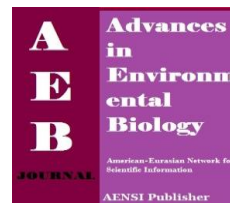




AENSI Journals

Advances in Environmental Biology

ISSN-1995-0756 EISSN-1998-1066

Journal home page: <http://www.aensiweb.com/aeb.html>

Towards a student-oriented approach to evaluate an EMP textbook

¹Bahador Sadeghi and ²Zohreh Baharvand

¹PhD of Applied Linguistics, Department of Foreign Languages, College of Humanities, Takestan Branch, Islamic Azad University, Takestan, Iran

²MA of Applied Linguistics, Department of Foreign Languages, College of Humanities, Takestan Branch, Islamic Azad University, Takestan, Iran

ARTICLE INFO

Article history:

Received 15 April 2014

Received in revised form 22 May 2014

Accepted 25 May 2014

Available online 15 June 2014

Key words:

English for Specific Purposes (ESP), students' needs, needs analysis, textbook evaluation, English for Medical Purposes (EMP)

ABSTRACT

This study set out to perform a student-oriented textbook evaluation. The textbook selected for this purpose was entitled "English for the students of medicine (I) by SAMT publication. In doing so, 91 medical students from Qazvin and Sanandaj University along with six ESP instructors participated in the study. They filled out their related questionnaires. The former group (i.e., students) filled out two questionnaires and one evaluation questionnaire at two intervals; one at the beginning of the term in which they rated the skills that assumed to be important in their future tasks and their expectations of the ESP course they were about to begin. They were also asked to fill out the same questionnaire at the end of the course to investigate to what extent the four language skills have been addressed as well as their initial expectations. During the same session they filled out an evaluation questionnaire. The latter group (i.e. ESP instructors) filled a questionnaire designed to investigate their opinions regarding the efficiency of the ESP textbook they had been teaching for years. The results of the study revealed that there was not a relationship between students' needs and their ESP textbooks and even though reading and writing were seen as properly addressed by the ESP textbook, listening and speaking were not seen as appropriately addressed by it.

© 2014 AENSI Publisher All rights reserved.

To Cite This Article: Bahador Sadeghi and Zohreh Baharvand, Towards a student-oriented approach to evaluate an EMP textbook. *Adv. Environ. Biol.*, 8(9), 982-988, 2014

INTRODUCTION

Because of a rapid world economic growth that gave rise to a colossal increase in job opportunities and an increased number of students seeking to pursue their education in English-speaking countries particularly US and UK, calls were made for the initiation of English language courses to specifically prepare language learners for certain situations [19]. In order to more effectively prepare language learners for their future situations SLA theorists proposed English for Specific Purposes (ESP) as the desired solution.

The basic question in ESP is: Why does this learner need to learn a foreign language? The purpose of learning English became the core [19]. It is a branch of ELT and defined as the developing of teaching materials and methods appropriate for the English language learners whose main goal is learning English for a purpose other than just learning the language system".

Hutchinson and Waters [19] see the following events as contributing factors in the development of ESP: a) a revolution in linguistics and b) focus on the learners. They explain that traditional linguists had the description of the rules of English usage, that is, the grammar as their primary concern. "However, the new studies shifted attention away from defining the formal features of language usage to discovering the ways in which language is actually used in real communication" [38]. One of the findings of these studies was that the language we speak and write in different situations varies considerably [4]. This finding inspired scholars to develop English courses for specific groups of learners. The idea behind this was that since language varies from one situation to another then it is possible to determine the features of certain situation and then these features be used for making the basis of the learners' course [39].

The other factor which Hutchinson and Waters [19] point to as a contributing factor in the development of ESP is shifting attention away from teaching to learning and learners. Learners were begun to be seen as having different needs and interests. This difference could be employed for the development of courses in which learners' needs and interests were paramount.

Corresponding Author: Bahador Sadeghi, PhD of Applied Linguistics, Department of Foreign Languages, College of Humanities, Takestan Branch, Islamic Azad University, Takestan, Iran & PhD Candidate of International Relations, Allameh Tabatabai University, Tehran, Iran
E-mail: bahsad@gmail.com

Reviewing the literature, one is able to find out two important features that lie at the heart of ESP: firstly, an ESP's primary concern is with the purposes for which learners need English (thus the name suggests) [18,13,29], secondly, in ESP courses the students and their needs are placed at the center of course design [14,19,33,10,3,4,34].

As Dudley- Evans and St. John [10] point out, ESP has traditionally been divided into two main categories: English for Academic Purposes (EAP) and English for Occupational Purposes (EOP). The dichotomization of ESP is generally presented in a tree diagram. The diagram is reproduced in Figure 1

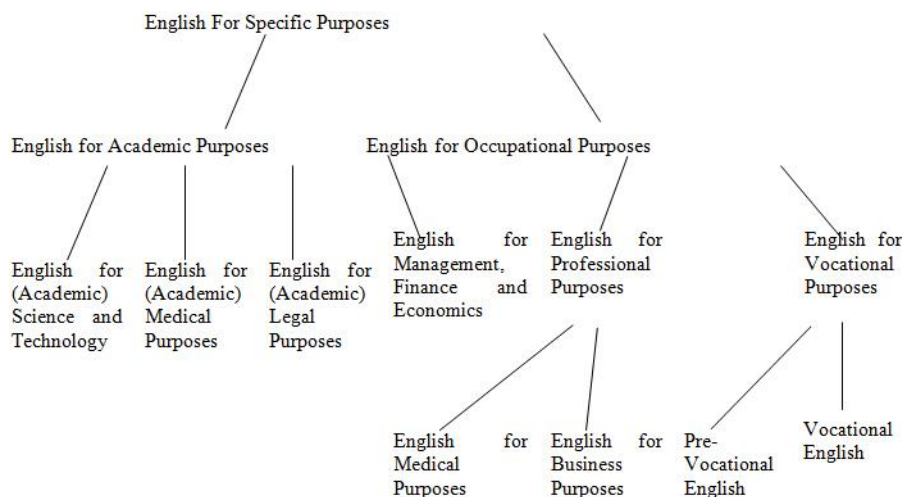


Fig. 1: ESP classification by experience (adopted from Dudley- Evans & St. John 1998, p. 6).

English for Medical Purposes as an academic discipline comes under the more general term of EAP. Within EMP, Dudley- Evans and St. John [10] identify a distinction between a discipline of EMP that is included under EAP and EMP that is included in EOP.

Lee [22] defines EMP as “a specialized English course for students or for those working in nursing and medical areas. EMP may include job-related English skills such as medical terminology, abbreviations and conversations used in performing daily medical tasks” (p. 125).

1.1 Textbook and textbook evaluation:

A textbook can be referred to as a published book especially designed to help language learners to improve their linguistic and communicative abilities [34]. Textbook is generally regarded as an indispensable tool in ELT especially in EFL context where it is the only language source which learners have to rely on for language learning. After teachers, textbooks are considered to be the next important factor in second/foreign language classrooms.

Not all scholars, however, do hold a positive view toward textbook and its use [36,1,17]. Despite certain objections toward them, textbooks are here to stay because their advantages far outweigh the disadvantages. Course books are the route map of any ELT program [34], textbook serves as a blue print [19], it can function as a motivation generating tool [22], it can, like a map, show the teaching progress [27], it provides support and security for inexperienced and diffident teacher [24] and it can be used for revision of previously taught materials by students [37].

Textbook evaluation and its role in enhancing the quality of a given course is another factor which has been frequently discussed in ELT in general and ESP in particular [6,39,34,2,26,28]. “The evaluation results can help to enhance the effectiveness of the use of textbook by helping teachers to understand what areas of the textbook need further modification, or to what extent adaptation of other new teaching materials is necessary”. Sheldon [34] points to two reasons for textbook evaluation; firstly, it will help the teacher or program developer in making decisions on selecting the appropriate textbook secondly, evaluation of the merits and demerits of a textbook will familiarize the teacher with its probable weaknesses and strengths. This will enable teachers to make appropriate adaptations to the material in their future instruction.

In line with other researchers and in arguing for the importance of textbook evaluation, Ellis [13] identifies three kinds of textbook evaluation namely, pre-use, in-use and post-use. Pre-use evaluation is performed to help teacher select the most appropriate textbook for a course. In-use evaluation aids the teacher identifies the strengths and weaknesses of the textbook while it is being used and finally post-use evaluation helps the teacher reflect about the general quality of the book after it has been used.

Adopting a post-use evaluation approach with a focus on how a particular textbook can meet students' needs, Litz [23] conducted a textbook evaluation. It was a language teaching textbook. Among the positive features of the textbook were the followings: it had a high quality and the presentation of information appeared to be clear, concise and user-friendly. It contained charts, models and photographs that helped contextualize the presented information. The textbook was accompanied with teacher's guide, CD, workbook and website which provided learners with extra related exercises. Its emphasis was on meaningful and authentic language and finally it enjoyed a well-organized structure. Among the shortcomings of the textbook were as follows: it was relatively found expensive and almost difficult to find in the market, it employed different eclectic methods taken from suggestopedia and silent way which resulted in sort of confusion both on the part of learners and inexperienced teachers.

Another English language textbook evaluation was conducted by Tok. The data were collected by means of a questionnaire and addressed the following six features: layout and design, activities, skills, language type, subject and content and whole aspect. Among the aforementioned criteria only skill was rated positively by students and their teachers the other criteria were not perceived as positive by them.

Ghalandari and Talebinehad [15] set out a study with a focus on evaluation of a medical textbook developed for students of medicine at Shiraz University. By means of a five-part checklist containing twenty-one questions developed by Hutchinson and Waters [19] they evaluated students' textbooks. The results of their study show that the content of the book, generally speaking, is compatible with students' needs.

Considering the importance of evaluation in language teaching field the researcher set out a study in which she investigated the efficacy of an ESP textbook. It was an academic one which is being studied at a number of medical universities including Qazvin and Sanandaj Universities which are the focus of current studies. The study aimed to investigate the extent to which the students found the textbook effective in addressing their language skills. Specifically the following research questions were proposed:

RQ1: Is there any significant relationship between students' need and ESP textbook?

RQ2: To what extent does EMP book published by SAMT address all four major skills of LSRW?

2. Method:

2.1 Participants:

The participants of this study were 91 medical students from Qazvin and Sanandaj Medical Universities and ESL instructors of these two universities. Their mean age was 22.36 (range: 21-25, SD: 2.4). They were admitted in the academic year 2010-2011. Students came from varying L1 backgrounds; 17 reported to have Kurdish, 25, Turkish and the remaining students (i.e. 42) reported to have Farsi as their native language. The participants were also heterogeneous in terms of their language learning experience. They had varying amount of language learning experience. Their language learning experience ranged from one year to eight years language learning (SD: 5.3). However, almost all of them reported to have an intermediate- to advanced level of acquaintance with English.

2.2 Instruments:

The main data of the study were collected through four types of questionnaires. Three of them were filled out by medical students of Qazvin and Sanandaj Universities and one was filled out by ESP instructors of these two universities. The first employed instrument was a two-part expectation questionnaire which surveyed students' expectations from the ESP course they were about to begin (Appendix A). The same questionnaire, with minor alterations, was administered one more time at the end of the course to see to what extent the textbook had been successful to meet the students' initial expectations (Appendix B). Also an instructor and students' textbook evaluation were also employed (Appendixes C and D, respectively). Another employed instrument in the study was a TOFEL test.

2.3 Procedure:

After obtaining the deans allowance for performing the research at their universities, I attended the first session of ESP course at Qazvin University. At the second session of the ESP the students were informed about the purpose of the research. that they were going to be a part of research process. They were informed that the research intended to evaluate their ESP textbook by means of their instructors' and more importantly their own views. They were also informed that participation was totally voluntary. Before distributing the questionnaire I distributed the tailored TOEFL tests papers. The purpose of administering it was to determine the overall language proficiency of the students. The results of the test showed that almost all of the students had gained more than the mean score. After having answered the test, learners were provided with the first questionnaire. The questionnaire had been designed to survey their expiations from the ESP course they were about to begin. It was designed by the researcher based on the reviewed literature and related questionnaires designed by other writes. It was a two-section questionnaire; section one was designed specifically to probe students' opinions regarding the language skills that they found most/least important in ESP and expected them to be improved in

the ESP course. They rated the four language skills of listening, speaking, reading and writing in their questionnaire as “Highly needed”, “Very much needed” and “Only of limited use”.

The second part of the questionnaire consisted of nineteen questions against each one was a series of scores ranging from 1 to 5. The students read the statements and rated them on a five-point scale ranging from “Strongly agree” to “Strongly disagree”. Along with each statement a short researcher’s explanation in Farsi was provided to crystallize the meaning of each statement.

The researcher attended the ESP course again about one week or two before the end of the term and asked the students to fill out a questionnaire in which they rated the efficacy of the textbook which they had studied for a term.

When they had finished with the questionnaire that was almost identical with the initial expectation questionnaire, they were given the textbook evaluation questionnaire. It probed students’ opinions regarding the following seven components: Vocabulary, reading, grammar, language functions, pronunciation practice, physical make-up and practical concerns. The same procedures which were followed for collecting data from Qazvin medical students were followed exactly to collect data from Sanandaj Medical students as well. And finally, ESP instructors of these two universities were also asked to fill out a questionnaire whose aim was to probe ESP instructors’ opinions regarding the textbook they had been teaching for several years.

3. Data Analysis:

Table 1 illustrates the frequency and the percentage of the students’ opinions regarding the skills which they thought as the most/least important at the first administration of the expectation questionnaire.

Table 1: The initial expectation questionnaire: Part one.

Item		Highly needed	Very much needed	Only of limited use
Listening	frequency	41	21	29
	percent	45.05	23.07	31.86
Speaking	frequency	40	35	16
	percent	43.96	38.46	17.58
Reading	frequency	29	31	31
	percent	31.86	34.96	34.96
Writing	frequency	42	28	21
	percent	46.15	30.76	23.07

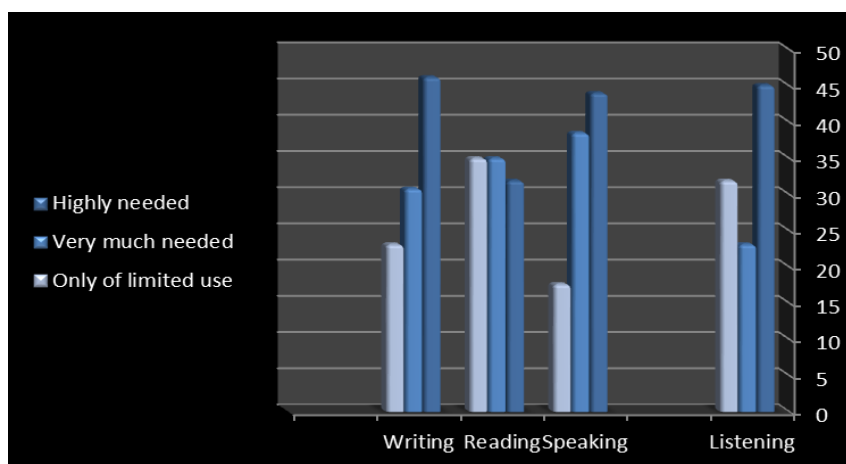
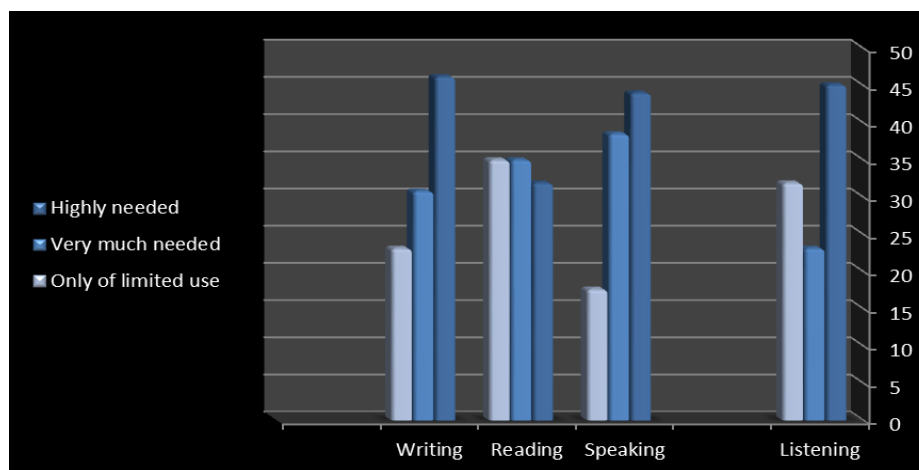


Table 2: Illustrates the frequency and the percentage of the students’ opinions regarding the skills which they thought as the most/least important at the second administration of the expectation questionnaire.

Table 2: The second expectation questionnaire: Part one .

Item		Highly addressed	Satisfactorily addressed	Limitedly addressed
Listening	frequency	16	34	41
	percent	17.58	37.36	42.70
Speaking	frequency	19	22	46
	percent	20.87	24.17	50.54
Reading	frequency	42	15	34
	percent	46.15	16.48	37.36
Writing	frequency	27	15	49
	percent	29.67	16.48	53.48



In order to answer the first research question, we employed Pearson correlational test.

Table 3: Pearson correlational test.

Variable	Correlational coefficient	Meaningfulness level
Students' needs	0.331	0.245
ESP textbook		

According to the above table, there is not a meaningful relationship between Medical Students' needs and their ESP textbook. Because the obtained meaningfulness level is 0.245 which is greater than $\alpha = 0.05$.

In order to answer the second research question, we employed Paired T-test. The results of the analysis are provided in Table 4 below.

Table 4: Paired T-test results.

	Degree of Freedom	T value	Degree of Freedom	Probability value
Listening	90	0.206	90	0.325
Speaking	90	2.647	90	0.002
Reading	90	0.179	90	0.860
Writing	90	0.213	90	0.043

According to the results of the above table, in every instance where the probability value is smaller than 0.05 it indicates that the skill has been addressed appropriately by the textbook and whenever the probability is greater than 0.05 it implies that the skill has not been inadequately or even not addressed at all by the textbook. Hence, reading and writing were reported to have been given attention in the ESP textbook; however, listening and speaking were announced to have been properly addressed.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION:

In the first administration of the questionnaire and Part one which attempted to investigate the skills which students found most and least needed the results revealed that almost all skills were rated as highly important with a small difference in the number of students rating the skills as important. The hierarchy of skills rated from highly important to less important by students was as follows: writing, listening, speaking and reading. The analysis of the results of Part two of the initial questionnaire reveals that Prompts No. 1 and No. 11 were among the highest selected choices. Prompt No. 1 dealt with the authenticity of reading material and Prompt No. 11 dealt with the effectiveness of the instructors. These two items were rated as the students' expectations more than other prompts. Among the prompts that were chosen by the least number of students were Prompts No. 9, 7, 4, 17 and 19. They were rated by only 23, 12, 11, 12, 13 and 10 students as high expectations.

The analysis of the results of the second administration of the questionnaire which had been designed to investigate the extent to which learners' initial expectations had been met by the course reveals a marked discrepancy between the first and the second questionnaire results. The difference is especially notable in Part 1. In the first administration of the questionnaire, students rated almost all four skills as highly important. In the second administration of the questionnaire where they were asked the extent to which the four skills were addressed the following findings were observed. Reading was chosen by the majority of students as the mostly addressed skill in the course. Reading was followed by writing, speaking, and listening. That is, reading was rated as the most addressed skill in the course and listening, the least.

In Part two of the second administration of the questionnaire Prompt No. 6 was the most selected item (32) selected. Prompt No. 14 was the least selected item (only 12). Given the scant opportunities for learners to

engage in oral communicative activities the observed result seems predictable. This part of the discussion analyses the results of the students and their instructors' textbook evaluation questionnaire. The former was a rather comprehensive questionnaire (40 questions) comprised of seven separate parts: vocabulary, reading, grammar, language function, pronunciation practice, physical make up and practical considerations which surveyed students' opinions regarding the content of their textbook. First the students' evaluation of the textbook will be presented then we will analyze the teachers' textbook evaluation. Among the most selected prompts were items 3, 12, 20, 21, and 39.

An interesting observation that was made regarding the instructors' questionnaire was the fact that the ESP teachers were either in highly agreement with the prompts of the questionnaire or were highly in disagreement with them. A possible explanation is that ESP instructors found some of the components of the textbook very positive, for example Prompt 11 which reads "An adequate set of evaluation quizzes or testing suggestions is included", or found some of the components of the book as highly problematic, for example Prompt 5 which reads "The author's views on language and methodology are comparable to mine".

Regarding the difference between the first students' expectation questionnaire and the second administration of the questionnaire which asked the students to rate the extent to which each skill had been addressed during the term a wide discrepancy is witnessed. While in the initial expectation questionnaire they had rated the four skills as equally important, in the second administration they only rated reading skill as highly addressed the other three skills were rated mostly as only limitedly addressed. A cursory look at the ESP textbook reveals that their evaluation of their textbook is not far from true.

As is the case with other academic English textbooks both general- and ESP-based, no listening activity has been designed in such textbooks. Listing activities are limited to reading aloud activities by other students or teachers' speech mostly centered on grammatical points. Speaking skill is another activity which has been evaluated by students as only limitedly addressed. Although at the end of each lesson there are some questions that are either based on the preceding reading or ask the students to verbalize their opinions, they are given a lip service by instructors.

Writing is another activity which was rated poorly by students. Although apparently students engage in a great deal of writing, they are mostly in the form of short answers to comprehension questions following each reading. Never does an activity in the textbook ask learners to write a longer discourse, say writing a critique to a reading or writing a personal experience related to the topic of the passage. Writing a longer discourse calls for a more complicated and advanced knowledge of language. Students need to attend not only to grammatical forms their language but also to the features that are characteristics of longer discourse for example coherence and cohesion. Only when do learners engage in writing such longer discourse and receive feedback by their instructors they develop the necessary skills for genuine writing.

Conclusion:

Every educational course must exercise its utmost care to make sure that the needs of the learners are appropriately identified and accordingly addressed. ESP-based courses are not exception. Students of such courses have almost this limited opportunity to enhance their four language skills and develop the skills necessary for engaging in orally and aurally in activities related to their field of study, in this case medicine.

Language is reading and listening, writing and speaking. Separating language into its ingredient parts and treating those parts subjectively and unequally, results to a less than comprehensive language learning. In such language learning contexts learners are good at say, reading but weak at listening. ESP students, like their counterparts in EGP courses, can do a great deal of reading individually without the help of instructor. They do not need to engage in reading aloud activities in the classrooms in which there is little if any learning value. Rather they can spend their time more constructively. They can, for example, engage in communication activities in which they discuss about the latest discovered treatment for a particular disease or they can engage in a listening lecture presented by a fellow student on a related controversial issue and after taking notes engage in an argument in which pros and cons of the topic in a longer discourse defend their opinions. Considering the fact that ESP and EGP in our country occurs in an EFL context the importance of aforementioned comments increases. ESP learners have only their materials, teachers and fellow students at their disposal to practice and automatize their inter language. Depriving ESP learners of this opportunity may put them in a disadvantage position in their future career.

REFERENCES

- [1] Allwright, R., 1982. What Do We Want Teaching Materials For?. *ELT Journal*, 36: 5-13.
- [2] Ansary, H., E. Babaii, 2002. A step towards systematic textbook evaluation. *TESL Journal*, 1: 60-67.
- [3] Antić, Z., 2008. The new roles of teachers and students in EMP. *Medicine and Biology*, 15: 125-129.
- [4] Basturkmen, H., 2006. *Ideas and options in English for specific purposes*. New Jersey: L. Erlbaum Associates.

- [5] Brown, H.D., 1994. Principles of language learning and teaching. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall.
- [6] Bruder, M.N., 1978. Evaluation of foreign language textbooks: A simplified procedure. In H. S. Madsen and J. D. Bowen. Adaptation in language teaching. Appendix 2 (pp. 209-218). Rowley, Mass: Newbury.
- [7] Celani, M.A., 2008. When Myth and Reality Meet: Reflections on ESP in Brazil. *ESP Journal*, 27: 412-423.
- [8] Chia, H.U., R. Johnson, H.L. Chia, F. Olive, 1999. English for college students in Taiwan: A study of perceptions of English needs in a medical context. *English for Specific Purposes*, 18(2): 107-119.
- [9] Chien, C., M. Hsu, 2010. A study of incorporating ESP instruction into university English courses. *Precedia-Social & Behavioral Sciences*, 9: 1885-1888.
- [10] Dudley-Evans, T., M. St John, 1998. *Developments in ESP: A multi-disciplinary approach*. Cambridge: CUP.
- [11] Ellis, R., 1997. *SLA research and language teaching*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- [12] Ellis, R., 1997. The Empirical Evaluation of Language Teaching Materials. *ELT Journal*, 51: 36-42.
- [13] Ellis, R., 2003. *Task-based language learning and teaching*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- [14] Gardner, P.H., J.D. Winslow, 1983. Present and proposed methods of determining the needs of students in public sector identifying language needs. Pergamon Press.
- [15] Ghalandari, Sh., R.M. Talebinejad, 2012. Medical ESP textbook evaluation. *Education Research Journal*, 2: 20-29.
- [16] Grabe, W., R. Kaplan, 1986. Science, technology, language and information: Implications for language and language-in-education planning. *International Journal of the Sociology of Language*, 59: 47-71.
- [17] Harwood, N., 2005. 'I hoped to counteract the memory problem, but I made no impact whatsoever': discussing methods in computing science using I. *English for Specific Purposes*, 24: 243-267.
- [18] Howatt, A., 1984. *A history of English language teaching*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- [19] Hutchinson, T., E. Torres, 1994. The textbook as agent of change. *ELT Journal*, 48: 125-137.
- [20] Karimkhanlouei, G., 2010. What do medical students need to learn in their English class? *Journal of language teaching and research*, 3(3): 570-577.
- [21] Lantolf, J.P., 2000. *Sociocultural theory and second language learning*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- [22] Lee, I., 1997. ESL learners performance in error correction in writing: some implications for teaching. *System*, 25(4): 467-477.
- [23] Litz, D.R.A., 2005. Text book evaluation and ELT management: A South Korean case study. Retrieved from: <http://www.asian-Efl-journal.com/Litz-thesis.pdf>
- [24] Mares, C., 2003. *Writing a coursebook*. Needham Heights, MA: Allyn & Bacon.
- [25] McDonough, J., C. Shaw, 1993. *Materials and methods in ELT: a teacher's guide*. Oxford: Blackwell pub.
- [26] McGrath, I., 2002. *Materials evaluation and design for language teaching*. Edinburg: Edinburg University Press.
- [27] McGrath, Ian, 2002. *Materials evaluation and design for language teaching*. Edinburgh: Edinburg University Press.
- [28] Miekley, J., 2005. ESL textbook evaluation checklist. *The Reading Matrix*, 5(2): 52-64.
- [29] Nunan, D., 2004. *Task-based language teaching*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- [30] O'Neil, R., 1982. Why Use Textbooks?. *ELT Journal*, 36(2): 104-111.
- [31] Rea-Dickens, P., K. Germaine, 1993. *Evaluation*. Hong Kong: Oxford University Press.
- [32] Richard, C., S. Rodgers, 1986 *Approaches and methods in language teaching*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- [33] Robinson, P., 1991. *ESP Today: a Practitioner's Guide*. Hemel Hempstead: Prentice Hall International.
- [34] Sheldon, L.E., 1988. Evaluating ELT textbooks and materials. *ELT Journal*, 42: 237-246.
- [35] Skierso, A., 1991. Textbook selection and evaluation, in M. Celce-Murcia *Teaching English as a second foreign language*. Boston: Heinle and Heinle Publishers.
- [36] Swales, J., 1980. ESP: the textbook problem. *The ESP Journal*, 1: 11-23.
- [37] Ur, P., 1996. *A course in language teaching: practice and theory*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- [38] Widdowson, H.G., 1978. *Teaching Language as Communication*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- [39] Williams, D., 1983. Developing criteria for textbook evaluation. *ELT Journal*, 37: 251-255.
- [40] Willis, D., J. Willis, 2007. *Doing task-based teaching*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- [41] Xu, X., 2008. Influence of instrumental motivation on EFL learners in China and its implication on TEFL instructional design. *Educational Communications and Technology*, University of Saskatchewan. Retrieved August 20, 2009 from <http://www.usask.ca/education/coursework/802papers/xu/index.htm>
- [42] Zengin, B., A.R. Erdogan, S. Akalin, 2007. Acquisition of Latin roots with implications for EAP. *Journal of Language and Linguistics Studies*, 3: 11- 31.