EVALUATING VISUAL ELEMENTS IN TWO EFL TEXTBOOKS

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Abstract

This study evaluates visual elements in two English textbooks, that is, Interchange 3 and Top Notch 3B, commonly taught to Iranian EFL learners; it analyzes illustrations to find out the balance of black-and-white and color drawings and photos and examines the extent to which visual materials are used for decorative purposes. The analysis of visual elements reveals that, first, color pictures constitute a large percentage of illustrations in both textbooks, reflecting current publication trend for stylish color pages. Second, Interchange 3 has more drawings than the Top Notch whereas the Top Notch textbook has more photos, which can establish more authenticity and result in its higher price. Third, the majority of the portraits are color photos, and, further, actions are represented more through drawings than photos, presumably because of practicality issues. Finally, pictures used for decorative purposes constitute a small percentage of illustrations in both textbooks, indicating their pedagogically facilitative effects.

Keywords

Evaluation, L2 Teaching, Textbooks, Visual elements
For many years, the two elements, teachers and students and their roles were investigated thoroughly, but less attention was given to the issues regarding textbooks. However, in most cases, textbooks represent the hidden curriculum of the language studies in a certain program or country. Graves (2000) criticizes the illustrations in a textbook wherein visual priority is given to a specific gender, class, race and culture. Evaluating the cultural issues in ELT textbooks in EFL settings, the cultural representations of the target language in textbooks can be problematic sine the learners try to acquire the unfamiliar input of the target language culture and need to be acknowledged concerning the stereotyped representations of the people in native speaking communities. Abstract: This study evaluates visual elements in two English textbooks, that is, illustrations to find out the balance of black-and-white and color drawings and Indonesian Journal of Applied Linguistics, Vol. 4 No. 2, January 2015, pp. 68-77. Evaluating visual elements in L2 textbooks is important, particularly in EFL contexts where learners have
little exposure to target language. Although different books and articles (e.g., Brand, 1997; Hill, 1996; Gerrard, 2008; Porcaro, 2001; Wright & Haleem, 1991) have been written showing the significance of visual elements and literacy in ELT, there still exists little research on analysis of visual elements in ELT textbooks, particularly in Iran.