

EXPLORING THE PROS AND CONS OF A LOCAL ENGLISH COURSEBOOK IN USER PREFERENCES

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Abstract

Despite teachers' constant complaints, local course books continue to be the basic text of foreign language classes in Turkey, and apparently owe their wide circulation much to MoNE's official mandate in state schools. Although their deficiencies and user dissatisfaction have been well-documented, the problem of quality has still not been resolved. This may be related to the fact that the authorities are disregarding the opinions of teachers and students as real consumers. However, a post-use evaluation of local course books by its users can render useful data, on which course book writers can base their revisions for new editions. For this reason, the purpose of this study was to elicit the views of 85 English teachers and 396 seventh-graders on the performance of the newly published local textbook (Sunshine 7), to identify its strengths and weaknesses for the teachers as well as students' favorites, and also to determine the course book's role, teachers' preferred supplementary materials and learners' cultural needs. The qualitative data from the survey questions were examined with the content analysis method, and it was found that almost half of the teachers (47%) were discontent with their local course book in use, and its major weaknesses related to the limited number of activities (11%), vocabulary overload (7%), and incompatibility with the learners' level of proficiency (7%), whereas the strengths were about the choice of interesting topics (7%), reading texts at the appropriate level of difficulty (6%), and clear outline of the content (7%). While 61% of the teachers did not assign a central role to the course book in the foreign language class, they tended to prefer conventional paper-based materials to promote grammar learning (49%), and thus improve learners' performance in state examinations (TEOG). On the other hand, the students were found to be much attracted by the visuals (35%) and activities (12%), and demanded a richer presentation of global world cultures (59%).

Keywords: local course books, post-use evaluation, supplementary materials, user views