

**Evaluation of the coursebooks used in the Chungbuk Provincial Board  
of Education Secondary School Teachers' Training Sessions**

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## 1.0 Introduction

Materials provide an important function in language teaching methods. In a functional/communicative methodology, for example:

- “1. Materials will focus on the communicative abilities of interpretation, expression, and negotiation.
2. Materials will focus on understandable, relevant, and interesting exchanges of information, rather than on the presentation of grammatical form.
3. Materials will involve different kinds of texts and different kinds of media, which the learners can use to develop their competence through a variety of different activities and tasks.” (Richards and Rodgers, 1986: 25)

This paper will provide a detailed evaluation of the coursebooks used in the Chungbuk Provincial Board of Education Secondary School Teachers’ Training Sessions. It will begin by introducing background information and the coursebooks then follow McDonough and Shaw’s two-stage evaluation:

- “an external evaluation which offers a brief ‘overview’ of the materials from the outside (cover, introduction, table of contents)... followed by a closer and more detailed internal evaluation.” (McDonough and Shaw, 1993:66)

In accordance with McDonough and Shaw (1993:67) the external evaluation will be accomplished by “looking at:

- the ‘blurb’, or the claims made on the cover of the teachers/students book [and]
- the introduction and table of contents.”

It will also examine other factors that McDonough and Shaw (1993: 70) “believe...[are] necessary to take into account at this external stage.” These factors are as follows: the use of visual/audio equipment, coursebook layout, topic bias, the publication date, coursebook provisions, and time factors.

The internal evaluation will

- “analyse the extent to which the aforementioned factors in the external evaluation stage actually match up with the internal consistency and organization of the materials as stated by the author/publisher.” (McDonough and Shaw, 1993: 75)

Following McDonough and Shaw this analysis will investigate skill presentation, material grading and sequencing, natural language element inclusion, the relationship of tests/exercises to materials and learners, and finally, the suitability for teachers and different learner learning styles.

## 2.0 Course Background

The Chungbuk Provincial Board of Education offered two training sessions for Secondary School Teachers involving 60 hours of lectures by a native speaker of English. The courses were taught three hours a day, five days a week, for 20-day periods and consisted of twenty-five voluntarily enrolled Korean-English teachers.

Sinclair and Renouf (1988: 145) observe that as a result of various factors in different teaching situations it seems that language teachers are required to use only a textbook. For these training sessions, however, the course teacher was not expected to adhere to any particular coursebook, although one main text was to be chosen and distributed to the class, nor was the teacher to abide by a precise schedule. In other words, the teacher was not required to be at a particular unit at a given time. Near the end of each session

there was a student evaluation and listening test.

## 2.1 The Coursebooks

With freedom of choice in material selection the books “Springboard 1 and 2” were chosen and taught successively in the two training sessions. The books appeared to offer topics that the course teacher believed related to the everyday lives of Secondary School English teachers as well as their teaching environments. Moreover, the course teacher believed the books’ provision of website links, where authentic material could be downloaded, would enable learners to make generalisations about language for themselves and motivate them to become more active participants in the learning process.

## 3.0 External Evaluation

The external evaluation stage will examine claims made by the coursebooks on the back cover and in the introduction and table of contents. It will then examine the coursebooks’ use of visual/audio material, layout, bias in topics, publication date, provisions, and time factors.

### 3.1 ‘Blurb’ Claims

According to the back cover of the coursebooks,

“*Springboard* is a two-level conversation and listening course for pre-intermediate and intermediate learners. It is organized around high-interest topics that encourage students to talk about what they are most interested in: their own lives, aspirations, and interests. *Springboard* activates both previous language knowledge and real-world experience, while presenting students with natural conversational language, idiomatic expressions, and communication skills.

#### KEY FEATURES

- A **topic-based syllabus** focused on the world of young adults and adults, using topics drawn from student surveys
  - A **Project File** containing a project for each unit, with opportunities for student creativity, personal expression and recommendations for student assessment using **project portfolios**
  - A **defining Glossary** for easy access to key words and expressions
  - Photocopiable **vocabulary building activities** in the Teacher’s Book
  - **Photocopiable tests** contained in the Teacher’s Book and recommendations for student assessment
  - A **Springboard Website** providing a variety of **weblinks** with activity suggestions, **downloadable readings** with activities for each unit and additional resources.
- Available at [www.oup.com/elt/springboard](http://www.oup.com/elt/springboard)” (Springboard 2, 1999)

The backcover makes various claims about the books. Firstly, it alleges a topic-based syllabus intended for intermediate learners, from young adults to older adults, with some language knowledge background who want a course based on familiar or personal topics capitalizing on their previous knowledge and real-world experiences. Secondly, the backcover contends the books introduce more “natural” language and expressions to learners and involve learners in personal expression through the “Project File”. Thirdly, it maintains that teacher’s book activities build vocabulary. Lastly, the introduction points to a website, which has several downloadable reading activities and weblinks.

#### 3.1.1 Syllabus Claims

McDonough and Shaw (1993: 13) suggest,

“one of the simplest ways of surveying the types of syllabus available is to examine the contents pages of published English language teaching textbooks, because they reveal the underlying principles and assumptions on which the writers have based their material.”

According to the back covers of the coursebooks the author explicitly states a topic-based syllabus “focused on the world of young adults and adults, using topics drawn from student surveys.” (Springboard 1, 1998) This implies that tasks are items in the syllabus, which, according to Prabhu in White (1988: 104), operate

“with the concept that, while the conscious mind is working out some of the meaning-content, some subconscious part of the mind perceives, abstracts or acquires (or recreates, as a cognitive structure) some of the linguistic structuring embodied in those entities, as a step in the development of an internal system of rules.”

Unfortunately, there is no information on the student surveys that are declared to underlie the topic-based syllabus and as a result it is not possible to determine which students were involved in the survey process. Knowledge of these students would determine if they are generally representative of the learners in the training sessions.

Even though the coursebooks were not specifically designed for the training session learners they may be suitable for learners’ needs, because Secondary School teachers may previously have been acquainted with the various topics and activities and/or need the theme knowledge in their own teaching environments. In addition, as Sinclair and Renouf (1988: 146) point out,

“A coursebook is essentially a set of instructions concerning operations in the classroom. Whether or not it contains one or more syllabus statements, or refers to an external syllabus, the bulk of it is an elaboration of only one of the many ways in which coverage of the syllabus may be achieved.”

This view of coursebooks implies that although there is an explicit referral to a topic-based syllabus, the books, then, are simply one method of accomplishing an underlying syllabus. This implication may affect syllabus relevance, but “there is general agreement nowadays that people learn a language best by actually using the language to achieve real meanings and achieve real outcomes.” (Willis, 1990: 1) Hence, topic-based teaching and learning may enhance learner language knowledge and motivation in the learning process.

According to Breen and Candlin in Rutherford (1987: 149-150)

“In the past, it has seemed easier to somehow separate the learner from the knowledge to be learned - to ‘objectify’ the target language as something completely unfamiliar to the learner... Thus, ideational and interpersonal knowledge, which continually interact with textual knowledge and from which textual knowledge evolves, have tended to be overlooked or neutralised.”

However, through familiar task activity topics the books appear to allow for the involvement of background knowledge. Hutchinson and Waters in Littlejohn and Windeatt (1989: 158) suggest that content for learners should involve, “reasonable background knowledge, but with a new or unusual slant to it.” As the learners are Secondary School English Teachers, they have studied various English programmes in university, such as Literature and Education, and also may have encountered the coursebook topics on a regular basis in their classroom teaching material. Moreover, some teachers may have also taken part in the annual summer “English study abroad”

program. Hence, learners may have encountered similar situations and/or be familiar with the ideas presented within the topics.

### 3.1.2 Learner Claims

The “natural conversational language, idiomatic expressions, and communicative skills” (Springboard 1, 1998) provided in the books might more equip learners to cope successfully in future situations with non-Korean speakers, such as their co-team teacher or foreign lecturers, because they appear to encompass more typical characteristics of authentic social discourse. In fact, according to Nunan (1991: 24),

“providing the conversations are authentic (that is, they were not specifically created for the purpose of illustrating or teaching features of the language), they can provide learners with insights into ways in which conversations work. They can also provide learners with strategies for comprehending conversation outside the classroom in which they are not actively involved, but which may provide them with input to feed their learning processes.”

Furthermore, the themes presented in each of the units do not appear to have strong grammatical links or be mechanical in structure like traditional Korean language texts. For learners, this may be more interesting and provide “greater opportunities for additional learning outcomes... through the design of materials which involve the learner in working with both the language and the content.” (Littlejohn and Windeatt, 1989: 158)

The ‘Project File’, according to Springboard 1 teacher’s book (1998), encourages student’s involvement and bridges the gap between language study and usage. Since “there is much more to learning a first or subsequent language than simply learning the grammar and vocabulary” (Nunan, 1989: 40) these ‘Project File’ activities may motivate learners in their language learning. Additionally, learners may expand their understanding of language studied and use this knowledge in their own teaching situations.

### 3.1.3 Vocabulary Claims

The vocabulary building exercises claim to:

“highlight different features of the vocabulary items... practice comprehension...[and] collocation... help students better understand nuance and register (e.g., Formal, informal, neutral)...call upon [students’] real-life knowledge...work on their spellings... [and] encourage students to place words and phrases in lexical or grammatical sets.”

(Springboard 1 teacher’s book, 1998)

These exercises may increase learners’ knowledge about words because “knowing a word involves knowing how to *use* the word syntactically, semantically *and* pragmatically (i.e. discursively).” (Carter, 1998: 220) In other words, a teacher “cannot simply go into a language class, teach any item one wishes, or thinks might be appropriate for the learners, and expect the learners to learn.” (Nunan, 1989: 37) As a result the provision of these additional varied vocabulary exercises may enable learners to develop more comprehensive knowledge and thus be more successful in their language usage.

### 3.1.4 Website

As there are no readings in the books, downloadable readings are available from the coursebooks’ website. It appears that the downloadable readings are not designed to

demonstrate a particular language structure but to expand on the general unit theme, which may increase motivation and avoid traditional reading situations that appear,

“artificial because the intention is to draw learners’ attention to items of structural usage rather than the authentic features which are characteristic of ‘real’ text, or what makes texts ‘hang together.’”  
(McDonough and Shaw, 1993: 104)

The weblinks provide links to various sites from which resources may be downloaded. These resources introduce authentic material into the classroom that may decrease heavy reliance on concocted text. In fact,

“It is the learner who has to make sense of the insights derived from input, and learners can only do this by considering new evidence about the language in the light of their current model of the language... they should be encouraged to process text for themselves so as to reach conclusions which make sense in terms of their own systems.” (Willis, 1994: 56)

Thus, participation in self-discovery through authentic text may enhance learner knowledge and understanding of language, and thus may expand awareness between written and spoken grammars, which appears to be a barrier for Korean-English teachers. That is to say,

“One of the great advantages of beginning with authentic written or spoken texts is that classroom work is referenced against the type of language which learners will encounter outside the classroom.”  
(Nunan, 1991: 215-216)

### **3.2 Introduction Claims**

The following statements were taken from the coursebooks’ introduction:

- photographs or artwork that activate students’ previous language knowledge and real-world experience
  - short interactive tasks and personal surveys guide students toward conversational fluency and help them develop communication skills that can be put to immediate use in real-world situations
  - develop listening strategies such as listening for gist, attitude and inference
  - variety of international accents... so that students are exposed to English spoken as they may actually encounter it outside the classroom
  - topics selected from student surveys
    - language models, key expressions and vocabulary... giving students clear guidance in developing conversational skills they need to discuss topics”
- (Springboard 1 teacher’s book, 1998)

The introduction makes claims about learners and learner skills. Firstly, it suggests that learners should have reasonable previous language knowledge to discuss topics drawn from student surveys, which have been enhanced by models, expressions, and vocabulary. Secondly, the introduction claims to guide and develop listening and conversational skills learners will need outside the classroom. Also, the listening activities claim to develop listening for gist and attitude by using a variety of accents that may expose learners to English heard outside the classroom.

#### **3.2.1 Learner Claims**

Although learners should have reasonable previous language knowledge to discuss coursebook items, it does not appear that any degree of specialized subject knowledge such as tourism or business is necessary. Items appear to originate on a variety of themes from various subject matters, which Secondary School teachers may have had exposure to outside the classroom.

In addition, the use models, expressions, and vocabulary alternatives rather than structural presentation learning may increase communicative competence. In fact, Widdowson (1989: 135) would argue that,

“communicative competence is not a matter of knowing rules for the composition of sentences... It is much more a matter of knowing a stock of partially pre-assembled patterns, formulaic frameworks, and a kit of rules, so to speak, and being able to apply the rules to make whatever adjustments are necessary according to contextual demands. Communicative competence in this view is essentially a matter of adaptation, and rules are not generative but regulative and subservient.”

### 3.2.2 Skill Claims

Stern (1992: 318) points out that,

“If classroom discourse is to reflect the characteristics of ordinary conversation... there should be opportunities for students to take the initiative, and speech roles should be diversified, as is made possible through small group or pair work.”

Following Stern’s view, it appears that the coursebooks use of interactive task activities without strict mechanical structures or controls may help develop these characteristics of conversations because, according to Stern (1992: 318), when linguistic controls and restrictions are removed, the language classroom becomes more representative of natural situation communication.

Moreover, for some learners,

“the experience of simply repeating sentences after the teachers’ prompts would appear to demonstrate clearly that their role in the classroom is largely a powerless one in which they mechanically follow instructions... *in chorus* adds the sense of anonymity and being ‘one of the mass’ upon which much social control – inside and outside the classroom - seems to rest.”

(Littlejohn and Windeatt, 1989: 167)

Hence, the coursebooks’ low concentration on repetition techniques may enable learners to become more active participants through techniques such as pair or group work, or class discussion avoiding traditional Korean passive learning. The learners may also be given a sense of student-centredness and individuality through the books’ teacher-student “assessment portfolio” discussions, which reduces teacher-centredness typical of Korean learning situations.

Although repetition practice is not a central focus in the coursebooks, there are instances of “in chorus” repetition, which according to Gowers and Walters in Ellis (1988: 24),

“helps to develop habits. However, in real life we are mostly able to choose which language to use and as we are largely non-mechanical beings this makes for a profoundly complex activity. Habit formation is a small, if essential, part of learning to communicate.”

The listening activities appear to centre on listening for gist and attitude rather than listening for details. These activities may help to develop skills the learners may need outside the classroom and/or in their own teaching situations, because when one recalls a conversation or listens to a recorded conversation,

“it is extremely unlikely that you will be able to remember any of the sentence patterns, or much more than the vocabulary generally associated with the subject-matter. You will, however, be able to recall in some sense what it was ‘about’.” (McDonough and Shaw, 1993: 134)

### **3.3 Table of Contents Claims**

“The table of contents may sometimes be seen as a ‘bridge’ between the external and internal stages of the evaluation and can often reveal useful information about the organization of the materials, giving information about vocabulary study, skills to be covered, functions and so on, possibly with some indication as to how much class time the author thinks should be devoted to a particular unit.”

(McDonough and Shaw, 1993: 71)

The table of contents is organized according to general themes composed of four-page units. These themes are then subdivided into specific topics with an average of four speaking activities and two listening activities per topic. At the end of each unit there is a related ‘Project File’ activity. The table of contents does not discuss information on vocabulary study, skills covered, functions, the time that should be allotted to each unit nor how the topics are brought together with those items. Also, there is no indication of how topics are linked to grammatical points.

The table of contents appears to imply that learners are exposed to language without linguistic controls or mechanical boundaries. This approach to learning may enable learners to see themselves as part of the learning process rather than simply viewing learning as the development of various mechanisms, which has been the focus of language learning in Korea for many years.

### **3.4 Use of Visual/Audio Equipment**

“Current materials tend to overburden the user with an embarrassment of riches” (Rossner in Nunan, 1991: 214) and “may be confusing, whereas restricted and simple resources may be more effective because they are easier to handle.” (Stern, 1992: 34) Moreover, “there has been a tendency to use glossy prints in some materials to try and make the book appear more attractive.” (McDonough and Shaw, 1993:71) Contrary to these views, the books’ materials appear to be simple in format and design without an overabundance of items on each page. Although there are occurrences of decorative photos, pictures, and charts they generally appear to be an integrated part of each unit. There is no specific reference to video equipment as part of the coursebooks, but as the coursebooks are based partly on listening tasks, audio equipment is an essential piece of equipment. As only the teacher requires the cassette tape, there is no significant increase in the cost of the course, however, if learners wish to buy the cassettes they are encouraged to purchase them.

### **3.5 Coursebook Layout**

McDonough and Shaw (1993: 71) contend “some textbooks... are very well researched and written but are so cluttered with information on every page that teachers/learners find them practically unusable.” However, these coursebooks appear to be clearly presented and formatted for teachers and learners. Each speaking dialogue is clearly highlighted in yellow with a response/expression/vocabulary alternative column next to it. Listening activities are generally highlighted in purple if they contain written text or present clear representative photos if they require selection or sequencing. Moreover, the books are also neatly bound and have good quality glossy paper, which “means they are easy to carry and to look at where and when the learner wants to.” (O’Neill, 1982: 152)

Nunan (1991: 210) points out that, “The way materials are organised and presented, as well as the types of content and activities, will help to shape the learner’s view of language.” The books offer a variety of topics such as considerations for learning, stress and solutions, values, and challenges. This is “one of the most obvious ways in which materials may offer opportunities for additional learning,” (Littlejohn and Windeatt, 1989: 157) because it may enable learners to ponder additional aspects of learning than those expected from the materials. In addition, “for most learners it is important to recreate their own identity in the second language” (Stern, 1992:190) so the coursebook topics may enable learners to more comfortably discuss and learn about situations or interests, because they involve the learners’ teaching backgrounds and/or personalities.

As maintained by Littlejohn and Windeatt (1989; 162),

“In that most FLT materials are normally organised into ‘units’ or ‘lessons’ with a repetitive pattern of sub-sections labelled according to the content or type of activity involved, learners may see learning a foreign language as involving the development of abilities in the specified content areas or activity types.”

However, the coursebooks do not appear to have elements of grammar in their view of language learning. There is also no detailing of vocabulary and punctuation. There are provisions for alternative vocabulary, idioms, or expressions but there are no strict guidelines for their usage. Therefore, learners may view language learning as more than the simple development of abilities.

According to Stubbs in Littlejohn and Windeatt (1989: 165), in some teaching situations the teacher has control over classroom discourse and learners take a passive role in the learning process. Stubbs then claims that in these situations, “education consists of listening to an adult talking and answering his or her questions”. The Springboard coursebooks, however, do not appear to concentrate on repetition, substitution, or translation activities, which may increase the amount of involvement by learners in the learning process because learners should perform without constant supervision. Moreover, the few cases of unison repetition that exist in the coursebooks seem to be connected to language explanations and/or pronunciation features.

### **3.6 Topic Bias**

According to McDonough and Shaw (1993: 74) it is “possible that the content of some materials will cause offence to some learners”. Their opinion is supported by Littlejohn and Windeatt (1989: 172) who claim that it is not difficult to find representations and references to “Sexism... ageism, racism, elitism, heterosexism, pro- or anti-smoking, pro- or anti-alcohol and so on” in materials. Although it may be possible that some content may offend some learners, the topics generally do not appear to be specifically centred on a particular representation or reference. Moreover,

“to argue that such features of materials may bring about particular kinds of learning outcomes, however, one needs to show that specific values or attitudes are *pervasive* throughout the text.”

(Gordon in Littlejohn and Windeatt, 1989: 173)

In accordance with Gordon’s opinion, as the coursebooks do not appear to centre on particular views or ideals, if one learner declares a topic offensive it may be based on that learner’s own morals.

### **3.7 The Publication Date**

McDonough and Shaw (1993: 69) point out that coursebooks over the last decade claim to include large amounts of learner involvement in the learning process. Moreover, according to Low (1989: 142),

“If the designer is justifying the material explicitly on the grounds that it relates to what people do and think when they use language, as is commonly the case with ‘communicative’ courses, then there is likely to be an attempt to make the unit task-based in some way.”

These ideas seem to be found in the coursebooks. The dates of publication are 1998 and 1999 and accordingly the author makes several references to learner participation. The books also maintain that learner participation may be increased by topics related to learners’ lives through “interactive tasks and personal surveys.” (Springboard 1, 1998)

Low (1989: 139-140) describes unmodified traditional course design as beginning with a reading or listening passage followed by “a set of comprehension questions and/or repetitions of the text, plus short grammatical drills.” This design may not give learners variety and interest in the course. In addition, traditional structures of text passages at the beginning of a unit may not enable learners to be

“trained in the language and in ‘text attack’ strategies, [instead learners] are simply tested on how far they already understand the passage and on whether they can use a dictionary.” (Low, 1989: 141)

As these books do not adapt traditional designs there are no comprehension and understanding questions based on passage reading or listening and hence learners appear to be more involved in language learning rather than being tested on language knowledge.

### **3.8 Coursebook Provisions**

The coursebooks provide a glossary of vocabulary found throughout the books, which according to McDonough and Shaw (1993: 71) may be useful for learners “doing a lot of individualized and/or out-of-class work.”

In addition to the coursebook there is a teacher’s book, which offers several prescribed methods, hints and/or suggestions for teaching. This provides information that may be needed for both novice and experienced teachers to understand activity focus and/or author intention. Also, the teacher’s guides supply progress tests; two listening tests and several discussion-question tests designed for oral testing. These tests may provide,

“a variety of possible functions: to help teachers and students estimate progress and identify weaknesses (i.e. a formative and diagnostic function), to direct attention to course objectives (a washback function), or to provide information for decision-making (a summative function).”

(Stern in Stern, 1992: 353)

Moreover, as “testing needs to be supplemented by other forms of evaluation such as observation and peer- and self-evaluation” (Stern in Stern, 1992: 356) the teacher’s guides provide achievement assessment material for learners. The “assessment portfolios” may enable learners to review and evaluate their accomplishments and developments individually and confidently with the teacher.

### **3.9 Time Factors**

“Time factors are a crucial part of planning, particularly in the case of the periodic, formulative evaluation...[and] can often be the deciding factor in the choice of method,

means/instruments, etc.”

(Hargreaves, 1989: 43)

As the course was only twenty days, adaptation and supplements to a coursebook would decrease material preparation by the teacher and hence reduce time and course cost.

Nunan (1991: 209) points out that,

“On the positive side, the best commercial materials fulfil an important teacher education function, and remove much of the burden and time involved in creating materials from scratch.”

However, according to O’Neill (1982: 155), textbooks “provide only a base or a core of materials” from which further language learning can be achieved. The author may have recognized this idea as the books point to a website that enables various additional authentic materials to be easily accessed and prepared at low cost.

#### **4.0 Internal Evaluation**

The internal evaluation will look at skill presentation, material grading and sequencing, inclusion of natural language elements, the relationship of tests/exercises to materials and learners, and the suitability for teachers and different learner learning styles.

#### **4.1 Presentation of Skills**

According to Nunan, in McDonough and Shaw (1993, 206-211), to maximize language learning,

“the integrated language lesson’ ... includes the following seven design principles:

- 1 authenticity...
- 2 task continuity...
- 3 real-world focus...
- 4 language focus...
- 5 learning focus...
- 6 language practice... [and]
- 7 problem solving.”

Moreover, according to McDonough and Shaw (1993: 203), “exposure to... ‘natural’ skills integration will hopefully show learners that the skills are rarely used in isolation outside the classroom and that they are not distinct.”

However, the coursebooks concentrate on listening and speaking skills, although learners may be required to write short paragraphs in the “Project File”. For reading or more comprehensive writing activities, the coursebook provides a website of various unit related readings and weblinks, where downloadable material may be accessed.

In support of the books’ concentrations on specific skills,

“several... studies suggest that more language, possibly more complex language, and no less grammatically correct target language, can be encouraged if learners interact with their peers, in small groups, or on convergent tasks.” (Chaudron, 1988: 99)

Hence, the books’ task-based design seems to enable learners to choose whether to use the limited language they can with confidence or take risks reflecting decisions made outside the classroom. Moreover, according to Willis and Willis, “students need to practise in the classroom the things they will need to do with the language outside the classroom,” (1996: 67) which appear to be the goals of the learners. Secondary School teachers seem to have the ability to produce grammatically correct language when given time to formulate sentences, hence, the books appear to provide the means by which

learners may improve their listening and speaking skills to comprehend classroom cassette tapes and/or national listening tests. In addition, the books may aid learners in producing language spontaneously on a variety of subjects with non-Korean speaking teachers at their schools. Lastly, the weblinks and downloadable readings provide learners conscious-raising activities that increase their language ability, which may lead to reproductions in their own classrooms.

#### **4.2 Grading of Materials**

According to McDonough and Shaw (1993: 76), “Some materials are quite ‘steeply’ graded while others claim to have no grading at all.” In these coursebooks, however, there is no mention of either grading or lexical count. There is also no claim of linear difficulty progression in the units, so it appears that unit and/or task order as well as time may be altered at the discretion of the teacher or learners. This non-sequential unit and/or task order may add variety to language learning, which may assist the learners in their own understanding and proficiency in the target language. Moreover, as themes are aimed at young or older adults, the topics and/or tasks enable learners to employ what they have learned to the their own classrooms either as lesson-based or supplementary material.

#### **4.3 Inclusion of Natural Language Elements**

Skehan (1996: 21) points out that,

“we are able to store in our memories many chunks, such that the same lexical element may appear in several chunks (making for an inefficiently organized but rapidly usable memory system). In this way, the several chunks can, when required, be processed and produced faster and with greater ease.”

This view implies that by reducing reliance on mechanical rules learners are able to produce more spontaneous language because they are not losing time organising grammatically correct sentences, but instead, are using “chunks” of stored language. It appears that the books’ provision of idioms/expressions/vocabulary instead of structural analysis enables learners to accomplish communication in real time, because learners are building up a number of routines that they may deploy rapidly and fluently. In other words, this build-up of routines may bridge the gap between language produced spontaneously and language learners produce after pausing for several seconds trying to produce grammatically correct sentences.

Swan (1985: 85), however, claims that,

“Scripted material is useful for presenting specific language items economically and effectively: the course designer has total control over the input, and can provide just the linguistic elements and contextual back-up he or she wishes, no more and no less. Authentic material, on the other hand, gives students a taste of ‘real’ language in use, and provides them with valid linguistic data for their unconscious acquisition processes to work on.”

Hence, the “Project Files” and website links enable the teacher to download theme related and/or authentic material. This material gives learners an opportunity to discover and use more natural language, because it allows for language use in the classroom that genuinely reflects natural elements of language produced outside the classroom.

#### 4.4 Tests/Exercises

According to Brown (1994: 252-253)

“A test measures *a person's* ability or knowledge... Also being measured in a test is *ability or knowledge* –that is, competence... Finally, a test measures *a given area*.”

The listening and oral tests may provide a realistic appraisal of progress if the full training sessions are based solely upon the coursebooks. However, as weblink materials are utilized, alterations and/or additions to the tests may prove to be appropriate and necessary.

As Secondary School teachers, many learners purchased the teacher's guides for the cultural information and to have access to the tape transcripts and tests. Therefore the course teacher did not use the listening tests provided by the coursebooks. In addition, oral assessment criteria is determined by the Chungbuk Provincial Board of Education, which maintains an informal assessment procedure based on fluency, understanding, and pronunciation carried out by the course teacher throughout the training session. Thus, the coursebooks' oral discussion-question tests were also not used by the course teacher.

The homework and optional activities appear to offer learners additional opportunities to apply classroom language outside the classroom, but were not utilized during the training session. As the learners are Secondary School teachers, before beginning the night class they would have completed a full day of teaching so it was decided that it was not appropriate to demand additional exercises of teachers.

#### 4.5 Suitability

“One of the major concerns is that any given coursebook will be incapable of catering to the diversity of the needs which exists in most language classrooms.” (Nunan, 1991: 209)

Therefore, according to Stern (1992: 260),

“There is a need for the teacher to consider the learner as a person, but equally a need for the learner to come to terms with himself, and try to understand his own strengths and weaknesses.”

The books seem to appeal both to the teacher and learners. They provide the teacher with colourful illustrations for topic introduction and discussion, task-based activities, step-by-step instructions for novice teachers as well as insight into activities for experienced teachers, suggestions for authentic material, additional exercises and readings supplements, and testing and assessment material.

The books also appear to increase and enhance, “the amount of initiative and control which learners are allowed to exercise and the extent to which they are active participants in the learning process.” (Nunan: 1991: 210) Since “for most learners it is important to recreate their own identity in the second language,” (Stern, 1992: 190) the coursebooks' choice of topics may, therefore, capitalize on learner's prior knowledge and motivate them to communicate in the target language. Breen (1989: 198) supports this idea pointing out that “Interest, relevance, or helpfulness of content seem to be very important to learners in making the learning process meaningful and manageable.” Hence the books appear to “be so designed and organized that a great deal of improvisation and adaptation by both teacher and class is possible.” (O'Neill, 1982: 152)

## 5.0 Summary

After a brief introduction of the training sessions, this paper followed McDonough and Shaw's evaluation. It began with an external evaluation that looked at the backcover "blurb", the introduction, the table of contents, the use of visual/audio equipment, book layout, topic bias, the publication date, book provisions, and time factors. It then continued with an internal evaluation that looked at skill presentation, material grading and sequencing, natural language elements, relationship of test/exercises to materials and learners, and the suitability for teachers and different learner styles.

## 6.0 Conclusion

"Teaching and learning materials provide the corpus of the curriculum. They normally exist as physical entities and are open to analysis, evaluation and revision in ways that teaching and learning acts are not; and they have a direct influence upon what happens in classrooms, which policy documents syllabuses and teacher-training courses do not." (Johnson, 1989: 7)

As a result, McDonough and Shaw's two-stage evaluation process was chosen as an effective method of coursebook evaluation. Firstly it "avoids long checklists of data and can operate to the purpose the evaluator has." (McDonough and Shaw, 1993: 79) Secondly, it fit the needs of the training session and helped demonstrate the books' appropriateness for Secondary School Teachers, because it appeared to match their course goals.

It is "clear that coursebook assessment is fundamentally a subjective, rule-of-thumb activity, and that no neat formula, grid or system will ever provide a definite yard stick." (Sheldon in McDonough and Shaw, 1993:65) Hence,

"assessment of language teaching materials, even when supplemented, as it should be, by empirical studies, remains, like the evaluation of hi-fi equipment, something of a 'black art'."

(Low, 1989: 153)

The overwhelming praise from learners for the books provides evidence of their effectiveness. The books' concentration on listening and speaking skills and material content that was relevant and authentic seemed to reflect learner and course teacher goals. More importantly, the Secondary School teachers praised the books' adaptability. Learners claimed it enabled them to reproduce material and/or speech again in their own teaching environments. Therefore, these books appear to have met course teacher intuitions, made during course selection, as well as overcome many weaknesses found in traditional, and even current, textbooks taught to Korean Secondary School English teachers.

The Chungbuk Provincial Board of Education was so pleased at the results of the training session and the praise that the books received from Secondary School teachers that similar training sessions, using the same books, were offered during school winter vacation.

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