EVALUATING THE PRESENTATION OF NEW VOCABULARY ITEMS IN MALAYSIAN FORM THREE ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEXTBOOK

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Abstract

Learners in Malaysia usually face difficulties in acquiring their four skills: listening, speaking, reading and writing in English language because of their limited vocabulary knowledge. In order to solve the problem, effective vocabulary learning should be given serious attention. This study aimed to evaluate the presentation of new vocabulary items in the Form Three English language textbook used in Secondary Schools in Malaysia. A group of purposively selected teachers \((n = 5)\) used a checklist to evaluate the presentation of vocabulary items in the textbook. The findings showed that the textbook is weak in vocabulary presentation. It was found that no specific method was followed to teach the new vocabulary. There was no index of the new vocabulary at the end of the textbook. The results have implications for the learners, English language teachers as well as textbook developers. The findings are also expected to provide guidance to teachers for improving their pedagogical practices in teaching vocabulary and to compensate for the weaknesses of the presentation of vocabulary in the textbook.

KEYWORDS: TEXTBOOK EVALUATION, ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEXTBOOK, VOCABULARY ITEMS

Introduction

English as an international language is today widely used in every aspect of education, economy, social and politics in many countries around the world including Malaysia. The government realized the importance of mastering the English language for Malaysians in order to be able to be globally competitive. English, mainly recognized as a second language in the country, is now taught as a second language in all Malaysian primary and secondary schools. Recently, the Prime Minister, Datuk Sri Mohd Najib Bin Tun Abdul Razak, has proposed a change in the general admission requirement for tertiary education in public university or Institut Pengajian Tinggi Awam (IPTA) and also suggested for private universities, colleges or institutes Pengajian Tinggi Swasta (IPTS) for year 2015 budget (The Budget Speech 2015, 2014). The Prime Minister stated that the confidence level and English communication skill of the learners will be enhanced. These show that government has begun implementing the effort to help boost the English language learning by pushing the young generation to be better at English in order to be prepared for competing with the global community.

In 1983, the Ministry of Education in Malaysia introduced the Integrated Secondary School Curriculum or the Kurikulum Bersepadu Sekolah Menengah (KBSM). Learners needed to be taught using the English curriculum specifications of KBSM to enable them to fulfil their knowledge acquisition regarding their future workplace needs. The textbook become a must for students and teachers in teaching-learning English language. School textbooks in Malaysia are state-sponsored. The government has spent billions of Ringgit over the years to provide free textbooks for students. Local scholars have argued that there is little regulation in the \textit{ad hoc} production of the school
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English language textbooks (Mukundan, 2003), and have warned the developers of their weaknesses (Mukundan, 2007). Indeed, there is research proof that commercially developed coursebooks have superior vocabulary load and distribution patterns in comparison with the Malaysian Secondary English Language Textbooks (Mukundan et al., 2009).

This study aimed to further explore the presentation of new vocabulary items in Malaysian English Language Textbook for the sake of students’ effective learning based on a group of English language teachers’ evaluation who used a checklist particularly developed for this purpose. The data were collected and then analysed in order to find out the strengths and weaknesses of the Form 3 English language textbook with regard to its presentation of new vocabulary. Admittedly, no textbook is perfect, and textbooks have to be evaluated before they are selected (Gholami, Nikou & Soultanpour, 2012). It should be noted that there are three types of textbook evaluation; pre-use, in-use, and post-use evaluation (Cunningsworth, 1995). Pre-use or predictive evaluation is designed to examine the future or potential performance of a textbook. In-use evaluation is designed to examine the material currently in use, and post-use or retrospective evaluation is concerned with the evaluation of textbooks after they have been used in a specific institution or situation (Ellis, 1997). This study was designed for an in-use evaluation; the textbook has been in use since 2004.

The statement of the problem

Like many other countries, Malaysia follows an exam-oriented educational system. At the end of Form Three, the Pentaksiran Tingkatan 3 (PT3), or Lower Secondary Assessment, is taken by the students. Based on PT3 results, students are given three streams to choose, which are Academic Stream (Science/Art), Technical and Vocational Stream, and Religious Stream. In 2013, government announced to replace Lower Certificate of Education (LCE) evaluation system with new evaluation, PBSMR (Penilaian Berasaskan Sekolah Menengah Rendah) or Lower Secondary School Based Assessment. The PBSMR system aims to assess proficiency of the students in the four core subjects – Bahasa Melayu, English, Science, and Mathematics (Ministry of Education of Malaysia, 2014).

The syllabus aims to extend the students’ English language proficiency in order to meet their needs for English in everyday life, for knowledge acquisition, and for future workplace requirements (Ministry of Education of Malaysia, 2003). Since the main objective in learning and teaching English in Malaysia is to be able to communicate in the language fluently and accurately, the mastery of a wider breadth in vocabulary knowledge are important. The wider one’s vocabulary range is, the more fluent and accurate one’s communication will be.

Many researchers in Malaysia have conducted studies on the evaluation of the textbooks currently used in secondary schools (Mukundan & Khojasteh, 2011; Mukundan & Rezvani Kalajahi, 2013; Philip, Mukundan, & Nimehchisalem, 2012; Zarifi & Mukundan, 2012 and 2013) to examine the effectiveness of these textbooks and to find out whether the intended learners achieve the desired benefit and educational objectives from the content of these textbooks. They commonly report that the textbooks that they evaluated needed some improvements and they recommended evaluating other textbooks using different instruments and smaller or larger sample sizes before making sure their findings could be generalized.

Based on Swales (1980), textbooks represent a problem, and in extreme cases can be examples of educational failure. One might argue that English language in Malaysia has not shown a remarkable improvement. Indeed; a review of literature indicates that it has been a failure. As a result, it was found that Form Five school leavers are not prepared to undertake employment as they are found to be poor in their oral and written communication (Mustapha, 2008).

Vocabulary items are considered building blocks of a language (Schmitt, Schmitt, & Clapham, 2001) and since textbooks are the primary source of learning vocabulary, it is essential to find out how they
are presented in the Malaysian school textbooks. Thus, it is necessary to evaluate the presentation of new vocabulary items in textbooks. The reason that motivated the selection of Form Three English language textbook was that it is used as a main source for the PT3 examination ultimately.

Objective and research questions

The objective of this study was to investigate the teachers’ evaluation of the presentation of new vocabulary items in the Form Three English Language Textbook. To address this objective, the following research question was posed:

- How do the teachers evaluate the presentation of the new vocabulary items in the Form Three English Language Textbook based on the checklist?

Significance of the study

This study was aimed to help English teachers identify the strengths and weaknesses of the breadth and distribution of new vocabulary items in the textbooks. The findings could help teachers implement the appropriate methods in the classroom activities to teach new vocabulary effectively. Based on the findings of this study, adaptations could be made in the textbook to make it more effective. The study also provides feedback to the curriculum designers and writers about the weaknesses of the new vocabulary presentation in the textbook that need to be improved.

Literature review

The role of textbook in ESL classroom

There are five important components which are students, teachers, materials, teaching methods and evaluation interrelated in any educational system. Textbooks play an important role in teaching-learning process. Besides being the major sources of contact with the language for students other than the input they receive from teachers, textbooks can provide some indirect training for inexperienced teachers with the help of teacher’s guides. Also, textbooks are one of the fundamental components of curriculum. Ghorbani (2007) stated that textbooks are basic tools that play the significant roles in obtaining knowledge in the application of the objectives of a course.

Textbooks are the main resource for both teachers and learners. They can be considered as the backbone of the course by guiding teachers what to teach and how to teach the students. They also serve as a main support to teachers because it is hard for them to find their own materials that are suitable and appropriate for the students. Thus, textbooks save teachers’ time and enable them to focus more on teaching rather than material production.

Besides that, learners who are serious and have purpose in their studies prefer to have textbooks. The textbooks provide major source of contact as they have with the language besides the input provided by their teachers. Students can be less dependent on the teachers because they can use them to learn new materials, review and monitor progress of themselves without depending only on the teachers. Kayapinar (2009) stated that coursebooks provide security for learners because they have a kind of road map of the course: they know what to expect and what is expected of them.

Characteristics of good English textbook

A good English textbook is the book that can achieve the learning outcomes or goals in teaching-learning English. Yap (2011) and McDonough and Shaw (2013) made a distinction between the
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situations where teachers select the course books on the one hand, and where the Ministry of Education produces the materials and hands them on to the teachers for classroom use as in the case of Malaysia. In the second case, teachers have no choice and they may not have to join the active evaluation process. Teachers should make evaluation on the materials they use in the classroom so that it can help in improving the weaknesses of the textbooks, so the objectives can be achieved.

A good textbook should include two general categories: general attributes and learning-teaching content. The first category can be divided into five subcategories which are syllabus and curriculum, methodology, suitability to learners’, physical and utilitarian attributes and supplementary materials. The second category includes general (task quality, cultural sensitivity, linguistic and situational realism), listening, speaking, reading, writing, vocabulary, grammar, pronunciation and exercises (Nimechhisalem & Mukundan, 2015).

Purpose of evaluation

Lynch (1996) defines evaluation as the systematic attempt to gather information in order to make judgement or decision. Williams (1983) emphasizes the importance of evaluation as an integral part of a pedagogical process. Therefore, it is important to evaluate the textbook before, while and after use in order to fulfil the target learner-teacher needs by improving the syllabus.

According to Arikan (2008), employing a wide variety of English textbooks in language teaching brings about the need for the evaluation of the overall content of these books. Systematic and thorough examination of the potential textbooks can give rise to better outputs for learners, teachers and administrators. Both Cunningsworth (1995) and Ellis (1997) argue that textbook evaluation also helps teachers move beyond generalized assessments, and it aids them to obtain helpful, precise, and contextual insights into overall nature of textbook material (McGrath, 2002). Evaluation, therefore, can help textbook writers to improve the content of their textbooks.

Evaluation of vocabulary

Vocabulary is really important to be mastered by the learners to be able to speak fluently and accurately, and to write well. Studies have been conducted on the presentation of vocabulary items in English language textbooks. Nemati (2009) evaluated the specific vocabulary of English Pre-University textbook of Karnataka State in India in terms of the merits and demerits of the textbooks. Based on her study, the teachers seemed to be fully satisfied with the textbook. However, Nemati suggested that the sequence of presenting the text had better be changed with more frequent vocabularies coming first and rare and more difficult vocabularies appearing at the end of the textbook.

Kalthoum (2011) in her evaluation of English textbook in the 3rd year secondary school in Libya revealed that the evaluators of the textbook seemed to be less satisfied with the vocabulary items in the textbook. The evaluators believed that if the new vocabulary were repeated frequently, the students would be able to know a large number of new words. The evaluators also felt frustrated because the appendix of new vocabulary in each unit in the textbook had been removed for unknown reasons. They pointed out that the index of the new vocabulary in the previous textbook was so helpful to the teachers as well as students who wished to see a list of the new vocabulary items in each unit.

Yap (2011) who evaluated the vocabulary items in the 1st year English textbook in Malaysian primary schools also pointed out the same problem. Based on her study, the evaluators felt less satisfied with the textbook. They suggested that the small boxes at the end of each unit that included all the new
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vocabulary items in each unit in the previous textbook should be maintained in the present textbook. The removal of the boxes added an extra task for teachers to determine the new vocabulary per unit.

**Rationale of using the checklist**

Evaluating textbooks using checklists has been advocated by most experts in language studies. For example, Tomlinson (1998) supports the use of this method and maintains that one of the most obvious sources for guidance in analyzing materials is the large number of frameworks (i.e., checklist) which exist to aim in the evaluation of a textbook. Mukundan (2007) also stated that there are numerous textbook evaluation checklists as useful tools that enhance the quality of evaluating the suitability and practicality of textbooks.

**Method**

**Research design**

This study is descriptive in nature. The data were gathered from a group of teachers’ evaluation of the presentation of new vocabulary items in a textbook based on a checklist developed by Mat Hussin, Nimehchisalem, and Rezvani Kalajahi (2015).

**The evaluators**

The evaluators for this study were five Malaysian English Lower Secondary teachers who had the experience of teaching the textbook. They were five female teachers; aged from 30 to 60 years. They have been teaching English for more than ten years, and they have been teaching the Form Three English language textbook since it was introduced by the Ministry of Education in Malaysia in 2004. All of them had a bachelor degree in Teaching English as a Second Language (TESL).

**Research material**

The material used for this study was the Form Three English language textbook taught in secondary schools in Malaysia. It is called *Integrated Curriculum for Secondary Schools English Form*, written by Annie Lee, Judith Arokiasamy, Kamala Ganesan and Jayaletchimy Veerasamy (2004), and published by PGI Cipta Sdn. Bhd. It was approved by the Ministry of Education in Malaysia as the main English textbook in secondary schools in 2004.

**Research instrument**

The data for this study were collected using the researchers’ Checklist for Evaluating New Vocabulary Presentation in ELT Textbook (Mat Hussin et al., 2015). This checklist was developed based on previous checklists such as AbdelWahab (2013). It is a systematic and practical instrument not very time-consuming compared with other instruments. There are 11 items in the current checklist with a 5-point Likert scale, in which ‘0’ indicates ‘totally lacking’, ‘1, poor’, ‘2, satisfactory’, ‘3, good’ and ‘4, excellent’ (Appendix 2). The 11 items examined the load of new words, balance of simple and complex, distribution of vocabulary load across whole book, recycling of new words, presentation of new vocabulary, topical nature of the vocabulary exercises, new lexical items in each unit, specific method to teach new vocabulary, quality of the sentences and examples defining the new vocabulary, and the presence of an index presenting the new vocabulary. Also, the
checklist provides a ‘Comments’ column that enables the evaluators to give feedback regarding the presentation of the new vocabulary items. The checklist was selected as it is flexible, comprehensible, and based on the needs of the learners who are using the textbook.

Research procedures
For the data to be collected in this study, the checklist was presented to the evaluators. They were provided with sufficient explanations on how to use the checklist. We made sure they had a clear understanding of each item in the checklist before they started to evaluate the textbook. The evaluators were provided with ample time to answer the items individually. They were also told that they could leave their comments for any of the items in the Comments column. The checklists were collected and the evaluators’ responses were keyed in to SPSS. The data were analyzed descriptively.

Result and Discussion

Demographic results
Table 1 shows the descriptive statistics related to the demographics of the evaluators (n=5), aged between 30 and 60 (M = 42.8).

Table 1. Descriptive statistics results of the evaluators’ demographic information

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Evaluator</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Level of education</th>
<th>Teaching experience</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>BA</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>BA</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>BA</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>BA</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>BA</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

According to the table, the teaching experience of the evaluators ranged between 6 and 33 years with an average teaching experience of about 18 years.

Analysis of the criteria in the checklist
This section summarizes the evaluators’ judgement of the quality of the textbook following their responses to each of the checklist items.

1. The load of new words
Most of the evaluators revealed that the new vocabulary section of the textbook is moderately useful for students’ learning. There are weaknesses in the new vocabulary section. Evaluators 1, 2 and 3 declared that the load of new words in each lesson (item 1) is moderately appropriate to the linguistic level of students while evaluators 4 and 5 declared the load was of a low level of appropriateness considering the learners’ level.

Furthermore, based on the curriculums specifications for English Form 3, there was no specific wordlist for Form 3 students. The vocabulary list given was a wordlist for lower secondary Form 1 to Form 3, and there were many new words in the textbook which were missing in the wordlist. Similar
imbalance between the new vocabulary in the wordlist and those used in the textbook was also reported by Jahangard (2007) in his evaluation of four EFL textbooks used in Iranian high schools. He found a lack of correspondence between the word introduced in ‘the new words’ sections and those used in the reading passages.

2. Balance of simple and complex words

All evaluators graded the simple and complex words as moderately balanced in the textbook (item 2). Evaluators 1, 2, 3 and 5 felt that there was ‘good’ balance of simple and complex words and evaluator 4 believed that the item was ‘satisfactory’. It is important to select difficult words carefully and present them gradually throughout the textbook (Kalthoum, 2011). Based on the evaluators’ judgement, the new vocabulary items were presented in a logical manner in the textbook and were sequenced in reference to their difficulty level based on the students’ level.

3. Distribution of vocabulary load across the whole book

Regarding item 3, evaluators 1, 2, 3 and 5 seemed to agree that there was good distribution of vocabulary load across the whole book. They seemed to be satisfied with the distribution of new vocabulary item because they felt the overall content of the textbook fulfilled the level of difficulty for Form 3 students using it. However, evaluator 4 thought that the distribution of vocabulary in the textbook was poor. Although the textbook would provide different kinds of vocabulary items in each unit, the textbook did not contain adequate vocabulary words and there was poor repetition and reinforcement of new vocabulary. According to Mukundan and Khojasteh (2011), in their research of the present set of Malaysian Forms 1 to 3 English textbooks, this corpus consists of 153, 889 running words which have been chosen to identify the frequency occurrences of nine central modals and their verb phrase structures. Their findings showed that the modals have dwindling frequency occurrences throughout the textbook.

4. Repetition of new words for delayed recall

Most of the evaluators believed that the repetition of new words for delayed recall across the book (item 4) is poor. The new vocabulary item is introduced by highlighting in every text in the textbook. There are four of five new words being presented for a text and meaning for each of them is given. The explanation of the meaning of the new words is clear but there is no further exercises and sufficient explanation on the proper application and use of them in communication. According to Yap (2011), repetition of words is very important to ensure acquisition of new vocabulary because that shows how frequently a learner encounters with a new word. It has been estimated that learners can recall the new words when reading, if the new words have been recycled for at least seven times over spaced intervals (Thornburry, 2002).

A study related to vocabulary learning strategies carried out by Nation (2001, as cited by Akin & Seferoglu, 2004) suggested three important processes for vocabulary learning activities: noticing, retrieval and creative use, in order to store the words for a long term. The textbook had fulfilled the process of noticing by highlighting (numbering) the new vocabulary in the text and giving the definition so that the learners can notice and understand the meaning of the new words while reading the text. However, the textbook failed to follow the process of retrieval and creative use. There are no recycling exercises or activities for the learners to revise the new words. The new words students learnt in the previous lesson are not repeated again in the next lesson. Also, the learners are not able to apply the met words in the different ways or context.
Several studies (Crothers & Suppes, 1967; Lado, Baldwin & Lobo (1967) have found that learners need to repeat the new vocabulary as much as possible so that their number of vocabulary breadth increase and they are able to remember and use those words for a long-term retention (as cited in Gu, 2003, p. 10). To overcome this problem, teachers need to do some recycling activities of the new vocabulary because it is no use for learners to learn a word if they cannot remember and use it creatively.

5. Contextualization of new words

All evaluators felt that the new words are moderately contextualized (item 5). There is no exercise for those new words introduced in the text in spite of numbering the words and giving the meaning at the side of the text. However, there is an exercise for learners to understand the meaning from context in each chapter of the textbook. The learners are given the meaning of the words and they need to find the correct words for the meaning in the text. The number of lines or paragraphs and sometimes clues is given. The exercise requires the learners to guess the words based on the meaning given. Although the exercise seems facilitate the learners’ understanding of the words because their brain is stimulated when they are guessing the suitable words for the meaning rather than just read the meaning provided, it still not enough because activities should emphasize genuine communicative purposes and encourage students to think about their own language rather than about some exercise supplied by others. An example for such an exercise can be having students revise and edit a sample essay (Yap, 2011).

6. Presentation of new vocabulary

All evaluators seemed to be moderately satisfied with the presentation of the new vocabulary in the textbook (item 6). They ranked the presentation of the new vocabulary in various ways as satisfactory and good. Evaluator 5 stated that the meaning of the new vocabulary is given. The new vocabulary is highlighted (being numbered) and the meaning is given at the side of the text. Some exercises require the learners to guess the words in the text that match the meaning given. Overall, the new vocabulary is presented in the same ways and methods for every text in every chapter.

The textbook is moderate in variety of ways; the new vocabulary is presented, the meaning of the new vocabulary is being reinforced and the exercises are carried and reinforced the new vocabulary items in each unit. An effective textbook should have variety of ways of new words presentation and exercises in order to attract the learners’ interest in learning vocabulary. Also, they can practice the new vocabulary in their four skills of language. “The exercises should be varied in forms and should cover the whole range of language skills” (Kalthoum, 2011).

7. Topical nature of the vocabulary exercises

The topical nature of the vocabulary exercises (item 7) is being ranked as poor by evaluators 4 and 5, satisfactory by evaluators 1 and 3 and good by the evaluator. Some of the evaluators believed that the topical nature of the vocabulary exercises is not often meaningful to the students while others believed it is moderately meaningful to the students. Some of the exercises and activities in the textbook are found to be too easy for overachievers and some are quiet difficult for underachievers. The overachievers might find the exercises as too easy and boring. Kalthoum (2011) stated that needs, interest and ability of the students should be taken into account while selecting them. Moreover, most of the exercises are not enhancing higher thinking skills of the learners. However, the illustrations and pictures in the textbook contribute to the interpretation of the text. The wording also helps to attract students’ interest to a unit of textbook.
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8. New lexical items

For the item 8, most evaluators moderately agreed that the new lexical items (item 8) appear in each unit. Only evaluator 5 felt that it is poor. The evaluator stated that it is not clearly identified. It was found that new lexical items appear in each unit in the textbook. Learners are introduced with different lexical items in each chapter. It depends on the teachers in what way they would teach their students for every lexical item.

9. Specific method in teaching new vocabulary

Evaluators 4 and 5 felt that there is no specific method to teach new vocabulary in the textbook (item 9). Evaluators 1, 2 and 3 thought that there might be a specific method. Based on their experience in teaching English language, the two evaluators believed that the textbook is totally lacking for the item of specific method in teaching new words. The author of the textbook used the same method in introducing the new vocabulary for every text. The new vocabulary is often presented in similar ways. For this case, teachers have to take another initiative to teach the new vocabulary to the learners so that it might lead to enhancement of their lexical knowledge. Teachers also need to introduce the vocabulary learning strategies such as repetition and recycling to learners and encourage them to practise on their own. “It is important to make training in strategy use a planned part of a vocabulary development program” (Nation, 2001, p. 222).

10. Definition of new vocabulary

Evaluators 1, 2, 3, and 5 responded that the sentences and examples that define new vocabulary use words that are known by learners as moderate while surprisingly evaluator 4 rated the item as poor. The definition of the new vocabulary is explained in simple sentences. Although most of the words are easy to understand, it depends on the vocabulary knowledge of the learners. Learners with poor knowledge of vocabulary acquisition might not know the meaning of some words. Here, teachers need to explain the definition of the new vocabulary to their students. Teachers should also find other initiatives in teaching the new vocabulary to their students so that the objectives of the textbook to be achieved. This is the reason why this textbook evaluation was conducted. Hutchinson (1987) believed that material evaluation not only serves the immediate practical aim of selecting teaching materials, but also plays a critical role in developing teachers’ awareness in a number of ways.

11. Index of new vocabulary

For the last items of the checklist (item 11), two highly experienced evaluators (4 and 5) reported that there is no index of new vocabulary at the end of the textbook. Index is so helpful to teachers as well as students to know what pages the new vocabulary is in each unit. Without the index, the teachers might have an extra task to identify the new vocabulary while preparing for their teaching process. It is also wasting the time to find the pages that contain new vocabulary. Yap (2011) in her study of the evaluation of the 1st year Malaysian English primary school textbook, also identified the same problem. She found that the small box that contains all the new vocabulary in each unit at the end of the textbook in the previous textbook was removed for an unknown reason. The teachers would confront difficulty to determine the new vocabulary in each unit in the textbook.

Overall Evaluation

Table 2 shows the overall results of the evaluation of the presentation of new vocabulary items in the textbook from each evaluator. The overall results reveal how the evaluators rated the textbook regarding the presentation of new vocabulary in the textbook.
Table 2. Overall results of the evaluation of the presentation of new vocabulary items in Malaysian form three English language textbook

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Evaluator</th>
<th>Total score (Items 1-11)</th>
<th>Mean Score</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>2.45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>3.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>2.64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>1.18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>1.64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>2.18</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Key: 0.00-0.80 (Negligible usefulness), 0.81-1.60 (Low usefulness), 1.61-2.80 (Moderate usefulness), 2.81-3.60 (High usefulness), and 3.61-4.00 (Very high usefulness)

Based on the checklist for the items of the presentation of new vocabulary scores interpretation guide in Appendix 2, evaluators 1, 3 and 5 rated the overall items of the presentation of new vocabulary in textbook as moderately useful for learners. Evaluator 2 seems satisfied with the presentation of the new vocabulary in the textbook. She rated the items as highly useful for the learners. However, evaluator 4 seems to have different views from other evaluators by rated the overall items as poor. She felt that the new vocabulary presentation in the textbook is not convincing and effective for the learners’ learning and need to be improved.

As it can be observed, evaluators with higher teaching experience (evaluators 2, 4 and 5) overall rated the presentation of new vocabulary items in the Form Three English language textbook as highly useful, low useful and moderately useful, respectively. Majority of the responses of these evaluators were 1 and 2 (low) followed by some 3 (moderate). They also rated two items 9 and 11, 0 which is totally low. However, evaluators with moderate teaching experience (evaluators 1 and 3) rated the range for overall presentation of the new vocabulary items of the textbook as moderately useful for students’ effective learning. Majority of them rated the criteria with 2 (low) and 3 (moderate). Therefore, evaluators with high experience in teaching English language using the textbook seemed to be less satisfied with the new vocabulary presentation in the textbook. For evaluators with moderate experience, they seemed to be moderately satisfied with the presentation of new vocabulary in the textbook. They ranked the presentation of new vocabulary items in the textbook as almost moderate. There were no evaluators who ranked the vocabulary as highly useful. Therefore, this proved that experience in teaching English language influenced the results and findings for this research. The evaluators with high teaching experience should know better the needs of their students. It seems logical to argue that teachers from different experience levels should closely work together to foster their students’ vocabulary learning. Briscoe and Peters (1997) stated that teacher’s collaboration can increase their ability to analyse and improve classroom practice.

**Conclusion**

Process of acquiring new words is very important because lack of vocabulary knowledge can affect all the four language skills: listening, speaking, reading and writing. As truly stated by Harmer (1994), “If language structure make up the skeleton of language, then it is vocabulary that provides the vital organs and the flesh” (p. 153). The presentation of new vocabulary in the textbook should be suitable and effective to the students’ needs. The purpose of this study was to evaluate the presentation of the new vocabulary items in the Form three English language textbook in Malaysia. Five Form three English teachers evaluated the vocabulary items in the textbook based on the evaluative checklist for the new vocabulary items.
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There were three evaluators who were highly experienced and other two other evaluators had a good level of experience in English language teaching experience. The result of the study revealed highly experienced evaluators generally felt that the new vocabulary is less suitable for the learners. However, the other evaluators seemed to be moderately satisfied with the vocabulary items in the textbook. None of the evaluators rated the presentation of new vocabulary items as highly suitable.

For the vocabulary load of new words in each lesson, the evaluators reported that the appropriateness of the items depend on the students’ proficiency in English language. The item was rated as moderately appropriate to the linguistic level of students by evaluators 1, 2, and 3 and as less suitability to the learners’ level by evaluators 4 and 5. Furthermore, many of the new words are not in the wordlist provided in the curriculums specifications for English Form 3. However, it was noticed that the balance of simple and complex words was rated as moderate by all evaluators. They seemed satisfied with the item because the vocabulary in the textbooks follows the order of difficulty based on the students’ level. The distribution of vocabulary load across the whole book was also rated as moderate because the overall content of the textbook fulfil the context of difficulty for the students.

Besides, there was a poor repetition of new words for delayed recall across the book. The evaluators felt that textbook failed to follow the process of retrieval and creative use because there are no recycling exercises or activities for the learners to revise the new words. Learners need to repeat and recycle the new vocabulary as much as possible so that their number of vocabulary breadth may increase so that they might be able to remember and use those words for a long-term retention. However, the vocabulary was rated as moderate in reference to the contextualization of the new words. The learners are given the definition of the new words for each text and there are also exercise of understand meaning from context in each unit but the exercise is still not enough to enhance and improve students’ vocabulary knowledge. It was also found that the evaluators were satisfied with the presentation of the new vocabulary in the textbook. They believed that the new vocabulary should be presented in a variety of ways to attract learners’ interest in learning the vocabulary.

The evaluators pointed out that some of the exercises and activities in the textbook are too easy for overachievers and some are quiet difficult for underachievers. The overachievers might find the exercises too easy and boring. They also added that the topical nature of the vocabulary exercises should be meaningful to the students to enhance their thinking skills. Most of the evaluators agreed that new lexical items appear in each unit in the textbook. Teachers should find out the effective ways to teach their students for every lexical item. Also, no clear instruction was provided to teach the new vocabulary in the textbook. The new vocabulary was introduced by using the same method in every unit. The evaluators felt that the sentences and examples that define the new vocabulary use words that are known by learners. The authors used simple sentences to explain the new vocabulary in the textbook in order to give better understanding to the learners. However, it might be effective if the teachers play the role in explaining the definition in the classroom so that low achievers students could catch up together with the overachievers. Finally, some evaluators felt disappointed with the indexation of the new vocabulary that should have been provided in the end of the textbook. It added extra task to the teachers to identify the new vocabulary in the textbook. It was concluded that the textbook did not meet the characteristics of a good English textbook especially in terms of vocabulary.

Implication of the study

Based on the findings of the study, it can be concluded that the Form Three English Language Textbook can still be improved in terms of presentation of new vocabulary items in order to fulfil its objective. The findings of this study can be used as a reference to improve the presentation of new
EVALUATING THE PRESENTATION OF NEW VOCABULARY ITEMS IN MALAYSIAN FORM THREE ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEXTBOOK

vocabulary items in Form 3 English language textbook. It is expected that the findings can be useful for English language teachers, ELT materials developers, evaluators and curriculum developers.

Selection of words should be closely aligned to the 2000 most frequently used words in the English language (Mukundan & Anealka, 2007). Michael West (1953) introduced the General Service List (GSL), which is a list of approximately 2,000 words which were the most frequent words in English taken from a corpus of written English. In 2013, Browne, Culligan, and Phillips developed the New General Service List (NGSL), a list of roughly 2800 core words with the highest frequency in English. Reportedly, knowing these highly frequent words is enough for a learner to comprehend 87% of texts of any topic (Nation, 1990). Therefore, it is essential that textbook developers consider these useful word lists in their selection of the words to be presented in the textbooks.

As vocabulary learning is important to the learners in order to acquire the four learning skills, the Ministry of Education of Malaysia and the curriculum designers should revise and modify the way the new vocabulary items are presented in the textbook. It is suggested that the new vocabulary should be presented in a variety of ways so that it can engage the learners. More variety of exercises of the new vocabulary should be added into the textbook to enhance critical thinking of the learners. A glossary of the new vocabulary can be added as an appendix at the end of the textbook to make it easier to the learners to identify the new vocabulary in each unit.

Supplementary materials such as CDS and videotapes should be provided to both students and teachers, together with clear and sufficient instructions for teaching language skills and sub-skills. The listening CDs, for example, can improve students’ pronunciation skills. Besides using the textbook, the teachers should be allowed to use their own materials such as newspapers, magazines, songs and movies to create a fun and interesting teaching-learning environment in the classroom. Also, teachers can use modern technology such as power point slides in presenting a lesson so that students will not be bored with the same ways of learning.

Limitations and Recommendations

The study has some limitations. Firstly, it was only an attempt to evaluate the presentation of new vocabulary items in the Form Three English language textbook used in secondary schools entitled Integrated Curriculum for Secondary Schools English Form 3 by Annie Lee Judith Arokiasamy, Kamala Ganesan and Jayalethimy Veerasamy (2004) from teachers’ perspectives. Therefore, the findings cannot be generalized to the textbooks used in private schools as the textbook is used only in the Malaysian public schools. Furthermore, this study was limited to the student book only and would not evaluate the respective work book. Finally, the evaluators for this study are only five Malaysian Secondary English teachers.

Due to the limitations of the current study, further studies with different approaches need to be conducted to evaluate the vocabulary items in the textbook. For instance, a corpus based analysis of the vocabulary presentation in Malaysian English school textbooks would be useful to provide empirical evidences in terms of vocabulary, frequency and distribution. It is also suggested to evaluate vocabulary items in other English textbooks such as upper secondary school (Form 4-5) for more valuable results.

Further studies can also be carried out using or modifying other instruments such as checklists or questionnaires that include other criterion of vocabulary. Observations and interviews should be added into the qualitative design to gather more valuable data for the study.

The learners also can benefit from the findings of this study. They can share their opinions with their teachers on how to improve their proficiency level of English. They can ask the administrators to create an English section for their free times so that they can do some useful activities to improve their vocabulary knowledge on their own. The activities should be based on the lessons in the
textbook. Finally, other studies can be conducted with other evaluators such the curriculum designers, the authors of the textbooks, supervisors and students as they might have different views on the good vocabulary criterion in the textbook.

References


EVALUATING THE PRESENTATION OF NEW VOCABULARY ITEMS IN MALAYSIAN FORM THREE ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEXTBOOK


EVALUATING THE PRESENTATION OF NEW VOCABULARY ITEMS IN MALAYSIAN FORM THREE ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEXTBOOK


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### APPENDIX 1

**TABLE 1. Results of the evaluation of vocabulary in Malaysian form three English language textbook**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Criteria</th>
<th>Evaluator 1</th>
<th>Evaluator 2</th>
<th>Evaluator 3</th>
<th>Evaluator 4</th>
<th>Evaluator 5</th>
<th>The average</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The load (number of new words in each lesson) is appropriate to the linguistic level of students.</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>There is balance of simple and complex words.</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good distribution of vocabulary load across the whole book.</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Few words are repeated across the book for delayed recall.</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Few words are contextualized.</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Few vocabulary is presented in a variety of ways.</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The topical nature of the vocabulary exercises is often meaningful to the students.</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Few lexical items appear in each unit.</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>There is specific method to teach new vocabulary.</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The sentences and examples that define new vocabulary use words that are known by learners.</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>There is an index of new vocabulary at the end of the textbook.</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td>27</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
APPENDIX 2

CHECKLIST FOR EVALUATING NEW VOCABULARY PRESENTATION IN ELT TEXTBOOKS (Mat Hussin et al., 2015)

**Introduction:**
This checklist has been developed to help you evaluate the presentation of new vocabulary items in Malaysian English Language Textbooks.

**Background information**

1. Age: …… years
2. Level of education: □ Diploma □ BA □ MA □ PhD □
3. Teaching experience ….. years

4. Textbook title: ……………………………………

**Instructions:**
Read the items below carefully and mark the appropriate number that best describes your evaluation of the textbook:

0: Totally lacking  1: Poor  2: Satisfactory  3: Good  4: Excellent

If you have any further comments about each item, you may leave your notes in the ‘Comments’ column. After calculating the mean score, you can interpret it using the ‘Scores Interpretation Guide’ below the checklist.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>#</th>
<th>Item</th>
<th>0</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>Comments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>The load (number of new words in each lesson) is appropriate to the linguistic level of students.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>There is balance of simple and complex words.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Good distribution of vocabulary load across the whole book.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>New words are repeated across the book for delayed recall.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>New words are contextualized.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Visuals have been used effectively to present the new vocabulary.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>The topical nature of the vocabulary exercises is often meaningful to the students.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>New lexical items appear in each unit.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>There is specific method to teach new vocabulary.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>The sentences and examples that define new vocabulary use words that are known by learners.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>There is an index of new vocabulary at the end of the textbook.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level</td>
<td>Range</td>
<td>Interpretation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------</td>
<td>-----------</td>
<td>-----------------------</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.00-0.80</td>
<td>Negligible usefulness</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.81-1.60</td>
<td>Low usefulness</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>1.61-2.80</td>
<td>Moderate usefulness</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>2.81-3.60</td>
<td>High usefulness</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>3.61-4.00</td>
<td>Very high usefulness</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>