



Helping Material in English Textbooks for Teaching Reading Skills at the Intermediate Level: A Critical Analysis

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Abstract- The study was undertaken to analyze the textbook helping material for teaching reading at the intermediate level. The particular objectives of the study were to analyze if the helping material lays equal emphasis on different sub-skills of reading e.g. skimming, scanning, prediction, anticipation and inference and to analyze the relevance of the activities to the content of the lesson. It also analyzed how varied the activities in the helping material are and if they are appropriate for the intermediate level. The books taken for the study were Intermediate Level textbooks of Punjab Textbook Board Pakistan; Book 1 (Short Stories), Book 2 (Modern Prose and Heroes) and Book 3 (Plays and Poems). The study is based on content analysis. As a result of the study it has been found out that the helping material in the books focuses mostly on a small set of sub skills i.e. scanning, skimming and past tense. There is also a lot of unnecessary repetition and some activities are too simple for this level. The study proposes recommendations for the teachers, students as well as the curriculum developers to improve the helping material in the books.

Key Words: English textbook, helping material, intermediate level, textbook evaluation.

I. INTRODUCTION

In Pakistan where English is taught as a compulsory subject at secondary level, the English textbook serves two fold purposes. It not only provides the information and literary content to the learners, but also serves as the only tool to develop their second language. Since there are no separate classes to focus on the development of language skills, the textbook has to meet this purpose as well. Reading and Writing are the only skills, our English language learner is exposed to. Although both these skills have their importance, still, the importance of speaking and listening skill cannot be over looked. However for the present study, only Reading skill is focused. Since most of the language teachers in our country are not well trained for the purpose of language teaching, this research can prove to be very supportive for them. The core of systematic textbook evaluation is to examine how well a given textbook matches the needs of a language program and how effectively and efficiently it can realize the objectives of the program. When we evaluate a textbook without any intention to use it for a certain group of students, we try to examine whether what is covered in the book can really fulfill the original purposes of the writing of the book. In other words it judges whether the book is really suitable for the learners to whom the book is intended prescribed.

The study focused on the teaching of Reading skill and investigated if the focus is on a number of sub-skills, for example, reading for information, skimming, scanning, inference etc. The study also tried to determine if the textbook contains activities and exercises that are repetitive or if it contains activities that are varied. The study will not focus on the content selection in the text and if the content / selections are appropriate to the comprehension level of the students.

II. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The helping material in the form of activities based on the lesson forms an integral part of English Text Books and has been included as a guide for explanation of some aspects of the lesson this study seeks to analyze its usefulness in terms of teaching the reading skill. Our study attempts to find out if the helping material provided in the textbook of English for the intermediate classes, lays equal emphasis on various subskills of reading such as skimming, scanning, inference etc., and if the activities are varied and according to the level of the learners.

III. RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

The objectives of the study are to:

- Analyze the textbook helping material that aims to promote the reading skills and sub-skills for their focus, diversity and appropriateness to teaching reading to ESL learners
- Analyze the relevance of the activities that make up the helping material to the content of the lesson.

IV. RESEARCH QUESTIONS

- What sub-skills of reading does the helping material focus?
- What are the areas that the helping material ignores?
- How appropriate is the textbook helping material in teaching the reading skills to ESL learners?

V. SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

The significance of the research lies in that it challenges the worth of something that is taken to be almost sacred. The discussion that the study will come up with is likely to have repercussions at many levels. The teachers may get the idea that they themselves can add much to the helping material to make it more useful. The study may also serve as a starter for debate on the material in the circle of teachers and syllabus designers.

VI. DELIMITATION

The research focused on studying the helping material of the Intermediate Level English textbooks of Punjab Textbook Board, Pakistan, i.e. Book 1 (Short Stories), Book 2 (Modern Prose and Heroes) and Book 3 (Plays and Poems). The study delimited itself to the teaching of Reading skill and to see if the focus is on a number of sub-skills, for example, reading for information, skimming, scanning, inference etc. The study also tried to determine if the textbook contains activities and exercises that are repetitive or if it contains activities that are varied. The study did not focus on the content selection in the text and if the content / selections are appropriate to the comprehension level of the students.

VII. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The study's methodological frame-work has been devised by drawing upon the ideas of the experts and practitioners who have formulated certain rules and guidelines for constructing text book helping material for language learning specifically for ESL learners. The standard proposed by LAUSDTE (Los Angeles Unified School District Textbook Evaluation) 2008, is useful for the study because this presents an outline as to what the textbook helping material should focus on. The study agrees with the evaluation in the report that the books need to address different learning styles for teaching language skills so as to engage all types of learners and also incorporate a number of learning theories in addition to numerous ways of working on language.

There is a general dearth of material regarding the textbook helping material. This is the gap in existing literature that the study will contribute to filling. The study believes that while a lot has been written on selections in textbooks, focus on skills and the integration, or lack thereof, of language skills, but not much has been done regarding the activities that the textbooks propose, rather force on the teachers and learners in the Pakistani context. This lack of attention to the helping material is the gap that the study will try to contribute to fulfilling. It also serves as a guide for the teachers. The textbook helping material should focus on improving the linguistic competence as well as performance of the learners. The present study will take this perspective into account.

8.1 Role of Textbook in Language Teaching

Linguists who regard text book as a valuable tool in the process of teaching. They hold the view that if the teacher has the ability to use the text book properly, it can provide invaluable assistance in the process of language learning.

According to Chris Mares (2003), the basic purpose of designing a course book is “to give cohesion to the language teaching and learning processes by providing direction and support and specific language based activities aimed at offering classroom practice for students.” He further adds that from the global perspective course books also provide non-native teachers with the support and security necessary for many of them to tackle more communicative type classes rather than the more traditional grammar translation classes of the past (p.130).

Amanda Guernsey (2006) stressed the importance of textbook by stating, “Knowledge originates from both the textbook and the teacher. The textbook contains the knowledge while the teacher teaches the knowledge that the book contains” (p.3). While Guernsey’s views may seem traditional they fit the Pakistani context almost perfectly. Textbooks do not function alone. They function within an overall paradigm of teachers’ roles and what education is supposed to be. In the Pakistani context education means imparting knowledge and the teacher is the person who imparts the knowledge given in the textbook. This means the teacher and the textbook work together to disseminate knowledge.

Cakit (2006) acknowledged the importance of text book by saying that despite the impact of new technologies, textbooks will doubtless continue to play an important role in language teaching and provide a useful resource for both teachers and learners. It has significant impact on the learners’ meeting their language learning objectives. He claims that the role of the textbook in the language classroom is undeniable. Both teachers and students need “a framework on which to build and textbooks definitely provide this” (p.15).

8.2 Textbook Evaluation

Having established the primacy and the necessity of textbooks for English language teaching we will go on to look at the features of a textbook that various theorists opine should be the priority of a designer. J. C. Agarwal (2009) in his book “Teaching of History, a practical approach” defined “Evaluation of a text book” by saying, “An evaluation of a textbook is a judgement on its merits as an effective tool of instruction. It consists of assessing the desirable characteristics of a textbook and assigning some value to these characteristics.” Good textbooks, planned with care are certainly an effective instrument of education. Unsuitable textbooks not only fail to promote the teaching-learning process, but also adversely affect it. A great care has to be exercised, therefore to ensure that textbooks conform to suitable standards (p.267).

As far as the criterion for textbook selection and evaluation is concerned Rani Rubdy is of the view that course book criteria are emphatically local. No one is really certain what criteria and constraints are actually operative in ELT contexts worldwide. Any culturally restricted global list of criteria produced cannot therefore hope to be definitive. Nor is it possible for all the criteria identified to be deployed simultaneously. Furthermore Rubdy quotes Sheldon’s words in this connection, who suggested, “it is clear that course book assessment is fundamentally a subjective, rule of thumb activity and that no neat formula, grid or system will ever provide a definitive yard stick” (Rubdy, 2005, p. 37-57).

Isil Cakit (2006) in his work refers to Jones who implies that it is essential that the activities in the course book have a variety of focus and pace and that the activities should be enjoyable to the students so that their motivation can increase. The activities and exercises should aim at encouraging the learners to use the language purposefully rather than practicing it only. He also proposes to see whether there is a balance between the activities for language and activities for skills and whether the skills development is promoted through various activities and exercises in the course book (p.45). A number of studies have been conducted in Pakistan to evaluate the textbooks of English. Shafqat 2015, Gulzaz 2017 and Aftab 2017 in their case studies analyzed the English text books of ninth and tenth classes. These studies were based on collection of data from teachers and students for eliciting information regarding the effectiveness of the materials used in the books. The current article analyzes the material included in the text books prescribed for intermediate classes to access its suitability and effectiveness with reference to the teaching of reading skill.

IX. METHODOLOGY

The study is based on content analysis. Typical content analysis of textbooks deals with two types of criteria “one of which deals with physical features of textbook and the other deals with internal features” (Littlejohn, 1998). The internal features of the textbook are “content areas that the textbooks cover, linguistic skills that the textbooks focus on, and tasks that students are expected to engage in” (Littlejohn, 1998, p.198). The study charts its own course by adding another dimension to the analysis that of evaluating the helping material provided in the textbooks. It takes its inspiration from content analysis and goes a step ahead to talk about the worth of the material. The study is qualitative in that the researcher will make a subjective assessment of the materials. This is because a quantitative assessment is neither possible nor desirable in this sort of study as different teachers may have divergent views regarding the material or they may not even realize the error or deficiency because of lack of awareness.

9.1 Data Collection

The data of the study comprised the helping material in the textbooks of class XI - XII. The study chose the textbooks of the Punjab Textbook Board because it is the largest board in Pakistan and is also one of the most reputed textbook designers in the country. The books under study are Book I (Short Stories), Book II (Modern Prose and Heroes) and Book III (Plays and Poems).

X. DATA ANALYSIS

The study evaluated the activities in the textbook to determine which sub-skills of reading e.g inference, reading for factual information, are promoted and if there is a narrow focus on just a set of sub-skills. The analysis of the data aimed to focus on the helping material and exercises in the textbooks. It looked at the exercises and activities to determine how varied they are and if the focus on a number of sub-skills for example different types of writing, writing for different purposes, reading for information, skimming, scanning, inference etc. The analysis also tried to determine if the textbook contains activities and exercises that are repetitive or if it contains activities that are varied.

10.1. Exercises

Exercises and activities are the most important and a major part of the helping material. The purpose of these exercises and activities is not only to help the students in understanding a lesson but also to give them practice in the target language. They can be a very good source of giving the students a well-tailored chance of practicing all the language skills and sub skills. The following observations have been made about the exercises given in the textbooks.

10.1.1. Limited Focus

The Integrative Approach to Language Teaching suggests that there should be an equal focus on all the skills and sub skills in English language teaching. Siti Viola (2012), commented on the Integrative Approach to Language Teaching. The trend today in a lesson is to integrate the four skills. This way, the lesson models for the students are the real life integration of the language skills and allow the teacher more flexibility to create interesting lessons. Interaction involves more than one skill which is sending/production (speaking/writing) and receiving/reception (listening/reading) messages. Particularly when we talk about Exercises part, Reading and Writing skill as well as their sub skills are expected to be given equal attention. The exercises in the books under study, however, have a limited focus. They only center on Scanning which is one of the sub skill of reading. The exercises only demand to check the facts over and over again. It is a common observation that throughout their educational career particularly in schools students have been given more than enough practice in developing the skill of scanning. Now there is no use focusing the same sub skill again throughout all the exercises. As in Book 1 and Book 3, in all the lessons, plays and poems majority of the questions focus on developing the scanning skill. In the helping material of most of the lessons, Question no 1 asks the students to “Choose the correct answer” from the given options. Almost all the parts of this question are providing a practice in scanning only, ignoring the other sub skills. In Lesson 1, “Button Button”, page 8, all the parts of Question 1 i.e part (i). to (ix) are just demanding the students to check the facts that are given in the lesson. For example, Part i. is “Where did Norma put the Lamb chops?” and the given choices are a) in the oven. b) in the broiler. c) in the freezer. d) in the basket. Students are only required to re-read the text of the lesson and choose the correct answer. The second paragraph of the lesson, on page 1, provides the correct answer which is “in the broiler”. The same activity is repeated for finding all

the answers of all the parts of this question. Similarly Question 2 of the same lesson which in most of the lessons is “Mark the statements True or False” follows the same pattern. Part i. of this question is “Norma found the Carton in front of her door as she arrived home”. The students go through the text again and mark the statement as true. Likewise they would answer all parts of this question. Question no 5 of the same exercise on page 10 requires to “Connect part of Column I with the relevant part of Column II to make a complete sentence”. Explicitly this question only asks to look for the asked statements within the text and connect them. The first part is “She saw a folded piece of paper”. The students check from the text and connect them to the other part which is already given in Column II saying “scotch taped to the bottom of the box”. In the same way, they match all columns. Question no 7 on page 10 asks the students to “Punctuate the following lines”. The lines that are given to be punctuated are directly taken from the lesson which leads the students to just reread the lines and copy the punctuation marks.

Lesson 2, “Clearing in the Sky” provides us the same kind of examples. All the parts of Question 1 are directly taken from the lesson and the actual task at hand for the student is only to scan through the text and choose the right answer. Part i. of this question states “The old man wanted to show his son: a) his farm. b) his land. c) patch of clearing. d) river”. The answer is quiet revealed from the very title of the lesson “Clearing in the Sky”. Like wise part v. asks “What did the old man cut with his pocket knife?”. The given choices are a) a sapling b) a flower c) a wisp of alfalfa d) a tomato. The fourth paragraph on page 11 provides the answer that option ‘c’ is correct i.e “a wisp of alfalfa”. In case of Question 2 , on page 16, other than part i. which is based on inference, all the other parts just require a quick scan of the text again and again and get the required information. Such as part vi says “The old man took the easy path to go to the top”. It only requires scanning. The students go through the lesson and find the answer on page 12, where it is disclosed that the old man took the steep path to go to the top.

Again in Question 3, the main focus is on giving practice in scanning. With questions like “What had the doctors told the old man”? (part ii), “Where did the old man take his son”? (part iii), “Had the son ever been there before?” (part iv) and “What were the names of the vegetables the old man grew on his farm?”(part v), focus on testing the scanning skill only. Question 6 on page 17, asks the students to “punctuate the following lines” that are taken from the text which will obviously be done by going through the text again.

In Lesson 6, “The Reward”, on page 41, Question 1, part iv is “He hit on a most extra ordinary ambition, to be appointed a) an inspector b) a magistrate c) a clerk d) a Court acrobat”. Page 38 straight away answers the question by stating “he hit on the most extra ordinary ambition, and stuck to it. It was nothing less than to be appointed Court acrobat”. Question 2, part ii is “Gorgios wanted to prove his parents wrong” and the text on page 38 directly tells that the statement is true. Similarly Question iii part i is “What was the subject discussed at the club?”. The very first line of the text of the lesson on page 38 provides the answer by stating “Our talk at the club one day was of opportunity and determination”. Question 5 requires the students to connect the relevant parts of Column 1 and Column 2 for which again only scanning the text is the main requirement. Such as in Column 1 part ii says “He was a good athlete when..” . The students scan through the text and find on page 38 that the relevant part is “he came by this wild idea” and join them. Similarly they attempt all answers. The lines that are given to be punctuated in Question 6 are directly taken from the text which also emphasizes on scanning the text only. Even the sentences that are given in Question 7, which demands to complete the sentences with the correct forms of the verbs in brackets, are all taken from the text of the story. Mostly students do not attempt it on their own. They just look back in the text and copy the answers. As part i says, “Jorkens said that if a man(he) determined to get anything, and (stick) to it long enough, he (get) it”. The first paragraph of the story on page 38 provides the answer. All the other parts of this question follow the same pattern.

Similarly in Lesson 9 , “The Foolish Quack”, on page 59, part ii of Question 1, for example, says “Why did the camel fall ill?”and the provided options are a) by heat stroke b) by infection c) when a melon stuck in its throat d) by poison. The first paragraph of the lesson, on page 57, provides the answer that option ‘c’ is correct. All the other parts follow the same pattern. Question 2 which is based on true and false statements asks in its part i , “With the blow of the mallet the melon broke in the throat of the camel” . The first paragraph of the lesson proves the statement to be true. All the other parts follow the same pattern. As part ii, iii and iv of Question 3 which requires the students to answer the given questions, queries like, “What was struck in the camel’s throat?”, “What did the quack pretend to cure?” and “What did the quack do with the old woman?” are designed like wise. Question 4 is also based on the same format including questions like, “How did the camel men cure their camel?” and “How did the camel men prove the stupidity of the quack?”. All the parts of

Question 5 which requires the students to choose the correct form of the verb is also taken from the text as in the other lessons. Consisting of sentences like , “Some travelers (stay) to rest under a clump of trees.”(part i), “The man (labour) away with all might.”(part vi) and “When consciousness (return) his bewildered victim (inquire)” (part x), this question also provides students with only an opportunity to scan through the text again. Question 7 and 8, “Punctuate the following lines” and “Read the passage and answer the questions given at the end” respectively are also taken from the story directly and is another practice of just ‘looking for the required information in the text’ which is scanning. In all the other lessons the exercises are designed the same way.

In Book 2 again it is found that the questions that are given at the end of the exercises just require confirmation of the information given in the text. Taking Lesson 2 as an example which is, “Using the Scientific Method”, Question 1 states, “How has the scientific method helped us in our fight against disease?” Question 4 says, “How has the scientific method helped us in the production and preservation of foods?” or Question 6 that asks, “How has the scientific method enabled us to get over the old fears?” which are all questions of the same sort. Other questions are of the same type. Randomly taking another Lesson 8, “China’s Way to Progress”, as an example, it also has the questions of the same sort. Question 1 here is, “Why has the world changed its attitude towards China?”. Question 2 says, “Discuss Chinese agricultural system.” Likewise Question 5 is, “What are the social security benefits provided to the Chinese women?” The main focus of the whole exercise moves around scanning the text and does not provide chances of free writing. In the other lessons too, same is the practice like Lesson 15, “Mustafa Kamal” is another evidence of the same point, where Question 1 is, “What was the attitude of the Turkish government towards the allies after World War I”, Question 2 states, “Why was Mustafa Kamal sent to Anatolia?”, Question 3 suggests, “What was the reaction of the Turkish patriots to the intention of the Allies to partition the Ottoman Empire?” and so on. Up to question 13, all queries are of the similar kind. The helping material of Book 3 is designed likewise, following the same pattern.

The helping material of the poems is designed in the same way. Not all but the major portion of the exercises has the same limited focus. Question 1 which is as usual, “Choose the correct answer” revolves around the text of the poem. In poem 1, “The Rain”, page 56, for example Question 1 part i is, “Who was drinking rain? a) a man b) a bird c) the leaves d) a tree.” Part ii is, “What was making the noise sweet? a) a guitar b) a singer c) drops of rain d) drops of rain falling on leaves”. Question 2 “Mark the statements true or false” is presented likewise, confirming the text. Part i of Question 2 is, “The poet hears leaves drinking.” Part ii is, “The rain drops make the leaves rich.” and so on. In Poem 5, “In the Street of the Fruit Stalls” on page 66, all parts of the first four questions are focusing on developing the same skill of the students. Question 1 , part i is, “Which fruit has not been mentioned in the poem? a) mango b) melon c) guava d) mandarin”. Part ii is, “The fruit resembled the ____ a) vegetables b) cannon balls c) bullets d) biscuits”. Likewise Question 2, part iii and iv says, “The children were holding coins in their hands” and “They ate the fruit with relish” respectively. Even the contents of Question 3, which asks the students to, “Add two more rhyming words to each of the words given below” are taken from the poem and are in no way encouraging students for creative thinking. Such as i. “Falls”, ii. “Spend”, iii. “Skin” and iv. “Forget” all are available in the poem. All the verses of Question 4 on page 67 which demand the students to, “Write down the missing word in each verse” are definitely taken from the poem. Like part i is “Wicks balance flame, a dark dew ____ a) falls b) calls c) moves d) comes”. The very first line of the poem provides the answer. The other parts of this question are similarly designed.

10.1.2. Repetition of the Same Point

There are a number of instances found in the questions and exercises where the questions are of similar kind having same answers. In the exercises, at a number of places the questions are repetitive. The same point is being asked in two different questions which the students only have to confirm from the text and answer. In Lesson 2 of Book 1, “Clearing in the Sky”, on page 15, Question 1, which requires the students to “Choose the correct answer”, its part i asks “The Old man wanted to show his son a) his farm b) his land c) patch of clearing d) river. The same point is being asked in Question 3, which is “Answer the following questions (in one or two sentences)”. Part iii, of this questions states “Where did the old man take his son?” On page 17, in the same chapter, Question 3, part viii states “What were the feelings of the old man at the age of seventy?” and the same point is asked in Question 4, (“Write the answer of the following questions in 50 to 100 words”) part ii : “How did the old man feel about the land?” Both of these questions are focusing on the same point. In Lesson 4 , “Thank you Ma’am”, on page 29, Question 1, part i states “ What was the woman carrying? a) a rod b) a bag c) a hammer d)a large purse”. Question 2, “Mark the statements True or False” part i had the same query asking “ A large woman was carrying a large purse containing hammer and nails”. For

both these questions students only need to scan through the text and look for the required information which would be the same in both cases. Similarly Question 1 of the same exercise in its part iii asks “What had happened to her? a) a boy made a request for help b) a boy tried to help her c) a boy begged ten dollars d) a boy tried to snatch the purse. Whereas part ii of Question 2, asks the same point that actually what happened to the lady by asking “The boy offered his help to carry the purse”.

Likewise in Lesson 5, “The Piece of String”, on page 35, Question 1 part vi asks “what were the feelings of Hubert when he was informed of the recovery of the lost object?” He felt a) disgusted b) triumphed c) indifferent d) concerned. The same point asking about the feelings of the character Hubert is being asked in Question 2 part iv again saying “Mr. Hubert was pleased to hear the allegation”. In Lesson 7 which is titled “The Use of Force”, on page 47, part iii of Question 1 is “The doctor was impressed a) by the beauty of the child b) by the patience of the child c) by the patience of the parents d) by the picture of the child he has seen in Sunday’s paper”. Question 2, part iii, again focuses the same point by asking “The doctor is impressed by the innocent beauty of the child”. In Lesson 9, titled “The Foolish Quack”, Question 3, part iv, “What did the quack do with the old woman?” and Question 4, part ii, “How did the quack try to cure the old woman?” on page 60 are asking about the same incident in the story to be explained.

At many places questions are also of repetitive nature, such as in Poem 11, “Leisure” on page 81, Question no 1 says “Read the poem and complete the lines with rhyming words”. All parts of this question are taken from the text of the poem such as part i is “What is the life if full of care, We have no time to stand and _____”. Part iii is the reiteration of the same line, “A poor life if full of care, We have no time to stand and _____”. Question 4 of the same exercise presents the same kind of activity again by proposing “Write down the pairs of all rhyming words in the poem”. In both the questions the students will have to scan the text for the same data. Poem 13, “A Tale of Two Cities”, on page 85 comes up with the same kind of repetitive activity based on rhyming words. Question 5 suggests the students to “Write down the rhyming words and use them in your sentences”. And then the very next Question 6 implies “Write two more rhyming words of the following” which is of the similar kind. The repetition of the same kind of activities brings no benefits and mostly become monotonous.

10.1.3 Activities and Questions Too Simple for Intermediate Level

In the helping material under study, a number of activities are below the expected proficiency level of the students. The students of Intermediate have a certain level which should not be underestimated. At the intermediate level it is expected that at least students should be able to do something that is above Secondary level. Many of the activities in the books understudy are too simple and do not provide any challenge to the learner. Chapter 1 of Book 1, “Button, Button” comes up with an activity on page 10 that states “Connect part of Column 1 with the relevant part of Column II to make a complete sentence”. This kind of an activity is well suited to the level of class 5th to 8th, and students have actually practiced a lot with it at that level. At the Intermediate level these types of activities provide no challenge to the students and cannot be considered suitable for enhancing the acquisition of Reading Skills. Part iii of this question states in its column I “Arthur came out of ...” The most suitable answer in column II is “the living room” which the students can easily guess because no other phrase of the same nature exists in column II so it provides no challenge to the students. Similarly part iv says “It won’t take long ...” and the answer in column II is “to explain”. The activity consists of too easy items and other wise too does not help the needs of the students of this level, in any way. In Lesson 6, “The Reward”, Question 5 on page 42 again consists of the same activity. The lines that are given in column I and Column II are directly taken from the text and demands nothing else than scanning the text again. Such as part i in column I says “Some said opportunity was” and the answer in column II is “required for success”. The first line of the lesson provides the answer. Similarly in Lesson 11 “I have a Dream” and in Lesson 12, “The Gift of the Magi” on page 71 and 78 respectively, the same activity is given with the similar items.

Likewise in the second lesson of Book 1 which is “Clearing in the sky”, Question 3 on page 17 states “Answer the following questions. (In one or two sentences)”. The purpose of this question is not understandable. The question contains below level queries like part iv of this question is “Had the son ever been there before?”. The actual answer of this question is “No, the son had never been there before.” This type of one line answer especially when it is even not related to the HSSC exam which they have to take, have no use and is explicitly below their level. Likewise in Lesson 6, “The Reward”, Question 3 on page 42 instructs the students to “Answer the following questions. (in one or two sentences)”. Part I of this question says “What was the subject discussed at the club?” The answer is “The subject discussed at the club was opportunity and determination”. In no way do these one line answers help the students.

In Book 3, the questions which asks to “Choose the correct answer” and “Mark the statement True or False” respectively, consist of items that are too easy. On page 56, Part i of Question 1 in poem 1, “The Rain”, suggests “Who was drinking rain? a) a man b) a bird c) the leaves d) a tree” and the answer, too simply, lies in the first line of the poem saying “I hear leaves drinking rain”. Part i of Question 2, then asks the same point, “The poet hears leaves drinking rain”. Likewise the other parts are also a bit too simple. In poem 8 , “Ozymandias”, Question 1, part ii on page 73 is “The poet met a ____ a) traveler b) sailor c) beggar d) captain”. The first line of the poem provides the answer “I met a traveler from an antique land”. Question 2 part ii states “The traveler saw nothing in the desert”. The queries of this nature are a bit too simple. Poem 9, “The Feed” also contains the similar kind of questions and fall in the same category of below level activities on page 76. Question 2 part ii, for example, is “The young ones are tiny and _____ a) big b) small c) white d) black” and the text clearly says “The young ones are so tiny and small”. Another question asking the students to “Write down the missing words in each verse” also provides the students just with redundancy.

The question that is often repeated and yet below the level of the intermediate students is “Write down the rhyming words that are used in the poem”. Such as in poem 11, “Leisure” on page 81, Question 4 is “Write down the pairs of all rhyming words in the poem”. Likewise, in poem 13 “A Tale of Two Cities” on page 85, in poem 14, “My Neighbor Friend Breathing His Last!” on page 87 and in poem 19, “A Man of Words and Not of Deeds” on page 95, either simply the rhyming words are asked or they are asked to be used in your own sentences. Since the students are already well familiar with the idea of what rhyming words are because they have been practicing the same in their earlier classes, this question seems unrealistic and unnecessary.

10.1.4 Questions Inappropriate for the Intermediate Level

Above level activities are as useless as the below level activities. While attempting activities that are too simple, students get confused when they suddenly get a task which is beyond their comprehension level. Over all it is found that as regards to the level of the questions there are two extremes. On one hand the helping material proposes questions which are too simple, and only requires the students to keep copying the text and practicing scanning the text only. Whereas on the other hand there are activities which are too demanding and require enough command in free writing which they have not acquired yet. As for instance, in most of the lessons of Book 1, Question 4 instructs the students to, “Write down the answer of the following questions in 100 to 150 words”. In some stories this word limit is 50 to 100. It is an explicit fact that one of the objectives of the helping material is to help the students prepare for the exam. The demand of the paper in HSSC exam is that the students are required to answer the questions in 40 _ 50 words. So it appears to have no use in giving them practice in writing the answers in 100 _ 150 words. In “Button, Button”, the first lesson of Book 1, Question 4 gives the same instruction on page 9. Part i then asks, “Write a note on the character of Arthur.” and part iv is “write the story in your own words”. Summarizing a long story short is an above level task which requires separate detailed instruction on summary writing.

In many of the other stories too, it is asked to summarize the whole story in 100 to 150 words. Contrarily, the queries asked under the question under discussion mostly do not need an answer of such length. Lesson 5, “The Piece of String” on page 36 asks in its part iii of Question 4, “Why did the Mayor not believe the innocence of Hubert?”. As a matter of fact the answer of this query cannot be of 100 to 150 words. Similarly part iv suggests “Was it necessary for Hubert to continue pleading his innocence?” which also does not require an answer of such a length. In “Use of Force”, Lesson 7 on page 49, part ii of Question 4 is, “Why did the parents keep the sick child in the kitchen?”. The answer of the query is just of a single line explaining that the parents kept her in the kitchen because the kitchen was warm and the other areas were damp. It cannot be explained in 50 to 100 words. Part iii of Question 4 on page 55 of Lesson 8, which is “The Gulistan of S’adi”, asks, “can an unjust king flourish”? that requires a brief answer only.

There are questions which clearly are above the student’s level of writing ability. Throughout, in the helping material, much of the emphasis is laid on scanning the text and writing answers which definitely is controlled writing. Now putting a demanding question like, Question 4 on page 54 of Book 3 that says, “Write a composition describing your ideal town” is a pressurizing demand. Likewise, writing a critical appreciation of a poem which too is a challenging and a tough task is above their ability level. Question 4 of Poem 1, “The Rain” on page 56 asks to, “Write a critical appreciation of the poem”. Likewise in poem 5 on page 67, “In the Street of the Fruit Stalls” instructs in its Question 5, “Write a critical note on the poem.” Poem 7, “Times”, on page 71, Poem 9, “The Feed” on page 76 and Poem 10, “The Hollow Men” on page 79 also demands the students to write the critical appreciation. Before setting the exercises, it has to be thought over that, has the helping material prior to this point prepared the students to write an answer of a complex question like a critical appreciation, on their own?

XI. CONCLUSION

The study was conducted in order to review and evaluate the helping material of the Intermediate text book of English. The study analyzed the exercises and activities to determine how varied they are. Keeping the importance of the reading skill in view, the study has reviewed whether the text book lays equal emphasis on the sub skills of reading for example, reading for information, skimming, scanning, inference, prediction, anticipation etc. The research also endeavored to determine if the textbook offers variety of activities and exercises for the development of the reading skill. The study aimed to identify the discrepancies and flaws that exist in the helping material.

Over all it was found that as regards to the level of the activities there are two extremes. On one hand the helping material proposes questions which are too simple, and only requires the students to keep copying the text and practicing scanning the text only. Whereas on the other hand there are activities which are too complex and require enough command in free-writing which they have not acquired yet since they have not got a chance to learn it step by step. Keeping in mind the importance of all the tenses in language learning, it is indispensable that all the tenses are given equal importance and space in the helping material. But the analysis of the textbook of the intermediate level reveals that it is only the past tense that is given emphasis in the exercises. Almost all the questions center on the teaching of past tense. The whole exercise is designed that way.

XII. RECOMMENDATIONS

- There is an unnecessary emphasis on past tense in the glossary. The inflection 'ed' is used excessively in the glossary items. The students should know the meaning of the words independent of their tense. The words should be explained without the necessary emphasis on anyone tense.
- The word and its meaning should be given in the same tense. Consistency of tense is important in making the student's concept clear about the time and tense.
- Instead of focusing on only skimming and scanning, exercises and activities should focus on all the sub skills equally. For instance, Anticipation, Prediction, Guessing within the context and Inference all should be equally emphasized.
- The questions in the exercises should not be repetitive. There should be variety and diversity in the questions so that the learners think from various angles about the topic or the lesson. The same point should not be asked in more than one question as it will diminish creativity and lead to mere repetition and reproduction of information
- The exercises should be according to the level of the students neither too complex nor too simple.
- In the exercises section also there is an overemphasis on past tense. The students should be given the opportunity to practice all the tenses equally.

This research can prove to be useful for curriculum designers, language teachers as well as students. For curriculum designers it provides a food for thought to recheck whatever is given in the textbooks and to work on designing error free, appropriate and diversified material for the language textbooks. For language teachers it can serve as a guide. It points to the fact that they are not supposed to follow the textbook blindly and they should be aware of the errors and problems the textbook helping material may contain. It encourages the language teachers to develop appropriate material for exercises for developing students' language skills. For the students the research is helpful because they can get exact and precise information about their textbooks helping material and can make their own efforts to improve it.

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