

Agricultural Extension and Rural Development ESP Textbook Evaluation in Bu Ali Sina University, Iran

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Received: April 30, 2013

Accepted: May 13, 2013

Online Published: May 16, 2013

doi:10.5430/elr.v2n1p113

URL: <http://dx.doi.org/10.5430/elr.v2n1p113>

Abstract

An efficient ESP learning plays a very major role in all the syllabi. This is why teachers, course designers and material writers consider learners' need as an indispensable part of syllabus. Also, the analysis of the particular needs of a special learner group is considered as an introductory part for evaluating an ESP textbook. Having to say this, this paper (the present study) tends to analyze the 'Agricultural Extension and Rural Development ESP Textbook' taught in Bu Ali Sina University. Therefore, this ESP textbook was evaluated by making the best use of Hutchinson and Waters' Framework. Then, the adaptability of the content of these textbooks in agricultural extension and rural development had been discussed regarding the learners' needs. Finally, regarding the presented results on the evaluation of ESP textbooks, it is found that these ESP textbooks are highly appropriate and proper for the students of the mentioned course in Bu Ali Sina University and this textbook is very compatible to students' requirements and success.

Keywords: ESP (English for Specific Purposes), Textbook evaluation, Learners' needs, Agricultural extension and rural development, Bu Ali Sina University

1. Introduction

On a daily basis, we as teachers, the materials that we teach must be evaluated, but this type of evaluation is not enough. We must conduct and perform systematic evaluations if our purpose is to maximize learning (Brown, 1995; Ellis, 1997; Richards, 2001). There are a large range of textbooks to choose from, but the process of selecting an appropriate textbook can be both time-consuming and expensive (McDonough & Shaw, 2001; Karimi, 2006). Evaluation is a 'matching process that matched the needs to available solutions' (Hutchinson and Waters, 1987 cited in Sheldon 1988: 237).

The emergence and spread and distribution of English as the language of international relationship, asserting of knowledge ideas, and culture is well attested. It is a fact that English language teaching is obviously subject to developmental trends, and of the main prominent trends of recent years has been that of English for Specific Purposes. English is by far the most important and acceptable language of scientific and scholarly conferences, workshops and debates. As a matter of fact, no one can deny the fact that for the past few decades there has been a growing need to use the English language for the expression of information within specific professional fields. In response to this need, the teaching of ESP has become a major concern mainly in the countries that English is taught as a foreign language (Gatehouse, 2001).

Definitions of ESP are numerous but they all reflect the emphasis on how ESP teaching develops appropriate procedures to learners whose main goal is learning English for a purpose other than just language learning. That purpose may be educational, or professional, and ESP seeks to justify how well it prepares learners to achieve the

required goals.

In defining ESP, Hutchinson and Waters (1987, p.19) posit "ESP is an approach to language teaching in which all decisions as to content and method are based on the learner's reason for learning."

Accordingly, ESP can be defined as English instruction based on actual and immediate needs of learners who have to successfully perform real-life tasks unrelated to merely passing an English course or exam (Smoak, 1996). So, the issue of focusing on learners' needs becomes equally paramount as the methods utilized to spread linguistic knowledge. Dudley-Evans and St. John (1998) believe that any language must be included as a defining feature of ESP but the main concerns of ESP are needs analysis, text analysis, and preparing learners to communicate in an effective way in any required situations.

Another thing which is of utmost importance is that the experts of curriculum design believe that the breaking down of curriculum into components and sub-processes is a vital issue, since it simplifies and organizes such a complex process as the curriculum design is (Hutchinson and Waters, 1984, Nunan, 1991).

The first component in doing this is the needs assessment --that is obtaining of data-- followed by a needs analysis. Therefore, the first key point to elaborate on is the students' needs and ways of assessing and addressing them in an effective and efficient way. Observation and analysis are essential to find out what the real language needs are.

Teachers nowadays are much more aware of the importance of needs analysis, and certainly materials developers think very carefully about the goals of learners at all stages of materials production. Although it is true that ESP is needs-based and task-oriented, it is not possible to determine and achieve all specific needs of learners in a general educational context; however, defining the main purposes based on a scientific needs analysis in terms of educational objectives is possible.

Hutchinson and Waters (1987) believe that the basic principle of ESP is to realize what learners need English for, and then teach the English that they need. So teaching ESP is demanding and time consuming. In Iran, English is the language of a lot of academic textbooks, especially in medicine and engineering. This has led universities to include ESP work in their curriculum as a necessary course. Even though ESP courses have become popular recently, and despite the growing demand for communicating through English for Specific Purposes, ESP courses are still limited to learning specific lexicon, grammar points, and translating texts. This approach which basically ignores learners' personal interests and needs often creates low motivation in students' English studies and, in turn, leads to poor performance later when they use English in their profession.

Moreover, with the advent of globalization, it is essential that students be able to listen, to read and present information orally and in writing on science related matters in English. In many Iranian agricultural-related workplaces, academic and professional, a certain level of understanding of English is required of members. Therefore, their ESP textbooks must fulfill some of their needs.

Since the early 1960's when ESP became one of the most prestigious areas of EFL teaching, we have witnessed the publication of a large number of ESP textbooks, but a few books are obviously the product of careful research and a clearly defined theoretical position. In fact, a number of them are general ELT courses (Robinson, 1980). It is so important that the evaluation of teaching materials is a major part of a teacher's work. Evaluation is basically a matching process, which concerns matching learners' needs to available solutions (Hutchinson and Waters, 1987). The evaluation process in ESP also should be carefully conducted to assure optimal results (Allwright, 1981; McGrath, 2002). Thus a much more promising approach to a theory of ESP comes from the analysis and evaluation of ESP textbooks. All ESP activities have to be linked to a view of text.

A textbook serves as a useful map or plan of what is intended and expected. Crowford (1994, p.58) says that a textbook is very important because it allows for:

1-*Negotiation*: the textbook can supply something to negotiate about.

2-*Accountability*: the textbook shows all stakeholders what is being done in a classroom.

In today's classrooms, textbooks are a key component in most language program. According to Riazi (2003) after teachers, textbooks are considered to be the next important factor in second/foreign language classrooms.

It is further worth mentioning that, materials should meet and fulfill students' needs by the consideration of different learning styles. Also, according to Dudley-Evans and St. John (1998), in some situations where English is a foreign not a second language, the ESP classroom may be the only source of English. Materials then play a crucial role in exposing learners to the language, and the full range that learners require. To stimulate and motivate, materials need to be challenging yet achievable; to offer new ideas and information while being grounded in the learners'

experience and knowledge; to encourage fun and creativity.

In Iran, textbooks have a major role for much of the language input that the learners receive and also they play an important role in the language practice that takes place in the classroom. For most teachers, textbooks provide the foundation for the content of lessons, the balance of the skills taught, as well as the kinds of language practice the students engage in during class activities. As a matter of fact, they shape the content and nature of teaching and learning.

On the other hand, a countless number of English textbooks are available on the market today. The eye can easily be deceived by colorful covers, a beautiful layout and attractive artwork. For an inexperienced teacher, it can be particularly difficult to know what to look for in an English textbook. So, due to this growth of materials in the ESL publishing industry, guidelines are necessary to raise teachers' awareness to various course book designs. The wealth of materials available makes the task of an ESP course-leader who decides to choose a published textbook particularly difficult. Rather than criticizing instructors who are handcuffed to a certain text, relevant evaluation criteria should instruct teachers how to best select course books that fit their specific needs (Wright, 1992). Consequently, the selection of a textbook is one of the most important decisions of a teacher.

Regarding these important choices, Nunan (1991) asserts that making the best use of materials evaluation in a systematic way can highly facilitate the selection process which guarantees that materials are consistent with the learners' needs and interests they are intended to serve, as well as being in harmony with institutional ideologies on the nature of language and learning.

Hence, when designing an ESP course, the primary issue is the analysis of learners' specific needs. Analyzing the specific needs of a particular learner group determines the –what 'and - how' of an ESP course. In practice we have Kipling's six —honest serving men (Hutchinson and Waters, 1987, p. 21) of What, Why, When, How, Where, and Who to help us. Other issues addressed include: determination of realistic goals and objectives, choosing related materials, and assessment and evaluation.

Materials and textbooks serve as one of the main instruments for shaping knowledge, attitudes, and principles of the students (Nooreen & Arshad, 2010). While there are numerous proposals for the evaluation of teaching materials, these proposals are much less common in the field of ESP. Equally worthy of mention is that, according to Ansari and Babayi (2002), as teachers, many of us have had the responsibility of evaluating textbooks, so the evaluation of teaching materials is an important part of a teacher's work. Sheldon (1988) has offered several reasons for textbook evaluation. He suggests that the selection of a language textbook often signals an important administrative and educational decision.

According to Tomlinson (2005), the process of materials evaluation can be seen as a way of developing our understanding of the ways in which they work and, in doing so, of contributing to both acquisition theory and pedagogic practice. It can also be seen as one way of carrying out action research.

The importance of textbook evaluation and teacher education as two mutually helpful aspects of professional development has been a major impetus in carrying out the present study. This study is on the whole trying to examine how far the prescribed textbooks used in ESP classrooms in agricultural extension and rural development discipline provide the necessary tools in preparing learners for the transition of language skills such as reading and writing across disciplines. Also, the current study concerns the language needs of agricultural extension and rural development students in Bu Ali Sina University, Iran, and attempts to shed light on their strengths and weaknesses in English.

2. Review of the Related Literature

2.1 Origins of ESP

ESP is the abbreviated form of English for Specific Purposes which today is being used by many teachers, experts and instructors. In this attitude of English, the learners' particular goals are emphasized. In this paper, by goal and objective, we mean the *applied* goal and objectives. Achieving these goals means to be successful in work and education by the utilization of English. So, in ESP the goal is not merely *the English* but the main goal here is to introduce ESP as a means to achieve these objectives.

According to Hutchinson and Waters (1987) when the Second World War ended, new scientific, technical and economic demands grew and English became the international language. Therefore, language teachers were pressed to meet the demands of people outside the teaching profession. Furthermore, a dramatic change took place in linguistics, which demanded focus on communicative aspects of language and learners' needs in specific contexts.

The ESP movement, according to Dudley-Evans and St. John (1998) originated from the massive expansion of scientific, technical, and economic activities on an international scale in the 1950s and 1960s.

2.2 Theoretical Framework

Farhady (1995) points out that it is necessary to examine the existing ESP materials in order to evaluate their correspondence to a specific model. He suggests that in preparing a textbook, needs-analysis should be conducted, specifications at different levels should be made and appropriate materials should be developed.

According to Aglaua (1999) there are several methods for language needs assessment. These methods range from conducting direct research on a given population using questionnaires to relying on past research, conducting interviews, and/or using case studies. Approving an ESP textbook involves issues such as what to teach, how to teach or whom to employ to teach.

Based on this integrated approach, the present study aimed at performing in terms of content and needs achievement of medical students and carrying out an evaluation of their ESP textbooks. To this end, Hutchinson and Waters' (1987) framework was used. The scheme attempts to evaluate the selected textbooks regardless of how they are used in the classroom. The researchers try to make it in-depth as possible by analyzing the individual activities in detail and in connection with important features.

Hutchinson and Waters (1987) provide a framework for analyzing students' language needs based on recent research in second language (L2) instruction and general textbook evaluation. This framework requires gathering data as to *why* students are taking the course, *how* the students learn, *what* resources are available, *who* the learners are, *where* and *when* the English course will take place. The evaluation process can be divided into four major steps:

- (1) Defining criteria—on what bases will you judge materials?
- (2) Subjective analysis—what realizations of the criteria do you want in your course? (e.g. who are your learners; what language points should be covered). Subjective analysis identifies your requirements.
- (3) Objective analysis—how does the material being evaluated realize the criteria? (e.g. who is the material intended for; how is the content organized within the units). Objective analysis is in fact, material analyzing.
- (4) Matching—how far does the material match your needs? This can be done impressionistically or by awarding points (Hutchinson and Waters, 1987, p. 97).

Regarding English learners' needs, there are three different kinds of the perspectives. The first group discuss on the major role of technical terms and grammar in language (Robinson, 1980; Spack, 1988). The second group believe that meta-linguistics issues and vocabulary promotion must be taken into consideration. This group generally has a technical view toward language learning in ESP. For example, they believe that teaching vocabulary and grammar should be accompanied with teaching reading skills (Munby, 1978; Wen & Johnson, 1997). The third group think that, in designing ESP courses, psychological features of the learners must be taken into account. Teaching vocabulary and grammar and also teaching reading skills must be included in designing ESP courses (Munby, 1978; Widdowson, 1983).

Having to say these three points of view and keeping in mind that English learners in ESP are mainly adults, it can be pre-assumed that they have mostly an intermediate proficiency level of English. So, it can be asserted that these groups of adult learners can help the material designers of ESP courses.

As was mentioned earlier, evaluation is a straightforward, analytical matching process. Thus, analysis of our course book in terms of subjective needs (material requirements) and analysis of objective solution (materials) are both required to find out how far the material matches the needs.

2.3 Definitions of ESP

ESP is an approach which has been widely used over the past three decades. However, as Anthony (1997) notes, there has been considerable recent debate about what it means.

At the first Japan Conference on English for Specific Purposes in 1997 clear differences in how people interpreted the meaning of ESP could be seen (Kimball, 1998). Some described ESP as simply being the teaching of English for any purpose that could be specified. Others, however, were more precise describing it as the teaching of English used in academic studies, or the teaching of English for vocational or professional purposes. The main speaker at the conference, Gatehouse (2001) was very much aware of the confusion and set out in his one hour speech to clarify the meaning of ESP. He referred to Strevens' original definition and presented his own revised definition as follows:

Absolute Characteristics

1. ESP is defined to meet specific needs of the learners;
2. ESP makes use of underlying methodology and activities of the discipline it serves;
3. ESP is centered on the language appropriate to these activities in terms of grammar, lexis, register, study skills, discourse and genre.

Variable Characteristics

1. ESP may be related to or designed for specific disciplines;
2. ESP may use, in specific teaching situations, a different methodology from that of General English;
3. ESP is likely to be designed for adult learners, either at a tertiary level institution or in a professional work situation. It could, however, be for learners at secondary school level;
4. ESP is generally designed for intermediate or advanced students;
5. Most ESP courses assume some basic knowledge of the language systems.

Wright (1992) says ESP is the study of a particular aspect of language so as to be able to accomplish certain tasks. Smoak (1996) considers ESP as English instruction based on actual and immediate needs of learners who have to successfully perform real-life tasks unrelated to merely passing an English class or exam.

In short, she continues, ESP means learning for a purpose and learning within a framework which makes reasons for learning not only clear, but also meaningful at the outset both for learners and teachers.

Similarly, Silva (2002) mentions that English for Specific Purposes reflects learners' specific purpose in learning the target language, and is a response to learners' needs and the acquisition of language relevant to communication outside the classroom, especially in their studies and future careers. It examines the tasks that students require to perform professionally in English.

Chien, Lee, and Kao (2008), browsing through teaching objectives of ESP education in Taiwan, affirm ESP as a learner-centered and content/context-based approach that primarily involves professional and practical English, and next meets learners' specific needs in utilizing English in their specific fields such as science and technology.

2.4 Benefits of ESP

Since ESP courses aim to develop linguistic skills relating to particular spheres of activity, according to Wright (1992, p.68) not only the *nature* of the linguistic items introduced, but the *ways* in which they are introduced and *how* they are practiced, are highly significant. He confirms that ESP benefits are threefold:

The first is the matter of *learning speed*. ESP courses result in a faster acquisition and learning of linguistic items; because, the pattern of native speakers' acquisition of language is followed and learned. ESP not only follows this pattern, but provides an opportunity to learn in an accelerated, intensive context.

Second point is the matter of *learning efficiency*. On an ESP course, the trainees and learners make the maximal use of their learning resources. Obviously, the needs analysis is of vital importance here, since it enables trainers and instructors to determine and declare the specific requirements of trainees and ESP learners.

Thirdly, there is *learning effectiveness*. On the completion of an ESP course, trainees and learners are ready to use language properly and correctly in job-related tasks, tasks which have been identified prior to the course by means of a needs analysis. So, English is usable immediately in the employment context (Wright, 1992, p.68).

Dudley-Evans and St. John (1998) summarize the advantages of ESP in the following four points:

1. Being focused on the learner's need, it wastes no time;
2. It is relevant to the learner;
3. It is successful in imparting learning; and,
4. It is more cost-effective than - General English.

2.5 ESP Categories

Wright (1992) says that different human activities require different communication skills, which in turn require mastery of specific linguistic items. He then adds that ESP is, basically, language learning whose focus is on all aspects of language pertaining to a particular field of human activity, while taking into account the time constraints imposed by learners.

ESP is said to be of two categories, English for Occupational Purposes (EOP) and English for Academic Purposes (EAP) (Chien, Lee, and Kao 2008). Hutchinson and Waters (1987) however, state that there is not a clear-cut distinction between EAP and EOP. "...people can work and study simultaneously; it is also likely that in many cases the language learnt for immediate use in a study environment will be used later when the student takes up, or returns to, a job" (p. 16).

2.6 Comparison with General English

Attempts to define ESP through the communicative approach to its teaching often lead to the question of how different ESP is from General English. Hutchinson (1987) answer this quite simply, "in theory nothing, in practice a great deal".

According to Wright (1992) due to the general nature of General English courses, no needs analysis is conducted, and hence there can be no attempt to cater to specific learning needs of particular students. These courses are, for the vast majority of students, extremely useful, which is why they comprise the vast majority of English courses. However, for students with specific learning needs, they are seriously lacking.

Indeed, teachers of 'General English' courses, while acknowledging that students had a specific purpose in studying English, would rarely conduct a needs analysis to find out what the learners, in fact, need to achieve. Hutchinson and Waters (1987) referred to the discipline imposed by needs analysis and the importance of awareness of learners' needs that make a communicative approach based on learner and learning needs absolutely essential. Perhaps this demonstrates the influence that the ESP approach has had on English teaching in general.

2.7 Current Articles on ESP in Iran

Since the early 1960's, ESP has been a developing branch of English as a foreign language (EFL) instruction in Iran. As in many countries, teaching ESP has a marginal status in Iranian tertiary education (Atai, 2000, 2002; Atai & Tahririan, 2003). At the undergraduate level learners of various courses and fields such as arts, science, humanities, social sciences, architecture, engineering and medical sciences have to pass a three-credit ESP course which utilizes a text-centered approach and can be described as an examination-oriented course.

Most importantly, the content, methodology, classroom techniques and activities which are expected to emphasize the development of reading skills may encourage the learners to translate some texts from English to Persian. The reading selections are loaded with technical and highly specialized language without providing the learners opportunities to use these words in realistic tasks or providing them with an opportunity to recycle the words. Co-texts and such devices as graphs, diagrams, and semantic maps are not included in ESP textbooks (Atai, 2000; Faharzadeh, 2000; Mazdayasna, 2008; Mazdayasna & Tahririan, 2008).

In the period of the Pahlavi era (1925-79) the government had some policies aiming at modernizing the country; so, it decided to expand the education system in a modern way. For many years, the secular system of the Pahlavi Era was based upon the French model. Their objectives and goals were to train Iranians for some modern occupations in administration, management, science, and teaching languages.

In Iran, textbooks serve as the basis for much of the language input learners receive and the language practice that takes place in the classroom. For most teachers, textbooks provide the foundation for the content of lessons, the balance of the skills taught, as well as the kinds of language practice the students engage in during class activities. For the EFL learners, the textbook becomes the major source of contact they have with the language apart from the input provided by the teacher.

As in Kiany (2005) mentioned, the First National ESP/EAP Conference in Iran was held in 2005, and 46 papers and 11 sample lessons were presented at the conference. Some of these articles are:

Farhady (2005) discusses ESP parameters, namely needs, materials, method, learner, teacher, and context. He begins with a brief history of materials development sponsored by SAMT and concludes by a series of suggestions to improve ESP in Iran such as carrying out thorough needs analyses, changing the designs and concepts of the materials, training qualified teachers, and reforming the testing procedures.

Shahini (2005) criticizes most the traditional approaches of developing ESP materials. He uses a rhetorical framework, covering discourse aspects of texts. This framework includes particular strategies, approaches and techniques which is based on a procedural model of reading to skim and scan the information.

Tajalli (2005), among various approached toward learning, focuses on the learner-centered approach. He mentions learner autonomy, goal-orientedness, process-orientedness, and metacognition as the profits of this learning approach and he discusses on TEFL in Iran to see if it related to these mentioned factors or not. Yazdjerdi (2005) review

traditional, teacher-driven approaches to define ESP and release a new, research-based approach.

ZareMoayed (2007) states the foibles of ESP courses and materials for a particular group of students. He releases some general suggestions and recommendations to make the best use more productive ESP classes for the students, learners and trainees. Khaksari (2002) shows that the learning of ESP related vocabulary on the internet are even more influential than that of the traditional text-based one. She has done this by means of a pilot study.

Yazdjerdi (2005) refers to some foibles of ESP books which are published by SAMT Publication, and he has commented on recent enhancements.

Nikpour (2008) refers to some points of ESP textbook, materials and need analysis of agricultural extension and rural development of Bu Ali Sina University. She has done this by using questionnaires and interviews.

2.8 ESP Textbooks and Materials

Do ESP textbooks really exist? This is the central question he addresses (Gatehouse, 2001).

Gatehouse (2001) believes that materials development is one of the major issues in an ESP curriculum. He declares while there are a few textbooks claiming to be ESP textbooks, Dudley-Evans and St. John (1987) argue that these materials are not really ESP in nature.

According to Noordin and Samad (2003), materials and textbooks are the important resources for teachers in assisting students to learn English. Textbooks survive because they are the most suitable means of providing the inputs for a teaching-learning system. A textbook demanded by the curriculum must satisfy the needs of students as learners of English. They mention that the

ESP syllabus should emphasize content accessibility, giving priority to the ability to read and comprehend science and technical materials.

The first dominating approach to ESP course design focused on the grammatical and lexical items of English. In the early 1980s, it was found that there was a certain need underlying a particular language use and the process of learning and learning skills needed to be taken into account. Recently more and more countries and institutions are developing curricula and materials which are based on content approaches which teach learners content subjects and skills in English instead of just teaching them English. So, the key emphasis in the ESP became the functional-notional approach (Dudley-Evans and St. John, 1998).

Wright (1992) mentions in general, learning on ESP courses should take place in contexts which are as authentic as possible and content-based. The requirement of authenticity means that learning materials should use actual texts produced by people working in the ESP field under consideration.

According to Robinson (1980) the content of ESP courses is determined in some or all of these ways: restriction, selection themes and topics, and communicative needs.

Noordin and Samad (2003) declare that although the goals of ESP include increasing language proficiency, the materials used in its teaching should not be completely language based. They believe ESP materials need to enhance students' visual literacy.

So, audio visual elements such as video clips, and to a lesser extent, sound files, should be a compulsory element in all ESP materials. Although, Dudley-Evans and St. John (1998) focus is on the paper-based materials, they add where possible ESP teachers should use audio and video cassettes, computers and, occasionally, other equipment or real objects. They mention there are four reasons for using materials in the ESP context:

- 1- as a source of language;
- 2- as a learning support;
- 3- for motivation and stimulation;
- 4- for reference.

According to Zhang (2007) course book is a resource for achieving aims that have been set in terms of learner needs. Jahangard (2007) argues that textbooks are an effective resource for self-directed learning, presentation material, activities, and a reference for students.

On the other hand, Ansary and Babayi (2002) declare no textbook is perfect. Therefore, teachers should have the option of assigning supplementary materials based on their own specific needs in their own specific teaching situation.

Wright (1992) stated the scope of existing materials is often not appropriate to the needs of a particular group of trainees. Textbooks and course books are too broad or too narrow, too long or too short. Existing materials are often too integrated with respect to the skills of reading, writing, speaking and listening, and the presentation of specific linguistic items.

According to Farhady (1995), it seems necessary to examine the existing ESP materials used in Iran to evaluate their correspondence to the (ideal) model. He believes that most of the ESP textbooks in Iran are some sort of patchwork of cut and paste type.

Tomlinson (2005) notifies that ELT materials in Asia have typically asserted the centrality of grammar (even when claiming to be following a communicative approach). In his view, EFL and ESL materials in Asia should focus on exposing learners to language in use.

3. Method

3.1 *Introducing Agricultural Extension and Rural Development ESP Textbooks*

In order to introduce these textbooks the following points should be presented:

1. *'Improving Reading Skills'* is a general English book in agriculture. The book starts with table of content introducing its units. It has no introduction explaining its aims. The purpose of this book is to acquaint learners with reading skills included, guessing the meaning through context, doing reading exercises through scanning, skimming and discursal context. It is claimed that the book is useful to provide students with general and academic vocabulary which is done through word formation.

The book consists of twenty units and extension exercises section. Each unit includes reading to discuss and improve speaking, writing, vocabulary, and then some very general questions are asked which are followed by interpretation of the words and phrases. The next exercises are synonyms and word formations which are followed by a rural development text that must be translated into Persian. Finally, there is a list of words and phrases to be read as a supplementary part.

The textbook is intended to be used with intermediate students in the first place. They are already familiar with the basic rules of the English language, and they can use these rules more or less successfully. Most part of the book emphasizes on reading skill. The emphases in reading parts are on contextual reference in English (rephrasing) and on choosing the right word form.

Usage of language deals with verb tenses, word order, prepositions, etc. Sentence building, paragraph building, and paragraph reconstruction are among the categories outlined in the writing skill which is absent in the textbook.

There are complementary lists of word parts, special terms and expressions and their meaning. Also, no listening exercises have been provided. The parts related to translation are nowhere. In addition, the book has not been equipped with audio-tapes exercises for pronunciation, or a set of color transparencies of both normal and clinical illustrations taken from the text.

2. *'Reading Science'* is a specialized book in agricultural extension and rural development. It starts with table of contents, then we have preface part explains why we have another book of reading. For a textbook aiming at developing reading comprehension ability in a foreign language at tertiary level, some features are of vital importance. First of all a textbook of reading comprehension must be interesting, secondly it must be of an appropriate level of difficulty, variety of exercises is another feature of a reading book which serves two functions: first, it provides opportunities for practicing linguistic features of the text in different forms and context. Another one is prevention of boredom and the last feature that we deem essential is providing opportunities for practicing extensive reading. Considering these features, it is strongly claimed that the present volume is much superior to any other similar reading book in helping students of agricultural extension and rural development sciences in our country improve their reading comprehension ([Mazdayasna](#) and Tahririan, 2008).

The textbook is intended for intermediate students in the first place. They are already familiar with the basic rules of the English language in general English, so they can use these rules more successfully. The emphasis of this book is on contextual reference in English and on choosing the right word form. Unfortunately, there is nothing which can be called guided writing or paragraph writing or any sorts of related dialogue or conversation. There are no complementary lists of word parts and their meaning.

Also, no listening and translation parts could be seen, the book has not be equipped with audio tapes exercises for pronunciation or a set of color pictures of both agricultural extension and rural development illustrations.

3. *English in agricultural extension and rural development* is a specialized book in agricultural extension and rural development. This textbook is designed to be used by the students of agricultural extension and rural development and related fields at the universities in Iran. The main objective of the text is to help agricultural extension and rural development students develop an ability to handle the kind of written English that they will encounter during the pursuit of their academic education. It is assumed that the student is thoroughly familiar with English orthography. Several types of exercise have been chosen to provide practice in the sub-skills as basic ingredients of reading materials. The primary objective of the exercises presented in the form of (multiple choice comprehension questions, word formation practices and cloze tests) is building and expanding students' knowledge of vocabulary improving their reading speed. As to the reading passages, all the colleagues familiar with the book were in favor of their authenticity, variety and usefulness. So, a compromise was resorted to and suitable exercises were developed (Khaksari, 2002).

Each unit includes the main text followed by the exercises such as language practice, comprehension exercises. This book has no charts, grids, tables and pictures but there are no parts of agricultural extension and rural development dialogue or conversation and lists of word parts. Also no listening exercises and pronunciation part could be seen.

4. *College Writing* is a specialized book for advanced writing course. This book is designed to take university –level students with an intermediate ability in English as a second language from paragraph writing through essay writing. The course combines a process approach to writing (where students work on invention, peer response, editing, and writing multiple drafts) with a pragmatic approach to teaching the basics of writing (with direct instruction on such elements as topic sentences, thesis statements, and outlines).

The introduction presents process writing to students. The tasks in the main units are graded. Students first work on recognizing and identifying key writing structures from model paragraphs and essays. Then they manipulate the structures in short, manageable tasks. Finally, they apply the structures to their own writing. There are opportunities for students to work independently, with a partner, and with a group. The exercises can be done either in class or as homework. Critical thinking is emphasized, so that students become aware of the impact of their choice of words, sentences and organizational techniques on the effectiveness of their writing. The focus throughout is on academic writing – the type of writing used in university courses and exams in English – speaking institution of higher learning.

In units 1-6, students analyze and write the types of paragraphs that commonly occur in academic contexts. They practice writing topic sentences and concluding sentences, organizing the paragraph coherently, and using appropriate vocabulary, grammar, and transitional devices in the paragraph body. In unit 7, students are supposed to write two-paragraph papers, in preparation for longer assignments. In units 8-11, students apply what they have learned about paragraphs to essay writing. They work on developing and supporting a central thesis, organizing an outline from which to write, and writing effective introductions and conclusions. Unit 12 discusses strategies for timed essay writing, including understanding standard instructions, time-management techniques, and methods for organizing information. Included in the Student Book are samples of the development of an essay from brainstorming to the final draft. And finally, in the rest of chapters till chapter 20 these skills are practiced more or less.

4. Discussion

4.1 Hutchinson and Waters' (1987) Framework

As was already mentioned, according to Hutchinson and Waters (1987) evaluation is a straightforward, analytical matching process. In this study, Hutchinson and Waters' Framework, which is a checklist of objective and subjective criteria, was used. This checklist entails five parts covering twenty one questions with answers ranking between 0 and 2. The scheme attempts to evaluate the selected textbook regardless of how it is used in the classroom. The checklist is based on recent research in second language (L2) instruction and general textbook evaluation and tries to be-in-depth by analyzing the individual activities in detail and paying attention to important features. Consequently, four major steps can be taken in the evaluation process:

- (1) Defining criteria—on what bases will you judge materials?
- (2) Subjective analysis—what realizations of the criteria do you want in your course?
- (3) Objective analysis—how does the material being evaluated realize the criteria?
- (4) Matching—how far does the material match your needs?

The more the answers are related to the criteria, the more the scores will be higher. It should be noted that the

subsequent steps were followed to use the checklist:

1. Answers to the A questions (subjective data) identified medical students/course requirements.
2. Answers to the B questions (objective data) used as a basis for material evaluation.
3. The comparison between the A and B findings provided a basis for awarding points. (Each part is measured between 0 and 2).

5. Conclusion

In addition to the result of each ESP textbooks, we consider that ESP textbooks in agricultural extension and rural development are appropriate books for the purpose of agricultural extension and rural development English for Iranian college students and their advantages where the content and needs are compatible to students, besides the findings of their summery writing based on reading an article shows that textbooks are satisfactory.

If we have a short glance on another study, done by Nikpour (2008) on agricultural extension and rural development students, we found that ESP textbook in agricultural extension and rural development were evaluated based on Hutchinson and Waters (1987) framework and the results showed that its ESP textbook was not a useful one for agricultural extension and rural development students, because it has a big portion of English grammar, reading comprehension and writing exercises, so no use of speaking or translation could be found. Among ESP textbooks in agricultural extension and rural development, it is shown this semi-specialized textbook has the first level according to its content and exercises, then specialized and agricultural extension and rural development writing textbooks come in to the second level and general English has the third level of acceptability and suitability, according to students answer and evaluation of textbooks. It is worth mentioning that the difference between textbooks in value is little and all of them are above 70%, so that ESP textbooks in agricultural extension and rural development could be useful and effective in terms of content and needs achievement for reading and writing skills of agricultural extension and rural development students.

Finally, it should be emphasized that evaluation is a matter of judging, there is no absolute good or bad!

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Appendix A & B

A = Subjective Analysis

B = Objective Analysis

1A- Who are your learners?	1B-Who is the material intended for?
Our learners are Iranian students of agricultural extension and rural development in Bu Ali Sina University supposed to achieve the most complete information, English level, and knowledge through this book.	BS and MS college students of agricultural extension and rural development of Bu Ali Sina University of Hamedan, Iran. Score: 2
2A- What are the aims of your course?	2B-- What are the aims of the materials?
These courses are supposed to train a good reader, and writer of English related to the agricultural extension and rural development domain. An engineer has to read English well, write it efficiently. On the other hand, according to needs analysis, learning how to pronounce words well, and speaking English with colleagues are important to students.	The main objective of the text and material is to help agricultural extension and rural development students develop an ability to handle the kind of written English that they will encounter during the pursuit of their academic education. It is assumed that the students are thoroughly familiar with English orthography. Also, this textbook tends to get the students familiar with the technical terms of this course. Score: 1.5

3A-What kind of language description do you require?	3B- What type of linguistic description Is/art used in the materials?
It should be related to the aims of learners and the course. So, it should be a combination of structural, notional and functional.	Most parts of materials are based on structural, Lexical Approach. Score: 1.5
4A-What language points should be covered?	4B-What language points do the materials cover?
According to needs' analysis, the most important language points are special terms and expressions, vocabulary, and translating English into Persian.	Most of the language points of these books are related to vocabulary and special terms and expressions. Agricultural extension and rural development terminology is used in this textbook. Score: 1
5A-What proportion of work on each macro-skill is desired?	5B- What is the proportion of work on each skill?
Reading comprehension practices should be given priority. After writing skills, listening, and speaking materials or exercises should be included.	The majority of exercises provided by these books are on reading and writing skills, no use of speaking and listening skills could be found. Score: 1.5
6A- What micro-skill do you need?	6B- What micro-skills are covered in the material?
The most important one is "guessing the unfamiliar words". Students shouldn't be forced to look up each word in their dictionaries. Content should be in such a way that deducing the meaning of unfamiliar words becomes easy. Content should also force them to infer, transfer, analyze their tasks and solve problems through interaction.	The materials of these books are very helpful for students to guess the meaning of unfamiliar words due to exercises and word formation. Score: 1.5
7A- What text-types should be included?	7B- What kinds of texts are there in the book?
With reference to medical concerns, a collection of experimental reports and texts based on: case study, notes / reports /theses and hospital sheets should be included in this course. The visual- related texts are important too.	The materials of these books are covered with useful and specialized agricultural extension and rural development texts and fortunately most of the materials are up to dated. Score: 2
8A-What subject-matter areas, assumed level of knowledge, and types of topics are required?	8B- What are the subject –matter areas, assumed level of knowledge, and types of topics in the materials?
The most important subject matters are the theoretical foundations of extension, extension agents, extension plans, the role of ICT in extension, globalization of extension, etc.	The subject-matter areas of these books are attractive, and the level of book is a bit higher than the assumed English level of students (according to most of students). The topics of texts are related to each of specific agricultural extension and rural development field. In fact, effectiveness, appropriateness, and feasibility of the material are satisfying regarding the students' interests and language level. Score: 1.5
9A- How should the content be organized throughout the course?	9B-How is the content organized throughout the materials?
It should be organized by a combination of subject–matter and medical skills dealing with some reading, writing, and speaking skills.	It mostly focuses on the reading and writing skills based on subject matters. Little related to speaking and pronunciation could be found. Score: 1.5

10 A –How should the content be organized within the course units?	10 B – How is the content organized within the units?
<p>Within the course unit, the content should be organized in a way that firstly a reading or experimental text followed by some exercises and related questions are taught. The text should be followed by a wordlist, which presents the active vocabulary on the topic. The supplementary texts are connected with the main texts of the units by subject matter. They develop and intensify the topic, and allow students to use in practice what they have acquired while studying the main text and the accompanying exercises. Then, some practices on communication, pronunciation, and written tasks [some kinds of language practice based on English use not usage] should be done.</p>	<p>The content of every unit in these books consist of six sections: part (a) is comprehension question which is followed by word and phrases interpretation (b). Part (c) is the synonym to improve the students' vocabulary. Next part (d) is word formation that This part is language practice to improve reading comprehension and vocabulary. Part (e) is like the cloze tests that improve the students thinking and writing. Part (f) introduces the rural development texts for enhancing the ability of the translation of the students. Finally, part (g) is about the translation of new word and terms and phrases.</p> <p>Score: 1.5</p>
11A- How should the content be sequenced throughout the course?	11B- How is the content sequenced throughout the book?
<p>It should be sequenced from easy to difficult.</p>	<p>The content of the book has a logical sequence.</p> <p>Score: 2</p>
12 A-How should the content be sequenced within a unit?	12B- How is the content sequenced within a unit?
<p>It is better to be sequenced from deep comprehension to production and from accuracy to fluency.</p>	<p>Each unit is begun with a reading followed by some comprehension exercises. It continues with a mass of other kinds of reading and writing texts. The focus is on comprehension and accuracy rather than production and fluency.</p> <p>Score: 1</p>
13A-What theories of learning should the course be based on?	13B-What theories of learning are the materials based on?
<p>It should be a fair combination of these theories: behaviorism, affective and cognitive. These aspects are meant to refer to the system of the language including pronunciation, spelling, lexis, grammar and the four skills. Culturally, it comprises the wealth of information on the lifestyle of a community which shares the same language, values and history. Also, the material should appeal to and motivate students in that they develop varying degrees of curiosity. So, motivation along with thinking, deducing and memorizing can be useful.</p>	<p>The textbooks usually focus on constructivism and pragmatism. But, the mentioned theories of learning are closely inter-related. However, the materials of this book are mainly based on behaviorism and cognitivism learning theories. All theories are of equal importance. The issue of motivation is overlooked through materials.</p> <p>Score: 1.5</p>
14A –What aspects of the learners` attitudes to /expectations about learning English should the course take into account?	14B–What attitudes to /expectations about learning English are the materials based on?
<p>Students studying this book have to use English as the language of the medical world; so they have to learn it well. It is essential that a physician can read, write, translate, and use specific terms in English efficiently, speak it as much as possible.</p>	<p>The content of the materials should have chronological order and cohesion and coherence must be observed. These books contains good samples of reading comprehension and good and comprehensive types of exercises and practice in agricultural extension and rural development terminology, but no use of English to/from Persian communication is seen.</p> <p>Score: 1.5</p>

15A –What kinds of exercises /tasks are needed?	15B –What kinds of exercises /tasks are included in the materials?
Comprehension ↔ Production Language Practice ↔ Language Use Language-based ↔ Content-based	The primary objective of exercises is building and expanding students' knowledge of vocabulary developing their reading comprehension and to a lesser extent improving their reading speed and it has hardly dealt with productive tasks. Score: 1.5
16A – What teaching–learning technique are to be used?	16B– What teaching–learning technique can be used with the materials?
There are: Lockstep, student presentation, real case Study and problem solving.	However it depends on the teacher as well as materials, the book has much space for case study and material presentation. However, with a cooperative teacher, students can be prepared for presentation and discussion of a real case study related to the materials. Score: 1.5
17A –What aids are available for use?	17B–What aids do the materials require?
To begin with, wall charts, overhead projection, and pictures are of great help. In addition using up to date information could be interesting. Most of students believed that there is a great need for using audio-visual equipments, computer and internet. So, it is the multimedia factor which attracts the pupils' attention and ensures their long-term persistence and enjoyment. To illustrate this, the colorful pictures, the tape-recorded material including music and drama play an important role in motivating the pupils.	However, it depends on teachers. Fortunately, audio-visual equipments can be employed through this course and the course book has the potential of being used by making use of audio-visual equipments. Score:2
18A-What guidance/support for teaching the course book will be needed?	18B-What guidance do the materials provide?
Statements of aims, lists of vocabulary, technical equipped with audio-tapes exercises for information and knowledge of medical terms, pronunciation, or a set of both normal and clinical more colorful pictures will be needed.	The books do not provide lists of word arts/technical information and their meaning, and has not been equipped with audio-tapes exercises for pronunciation. Score: 1.5
19A- How flexible do the materials need to be?	19B- In what ways are the materials flexible?
As much as possible materials need to be independent of each other.	Not only are units not related to each other but also some parts help each other to understand next one. Score: 2
20A- What price range is necessary?	20B- What is the price?
Up to 100000 Rials is reasonable.	Most of the books are about 80000 Rials which is both reasonable and practical. Score: 1.5
21A- When and in what quantities should the materials be available?	21B-When and how readily can the materials be obtained?
Depending on the term schedule, this course is the specialized one in English for students and usually presented in the fourth or fifth semester.	It can be presented after forth semester. Score: 2