have to answer only five, three marks each, so the whole question will be given fifteen marks.

The fourth question is about spelling, consists of two branches, section (A) is about synonyms and Antonyms, The pupils have to answer five points five marks each, and section (B) (complete the following words) Consists of five points ; one mark each.

The fifth question is about writing, consists of two branches, the students

have to choose one of them and write about it.

Twenty-five marks for oral test, fifteen to conversation and ten for reading. (see appendix 1).

To check the validity of the test, it has been given to group of jurors and specialists in ELT (see appendix 2). The jurors admit the face validity of the achievement test with number of recommendations on some items. Then the test has been applied upon a pilot sample to check its reliability. The pilot sample of (50) pupils has been chosen from two primary schools; one for boys and the other for girls. Then, the collected scores has been treated statistically and the test reliability achieved (81%) which means that the test is reliable and activated in testing primary school pupils in English language. Hence, the test is ready for application.

Administrating the Achievement Test:

To test the outcomes of English syllabus for primary stage and investigating the fulfilment of the definite objectives, the researcher administered the achievement test upon the main sample of the study after coordination with the principals of the schools. The test has been administered

upon (1020) male pupils chosen randomly from (15) primary schools. The written test has been administered first, then, the pupils move to oral test. EFL teachers in those schools have taken part in administering the oral and written test. After scoring the test, the findings are shown in table (4) and table (5).

Result Analyzes:

The result will be introduced according to the objective; "Whether the outputs of the instructional process, concerning English language, fulfil the objectives set by the Ministry of Education".

The researcher aimed in this respect to check the outcomes of the English language curriculum for primary stage (English for Iraq) through the application of an achievement test that was set according to the objectives of the curriculum and the content of textbooks for the three grades (fourth, fifth and sixth): The test was administered upon sixth stage pupils at the end of the academic year 2018/2019, taking into consideration that these students have completed the study of the English language curriculum started from the first to sixth stage. The researcher has decided to apply the test at the end of the school year so that the pupils had finished studying the content of the curriculum

which lasted for six years. Therefore, it will be possible to check the achievements of this curriculum from the pupils' achievement level in the field of English language, and to be able to identify the strengths and weaknesses in this curriculum by analyzing the answers of pupils and determine their achievement levels.

The test included two forms, written and oral, as explained in chapter three, After scoring the pupils' answers, the researcher has analyzed the data according to the activities in which the written and oral test questions were developed, In terms of success and failure, the results obtained from conducting this test has been distributed as shown in the tables below :

Table (1) Results of Written Test

Result	Reading		Grammar		Vocabulary		Spelling		Writing	
	Number of Pupils	Percentage	Number of Pupils	Percentage	Number of Pupils	Percentage	Number of Pupils	Percentage	Number of Pupils	Percentage
Fail	273	26.76%	279	27.35 %	278	27.25%	767	75.2 %	887	86.96 %
Pass	747	73.24%	741	72.65 %	742	72.75 %	253	24.8 %	133	13.04 %
	1020		1020		1020		1020		1020	

Table (2) Results of Oral Test

Results	Conversation 15	Percentage	Reading 10	Percentage
Fail	480	47.84%	500	49.1%
Pass	532	52.16%	520	50.9%
Total	1020		1020	

In order to reach the facts of these results and to what they represented concerning the data obtained , the researcher extracted the percentage of each activity according to the number of pupils who passed the activity or not. The researcher divided pupils' achievement into two levels: failures (pupils who did not pass the default passing score for each question where their score was between 0-6 for each question).The second level is the level of success (pupils who received a passing score in each question where their score was between 7-15 for each question).

It is clear from the tables above concerning the written test that English language curriculum for primary stage was successful in enabling pupils to understand and realize the activities of reading comprehension, grammar and vocabulary memorization. The calculated percentages indicate that the successful students have a higher percentage of the

failed in the first three activities. The success rate of reading comprehension is (73.24%), grammar got (72.65%) and the success rate of vocabularies was (72.75%) this means that the curriculum was clear in presenting definite materials to pupils in a scientific and logical way, which led them to achieve a good success rate in these activities. This confirms what was explained in the analysis of the first aim that the curriculum gives significant focus upon these activities. Therefore, the students' results were good and they achieved higher than average success rates.

As for the activities of spelling and writing, it is clear from the table above that the failure percentage was higher than the success percentage for pupils. The success rate in spelling was 24.8%, the failure rate was 75.2%, the writing rate was 13.04% and the failure rate was 86.96%. This means that the curriculum has been unsuccessful in providing these activities to pupils as the focus on these

skills got a little percentage during the last two years. It is clear that the weakness in this curriculum is represented in these activities as they represent the written skill. Pupils may understand vocabulary and grammar depends on memorization. The activities of spelling and writing must be learned through drills and exercises that the curriculum focuses on.

With regard to the oral test, it is clear from the table that the levels of pupils, are approximate, it is also clear that the pass rate was somewhat acceptable but not high compared to the pass rate in the written test. It is clear to the researcher from these results that the curriculum did not achieve some of its objectives in terms of developing students' communication and reading skills by creating opportunities for communication among pupils and with teachers. So, this means that the curriculum has another weakness in terms of developing communication skills in English.

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 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.

The weak points, which have found by the researcher, have been

discovered through the results of the achievement test administered upon the pupils, as well as the views of teachers collected through the questionnaire. It is clear to the researcher that this curriculum does not develop the written skills of students in English and this is what we have observed from the failure rate in the field of writing and spelling. The researcher has also seen that this curriculum includes a variety of activities and skills within the unit without specifying the domain that relates to these drills. For example, there are several exercises, which are unknown to the teachers and pupils as well if they are related to pronunciation or spelling, or related to grammar or written skills. This confuses the pupils because these exercises are vague. This was confirmed by teachers' opinion.

The curriculum also includes many images in a single unit, which leads to the dispersion of the students' mind. The curriculum also presents a large number of new vocabularies within the unit, which leads to the difficulty of understanding and memorization.

The researcher has found that it is difficult to implement the curriculum in reality due to the lack of teaching aids such as laboratories and recorders. Also, the lack of training courses for teachers may lead to the difficulty in

implementation and may also lead to the wrong implementation of the syllabus.

The researcher believes that this curriculum, because it is based on the communicative way, needs to build appropriate language competence for students for the purpose of implementing the activities in the syllabus. Otherwise, this will lead to poor comprehension and thus the weakness of pupils in English language. Therefore, the researcher believes, in regards to the views of teachers, that this curriculum is incompatible with the Iraqi environment as it requires pupils who have a beginner level of communication in English before entering school. This may be good for schools where English is a second language for them, such as the UAE, Qatar and Lebanon. The Iraqi environment is considered a foreign environment because it does not use English language continuously in daily life.

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