

An Evaluation of My World Textbooks Regarding the EFL Teachers' Perceptions and Classroom Applications : A Case Study of Thai Teachers

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บทคัดย่อ

การวิจัยครั้งนี้มีวัตถุประสงค์ เพื่อศึกษาเกี่ยวกับความเข้าใจวิธีการสอนภาษาที่เป็นพื้นฐานของหนังสือเรียนภาษาอังกฤษชุด My World และการนำไปใช้สอนของครู กลุ่มตัวอย่างในการวิจัยประกอบด้วย ครูภาษาอังกฤษที่ใช้หนังสือเรียนภาษาอังกฤษชุด My World จำนวน 39 คน เครื่องมือที่ใช้ในการเก็บข้อมูล คือ แบบตรวจสอบรายการ และแบบสอบถามของครูที่ผู้วิจัยสร้างขึ้น ผลการวิจัยในครั้งนี้พบว่า ความเข้าใจและการนำไปใช้สอนของครูมีความเหมาะสมกับวิธีการสอนภาษาที่เป็นพื้นฐานของหนังสือเรียนที่ครูใช้ นอกจากนี้ยังพบว่า ครูส่วนมากใช้หนังสือเรียนภาษาอังกฤษชุด My World เป็นสื่อเสริมประกอบการสอนในชั้นเรียนเป็นหลัก

คำสำคัญ : การประเมินหนังสือเรียนภาษาอังกฤษ การประเมินสื่อการสอน ความเข้าใจของครู การนำไปใช้ของครู

ABSTRACT

This research study is an investigation of teachers' perceptions and classroom applications of the language teaching methods which are based on My World textbooks. The subjects were 39 English teachers who employed My World 1-3 Book Series. The researchers designed both the checklist and the teachers' questionnaire to be the main research instruments in gathering data. The findings of the study indicated that most of the teachers' perceptions and classroom applications were at a suitably high level. In addition, this study found that most of the teachers employed My World textbooks as supplementary material in their classroom instructions.

Keywords : English Language Textbook Evaluation, Material Evaluation, Teacher Perception, Teacher Application

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Introduction

Nowadays, English language teaching (ELT) textbook have an important role in many language educational programs such as school, college, and university. Sheldon (1988) stated that textbooks not only represent the visible heart of any ELT program but they also have advantages for both students and teachers when they are used in ESL and EFL classroom. Particularly, the ELT commercial materials have grown in the market (Fredrikson and Olsson, 2006 ; Johnson et al, 2008), but they have some drawbacks because they cannot respond to various teachers and learners' needs (Richards, 2001 ; Zhao and Zhang, 2005 ; Allen, 2008) and cannot accomplish all the goals of the curriculums (Lamie, 1999). The problem statements show that no single textbook will ever be a suitable key for language learning in all situations; therefore, it is necessary to evaluate ELT materials in order to respond to the users' needs and provide suitability in language classroom situations.

One of the research areas of the ELT material disciplines is the topic of material evaluation, Which is continually interesting. Sheldon (1988), Zhao and Zhang (2005) stated that textbook evaluation is a beneficial process for both teachers and educational administrators to judge the positive and negative points of textbooks when they select, employ materials, and help to support both teacher development and training in language programs (Cunningsworth, 1995). According to Cunningsworth (1984) as cited in Law, (1995), "textbook use without evaluation is inimical to professional teaching." Consequently, textbook evaluation is an essential tool to guarantee ELT material value because it can effectively facilitate the accomplishment of language learning programs.

Since 1970's , the ELT material disciplines have begun to accept the significance of new perspectives which emphasize both teachers' and learners' factors; therefore, the role of textbook is a source in responding to the goals of teachers' and learners' needs rather than the goals of teaching and learning elements (Litz, 2005 ; Razmjoo and Raissi, 2010). Cunningsworth (1995) mentioned that the connection between textbooks and teachers would be efficient for language classrooms when their objectives could respond to the teachers' goals and answer the learners' needs. Besides, "Teachers are the mediators between published materials and learners, and choose to work with intentions or challenge them." (Mcgrath, 2002 as cited in Huang, 2011). It is evident from the scholars' opinions that teachers were important factors which affected the material evaluation process.

Since 1970's, The ELT material research areas have matured seeing that many empirical studies from overseas have been conducted regarding textbook evaluation which emphasized the factors related to teachers, Such as the selection and criteria of textbooks (Law, 1995 ; Fredrikson and Olsson, 2006 ; Johnson et al, 2008 ; Huang, 2011), the characteristics of textbook (Litz, 2005 ; Razmjoo and Raissi, 2010), including the attitude and belief of teachers (Allen, 2008 ; Kayapinar, 2009). Consequently, empirical studies overseas have been popular from past until present, and the research views have expanded.

On the other hand, many research papers on ELT textbook evaluation employed by teachers in the Thai contexts found that investigated performances were rather low in this field. The important reason was because most of the Thai research work contexts highlighted the main characteristics of textbooks such as grammar, vocabulary, and

cultural content rather than other factors. Moreover, research studies were not continually conducted when compared with the overseas study contexts. Recently, the research papers on textbook evaluation in the Thai contexts have focused on teachers' selection of textbooks such as Chathep (2006) and Prompan (2007), and teachers opinions (Arsairach, 2007). However, the study of ELT textbook evaluation has not been sufficient. Many textbooks designed by foreigners are not suitable for Thai learners, and many textbooks published by printing houses have not been studied thoroughly (Syananondh et al , 2005 ; Arsairach, 2007). Hence, the researcher would like to highlight the factors about teachers as a main case study in this empirical investigation because it is an important source to supplement the benefits of ELT material studies in Thailand in order to develop the EFL teachers' efficient instructions in the future.

Research Questions

The following questions based on the purposes are addressed in this study.

1. Which ELT principle are the textbooks based on?
2. Do the EFL teachers understand the ELT principle based on in their textbook and what level do they understand?
3. Is the EFL teachers' classroom application consistent with the ELT principle based on in their textbook and what level do they apply?

Purposes of the study

The study aims to investigate the consistency between the content of ELT textbooks and ELT principles, and the perceptions and classroom applications of EFL teachers who employed the ELT textbooks.

Scope of the study

This study is aimed at investigating the teachers' perceptions and classroom application concerning ELT principles which ELT textbooks are based on. The ELT textbooks focused in this study are My World 1, My World 2, and My World 3 series.

Research Methodology

This section presents the participants and materials selected for this study including the instruments used for data collection as well as data analysis and procedures.

Population and Subjects

The population was 66 English teachers from 15 secondary schools in four districts which are under Mahasarakham Educational Service Area 1 : Muang, Kantarawichai, Borabue, and Kae dam. The subjects in this study were 39 English teachers who employed the three textbook series, My World 1, My World 2, and My World 3 from the seven secondary schools which are under Maha sarakham Educational Service Area 1 in the academic year 2010.

Materials

This study evaluated the three ELT textbooks series, My World 1, My World 2, and My World 3, which are introduced to grade 7-8 students at the secondary schools in Mahasarakham Educational Service Area 1 in the academic year 2010

Research Instruments

The instruments in this study are divided into three as follows:

1. The ELT checklist is used to check the consistency concerning the ELT textbooks' contents



and ELT principles. It is to find out what ELT principle the textbooks are based on. The ELT checklist was constructed using the contents of the literature review of the types of the ELT principles to adapt and synthesize ELT principles concerning principles and characteristics for designing new question items in checklist. Therefore, the ELT checklist is a primary source to find out the ELT principles on which the textbooks are based before constructing the teachers' questionnaire which is based on the answers from the ELT checklist.

2. The teachers' questionnaire is the second instrument after acquiring the key answers from the ELT checklist analysis. This instrument comprises 87 items developed to highlight the teachers' perceptions and their classroom applications of the ELT principle on which the ELT textbooks are based. The contents of the questionnaire are based on five major components: objective, language measurement, activity design, and language contents activities which consist of four skills, grammar and vocabulary, including the perception of ELT textbooks' language principle.

3. The semi-structured interviews were done face to face after the participants completed the questionnaires with 14 English teachers who were randomly selected by the school size criteria. The contents of interviews were based on the questionnaires, including some important points which did not come up in the items.

Data Collection

The data were gathered during the second semester of the 2010 academic year (the third week of December, 2010- the second week of March, 2011) through the following steps:

1. The researchers constructed the teacher's questionnaire based on ELT principle after acquiring the main answer from the ELT checklist analysis. Before using the questionnaire, it was piloted with a group of 18 English teachers who employed My World 1-3 textbook series from three secondary schools in Kalasin and Roi et provinces in order to check validity and reliability of each items through Cronbach's alpha Coefficients.

2. In the actual data collection step, the subjects answered the teacher's questionnaire which is revised from the pilot study. They were given one hour to complete the questionnaire.

3. Lastly, the researchers gathered the qualitative data through the oral semi-structured interview with 14 subjects who were randomly selected by purposive sampling method. Each subject was a representative of each school size. They were given fifteen minutes for informing the interview data after finishing taking the questionnaire.

Data Analysis

This study has both quantitative and qualitative data analyzed from the ELT checklist, the teachers' questionnaire and interviews. The quantitative data, frequencies, means, percentage, and standard deviation (S.D) are calculated for items in both the ELT checklist and teachers' questionnaire. The qualitative data, collected through interviews, were transcribed and analyzed in Thai language version. The research procedure is shown in figure 1.

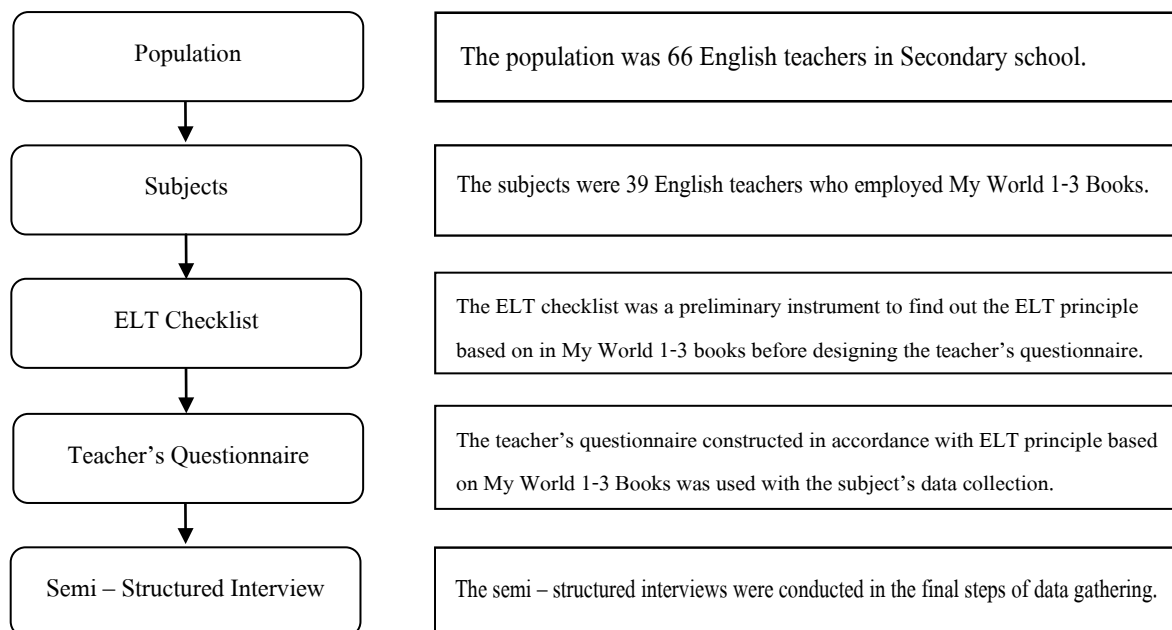


Figure 1 Research procedure

Results of the study

This section presents the results of the analysis of the three instruments: The ELT checklist, the teachers' questionnaire, and the interviews:

1. The result from the ELT checklist The items regarding this part aim to find the answer to the research question: Which ELT principle are the textbooks based on?

Table 1 : The frequency and percentage of the consistency concerning My World 1-3 series textbooks' contents and the ELT principles.

ELT Principles	My World 1		My World 2		My World 3	
	Score	Percentage	Score	Percentage	Score	Percentage
1. Grammar Translation						
Method	0	0	0	0	0	0
2. Direct Method	0	0	0	0	0	0
3. Audio Lingual Method	0	0	0	0	0	0
4. Total Physical Response						
Method	0	0	0	0	0	0
5. Silent Way Method	0	0	0	0	0	0
6. Suggestopedia Method	0	0	0	0	0	0
7. Community Language						
Learning Method	0	0	0	0	0	0
8. Content- Based						
Instruction Method	63	52.85	73	60.83	67	55.83
9. Task- Based Learning						
Method	0	0	7	4.16	11	6.54



According to Table 1, the findings indicated that My World 1-3 Textbook Series mostly conform to the content-based instruction (CBI). The textbooks were evaluated by the frequency of the contents and activities in three textbook series. The outcome indicated the following: the highest concordance with CBI is My World Book 2 (73 scores or 60.83%),

then My World Book 3 (67 scores or 55.8 %), and My World Book 1 (63 scores or 52%) respectively.

2. The result from the teachers' questionnaire The items regarding this part aim to find the answer to the second research question: Do the EFL teachers understand the ELT principle based on in their textbook and what level do they understand?

Table 2 : The EFL teachers' perceptions of content - based instruction which is based on My World 1-3 book series.

Content- Based Instruction (CBI)	Teachers' perception of My World 1		Teachers' perception of My World 2		Teachers' perception of My World 3	
	\bar{X}	S.D.	\bar{X}	S.D.	\bar{X}	S.D.
1. Definition of CBI	3.89	0.60	4.21	0.80	3.88	0.61
2. Objective of CBI	4.22	0.66	4.36	0.63	4.00	0.51
3. Theoretical Framework of CBI	4.00	0.70	4.21	0.57	4.00	0.63
4. Characteristic of CBI	4.56	0.52	4.57	0.51	4.37	0.69
5. Types of CBI Model	3.89	0.78	4.21	0.69	3.94	0.44
6. Activities based on CBI	4.33	0.50	4.43	0.51	4.19	0.54
7. Material design based on CBI	4.22	0.44	4.29	0.46	4.06	0.92
8. Lesson planning of CBI	4.33	0.50	4.43	0.51	4.25	0.77
9. Adaptation of CBI	4.33	0.70	4.57	0.51	4.31	0.60
Total	4.19	0.28	4.36	0.33	4.11	0.25

According to Table 2, the results showed that the levels of perceptions in all aspects among the teachers who employed My World 1-3 regarding CBI in the three textbooks were high. The teachers who employed My World 2 had the highest score in perceptions with the mean value of 4.36 while the teachers who employed My World 1 had the mean value of 4.19, and the teachers who employed My World 3 had the mean value of 4.11.

3. The result from the teachers' questionnaire The items regarding this part aim to find the answer to the last research question: Is the EFL teachers' classroom application consistent with the ELT principle based on in their textbook and what level do they apply?

Table 3 : The EFL teachers' classroom applications of content - based instruction which is based on My World 1-3 book series.

Classroom Application	eachers' applications in My World 1		eachers' applications in My World 2		eachers' applications in My World 3	
	\bar{X}	S.D.	\bar{X}	S.D.	\bar{X}	S.D.
1. Aims of Classroom						
Instruction	3.84	0.60	4.17	0.36	4.01	0.28
2. Language Classroom						
Measurement	3.96	0.19	4.03	0.19	3.96	0.33
3. Lesson Designing	4.33	0.40	4.33	0.38	4.07	0.41
4. Language Classroom'	3.97	0.28	4.15	0.32	3.91	0.28
Activities						
Total	4.03	0.16	4.17	0.16	3.99	0.19

According to Table 3, the results showed that the levels of classroom applications in all aspects among the teachers who employed My World 1-3 regarding CBI in the three textbooks were high. The teachers who employed My World 2 had the highest level of applications with the mean value of 4.17 while the teachers who employed My World 1 had the mean value of 4.03, and the teachers who employed My World 3 had the mean value of 3.99.

4. The results from the interviews

In the interviews with the teachers who employed My World 1-3 Book series, it was found that they were familiar with CBI principle because they used to learn and receive training from the ELT workshop, and also because the CBI principle was applied concerning the contents in their classroom instructions. In addition, they used My World 1-3 Book Series as the supplementary source rather than a major source in lesson planning.

Discussion

This study attempts to find out the EFL teachers' perceptions and classroom applications of the ELT principle based on My World 1-3 Book Series. Three interesting findings are worth noting:

1. In the case of the ELT principle, based on My World 1-3 series, the result from the ELT checklist shows that the highest total score conforms to content - based instruction (CBI) which emphasizes Theme - Based Model. This type is widely used in both ESL and EFL textbooks (Scarcella and Oxford, 1992 ; Syananondh, 2008), and it is extensively used as model of CBI at all educational levels (Duenas, 2004). All aspects of the books such as the layout, and the activities conform to CBI which emphasizes Theme -Based model as discussed in details below:

First, the textbook contents focus on subject matters rather than language forms, functions, or situations. Second, the textbook units emphasize integral skills rather than isolated skills. Third, the



textbook contents consist of authentic materials such as newspaper, magazine, and story books. Fourth, the unit contents are relevant to students' daily lives. Fifth, the unit organization can be divided into any subtitles which are categorized from the main theme. Sixth, the tasks focus on awareness - raising and draw attention to particular language features. Last, the CBI activities can be integrated with various activities such as project work, cooperative learning task, scaffolding task, etc. (Grabe and Stoller, 1997 ; Davies, 2003 ; Duenas, 2004 ; Juez, 2006).

2. The analysis of teachers' perceptions and classroom applications of the CBI principle, which emphasizes Theme - Based Model, shows that their total scores are high while the interview data outcomes show both strong and weak points about teachers' opinions. On the positive side, most of the teachers use CBI to design and select the topics which are interesting and appropriate for learners' needs based on age, language proficiency, and background knowledge. The result go along the same line with some previous studies on teachers' selecting and designing the topics which are in students' interest and stimulating English courses based on CBI principle (Ayari, 2008 ; Brenes, 2010).

In addition, most of them adapt CBI to integrate with the other language teaching methods. Grabe and Stoller (1997) stated that CBI can support the integration of various language teaching methods. Importantly, all teachers' opinions conform to the previous research studies on language teaching methods which stated that there were no best methods for all situations (Prabhu, 1990). However, the interviews indicate that some drawbacks from teachers' opinions are present. With CBI, teachers face many problems directly in designing lesson

activities and choosing the appropriate contents for their learners because it demands a lot of time to prepare their instructional lessons. In the same vein, with the findings from prior studies on CBI action research, this negative point is consistent with the fact that Thai teachers not only had problems in preparing the activities and materials before teaching, but they also had trouble planning activities and choosing topics that could integrate the practice of the four skills (Kwangsawad, 2007).

3. Although this study focuses on investigating the teachers who employed My world 1-3 Book Series, the interviews with them indicate that most of the teachers employed three book series as a supplementary source in designing and planning lessons rather than as a core source of lesson designing and planning. The outcomes seem consistent with the findings of previous Thai case studies on textbook evaluation that Thai teachers employed textbooks as the secondary materials in order to supplement in language learning and activity planning (Chathep, 2006 ; Prompan, 2007). Thai teachers do not follow all aspects of the contents contained in the textbooks, but choose specific contents or activities which are appropriate for learners and leave out some others. Besides, they also add new contents from other materials such as the Internet, newspaper, magazine and their academic research. Importantly, all of the teachers agree on the fact that only one textbook cannot respond to various learners' needs. Similarly, Richards (1993) as well as McDonough and Shaw (2003) stated that it is impossible for any single textbook to complete and answer the teachers' or learners' needs in all situations. From these perspectives related to a number of previous studies on textbook evaluation, teachers should have the

alternatives of applying materials such as supplementing, deleting, and adapting to be appropriate for users' textbook needs and teaching situations (Cunningsworth, 1995 ; Lamie, 1999 ; Richards, 2001 ; Ansary and Babaii, 2002 ; McDonough and Shaw, 2003).

Conclusion and Suggestion

To sum up, the result of this study reveals that the perceptions and classroom applications of the teachers who employed My World 1-3 Book Series, which are based on CBI principle, are at the suitable levels. From the findings of the investigation, the researchers hope that it is a significant key for both ESL and EFL teachers who employ ELT textbooks to be conscious of value and usefulness when evaluating materials. It may be the significant alternatives for the ELT material writers to design the course books to be suitable for instructors' and learners' needs as much as possible. Furthermore, educators and administrators need to understand the problem statements which are related to teachers, learners, materials, and curriculums because they can provide proper ways for problem solving through curriculum development, teachers' training, ELT material designing, and classroom - based research workshops in the future.

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