

COMING TO GRIPS WITH MATERIALS EVALUATION: LESSONS LEARNED FROM INTERVIEWING LOCAL COURSEBOOK USERS

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Abstract

Course books form the basis of foreign language instruction in most of the Turkish state schools, and the selection process of local course books depends on the outcome of panel sessions. Although the panelists' criticisms are welcomed, the voices of course book users tend to go unheard. Now that they have first-hand experience of the materials in the foreign language class, teachers and learners can provide useful information on their performance. For this reason, five English teachers and 19 seventh-graders from different secondary schools in Mersin were interviewed in order to extract their opinions on MoNE's selection process of local course books. With the purpose of offering an alternative model of course book selection on the basis of all-party evaluations, one course book author, besides the course book users, was inquired about his views on the process of course book design and selection through three open-ended questions. When the qualitative data from their responses were subjected to content analysis, the majority of the course book users focused on their inactive role in the selection process, the function of the course book and evaluative criteria in use, and tended to dislike the idea of choosing textbooks without consulting users. The course book writer, on the other hand, was disturbed by the constraints of the design process, and reported difficulty in revising the materials due to the misleading evaluations of the panelists. Finally, the proposed model for course book selection, adapted from Roberts (1996), consisted of the pre-production and post-production phases, and involved the use of needs analysis, piloting, continuous user evaluation and course book revision for obtaining more effective local course books.

Keywords: course book selection, content analysis, local course books, user evaluation