CHAPTER-TWO

A Critical Analysis of the Syllabus and English Language Textbooks in Iraq
2.1. SYLLABUS

2.2 The Concept of Syllabus:

A syllabus is a statement of the subject matter, topics or areas to be covered by the course leading to evaluation and testing. In the Oxford Dictionary syllabus is defined as a list of subjects, etc., that are included in a course of study. Jack C. Richards, John Platt and Heidi Platt (1992:368) define the syllabus as “a description of the contents of a course of instruction and the order in which they are to be taught.” Another definition of syllabus is that it is the summary of the course and usually contains specific information about the course.

Collins Essential English Dictionary defines syllabus as an outline or summary of the main points of a text or a course study. Brumfit in (1984a) discerns similarities among syllabuses and their components and he lists these as following:

1. A syllabus is the specification of work of a particular group or class.
2. It specifies the time in which this work has to be achieved.
3. It specifies the order in which the material has to be taught.
4. It is negotiable and adjustable.
5. It can only specify what is taught; It cannot organize what is learnt.
6. It is a public document and an expression of accountability.

Syllabus refers to that sub-part of curriculum which is concerned with a specification of the units which will be taught. The syllabus is the typical plan of what is to be achieved through teaching. Syllabus usually specifies what the teacher has to teach. A great deal of work in class, however, must be concerned not with teaching, but learning. One of the teacher’s biggest difficulties is that the learner’s speed of learning is different from the teacher’s speed of teaching.

2.3 Features of Syllabus

A syllabus is a document, and a public statement of an educational institution. It has its features, qualities and basic organizing principles in order to make the contents of a course of instruction and to make the order in which they are to be taught. A good syllabus has the following features and qualities:

1. Efficiency or the ability to work well.

   In order to ensure effectiveness of the syllabus should focus on:

   a) Pedagogy:- It refers to economy in the management of a students’ learning process.

   b) Pragmatism:- It refers to the economy of time and money.
2. Explicitness:- A syllabus should be explicit and clear for both the teacher and learner.

It should be very clear for the teacher and as long as the learner has some idea of the contents, it would suffice.

2.4 Types of Syllabus:

1. The structural syllabus:- This is also called grammatical or linguistic syllabus because it is based on a selection of grammatical items and structures (e.g. tenses, adverbial forms, singular and plural, grammatical rules, sentences patterns, etc), which exist in a language and arrange them in order to make them suitable for teaching.

2. Functional/Notional Syllabus:- This syllabus in which the language content is arranged in terms of function with the language items needed for them for example, the function might be: describing, inviting, etc. This syllabus tries to give learners opportunities to use English as a tool of communication in different settings.

3. The situational syllabus:- This syllabus is based on various situations in which it is used (e.g. at home, at airport, at the bank, etc.)

4. The lexical syllabus:- In this kind of syllabus there is a lexical strand to it. This will probably be topic based to be covered in the course and will then list the most important words associated with these topics. As
Dave Willis and Jane Willis state (2007:192): “Most syllabuses cover topic lexis.” In this kind of syllabus learners are given the commonest words with their meanings and their commonest pattern in which they are used. So in this kind of syllabus learners can use language for communication.

A syllabus should be flexible, negotiable and adjustable. It should be adjusted according to the time factor and interests of the learners.

2.5 PRINCIPLES OF SYLLABUS DESIGN

2.5.1. Basic Organizing Principles

Some organizing principles are derived from curriculum, and others from the philosophy of education because syllabus is a public document and a statement about teaching methodologies. M.L. Tickoo (2009:233) writes “A curriculum is a public statement which explains and justifies what a school (and college or university) does”.

Following is a set of options related to organizing principles:

1. The principles of organization of a syllabus should be linked to the view how the language is learned. As Mrinal K. Ghosh (2009:46) argues: “Students’ motivation for learning a language increases when
they see connections between what they do in the classroom and what they hope to do with the language in the future”.

2. The principles of organization of a syllabus should take into account the view how language is acquired. Mrinal K. Ghosh states (2009:44): “Learning a language means becoming able to use it to comprehend, communicate, and think – as they do in their first language”.

3. The principles of organization of a syllabus should be with reference to how the language is to be taught. Structure is a very important component of language. Therefore it should be at the core of the syllabus, so that one can build on it.

2.6. **Background of syllabus**

In order to achieve the aims of the syllabus we have to take into account the following:

1. **Needs Analysis**

Before designing a syllabus, one should carry out a needs analysis, which can contribute to determining what topics might be of interest. The syllabus designer should look into the needs of learners.
2. Learners’ profile:

There are certain characteristics and variables that influence planning decisions and the specification of goals. We should consider the following:

**Age:** This will particularly affect topics chosen and types of learning activity, such as the suitability of games or role play.

**Interest:** This may help in the specification of topics also and learning activities.

3. **Level of proficiency in English:**

It is very important to ascertain the learners’ proficiency level.

4. **Mother tongue:**

This may affect, for instance, the treatment of errors or the selection of syllabus items.

5. **Academic and educational level:**

These help determine intellectual content, breadth of topic choice, or the depth at which the material may be studied.
Syllabus Development

In response to the changing needs of English Language Teaching (ELT) in Iraq and to catch up with new developments in ELT theories and practice worldwide, secondary English syllabuses have to be updated regularly. The major goals of secondary ELT are the development of individuality and specialty. There are a number of extra-linguistic goals of ELT. The most important goal is to improve the quality of education and cultivate creativity as well as competence in students through the implementation of these goals. The goals of secondary ELT are also helping students gain essential knowledge of English through teaching them the four language skills (Listening, speaking, writing and reading) and fostering their interest in English. The researcher has attempted a critical evaluation of the present English syllabus for secondary schools in Iraq. The researcher seeks to analyze the factors which are internal to the present syllabus and those outside it that contribute to the unsatisfactory state of English teaching. Having identified the shortcomings of the present syllabus, an attempt has been made to suggest an alternative framework which would integrate the theoretical insights gained from the currently held models of syllabus design. The syllabus must meet the needs of the students and maintain their interest in the class. The syllabus should be made interesting, and student-oriented. It
should allow for interaction and provide opportunities for practicing skills relevant to real life needs. Syllabus involves choice and its selection based on certain principles.

2.7. Syllabus and Lesson Planning:

Planning is an innovative way of preparing a relevant syllabus that should be determined according to what students need to learn. M.L. Tickoo (2009:218) states: “A lesson plan helps organize a lesson. The more one does it, the better it becomes and the less effort it demands”. M.S. Sachdeva (2011:383) writes: “Planning means thinking about something beforehand. Here the planner tries to see to all the details and makes himself/herself ready for it in every way”. Syllabus should be designed with the student in mind. To plan a programme of learning innovatively, one has to focus on the role of student in the learning process as an active person while throwing light on the part of the teacher as a helper and a facilitator and not just a person with the authority of deciding everything. Educators and syllabus designers know that wants are clues or rather the best keys for realizing the needs, so the disciplines or knowledge society, and the individual are the only dependable sources for knowing students’ needs better. Students’ needs are academic, social and individual. As far as lesson planning is concerned, Mrinal K. Ghosh (2009:39) states: “A key aspect of effective teaching is having a plan
for what will happen in the classroom each day”. It is necessary for the teacher at the beginning of the school year to draw up a general plan in which the units of Book VII, including —the chapters of the Literary Reader, are distributed among the weeks or months of the school year, taking into consideration the fact the each unit is designed to be covered in two weeks. The yearly plan is a necessity, not just an official formality. The teacher should constantly refer to it in order to check how much progress has been made in covering the syllabus ahead of what has been planned. He can slow down by going over the forthcoming units more slowly and more thoroughly or by supplementing the exercises by some of his own. If the teacher discovers that he is behind what he has planned, he can move faster by touching lightly on topics that are familiar to his pupils.

In addition to the general plan the teacher needs a detailed plan in which he specifies the exercise he is going to teach everyday. This can be drawn for a whole unit or for two units in advance. This operational plan should be very brief. There is no need to write long essays that have little value. All that is needed is the specification of the numbers of exercises to be covered in every lesson.

In drawing the detailed operational plan, the teacher should make sure that a variety of activities are included in one lesson. The material of Book VII is
not intended to be covered in the sequence in which it appears in the book, do types of activities in one single lesson as possible. A whole lesson on oral practice or on pronunciation is boring. Instead, the teacher may plan to teach a dialogue, one or two pronunciation exercises, one oral exercise, some reading, some listening comprehension and some written work.

2.8 English Syllabus for Specific Purposes (ESP)

It is necessary to define what is meant by the term English for specific purposes (ESP).

ESP courses are those where the syllabus and materials are determined in all essentials by the prior analysis of communication needs of the learner, rather than by non-learner-centred criteria such as the teacher’s or institution’s predetermined preference for General English or for treating English as a part of a general education.¹

Clearly learners’ needs will vary from one group to another. Learners may want English for highly specific purposes. The priority in this kind of course (syllabus) is to enable learners to undergo using English in a closely defined area of study. This dictates not only the kind of vocabulary to be taught, but also the kind of activities that can be brought into the classroom. The learners
have to work on activities which involve note-taking and classroom discussion.

There are topics and activities which focus directly on vocabulary. The learners would need it for studying and the kind of language activities. They would need to engage in. So a well-designed specialist course will focus on a limited range of lexical topics and language activities. These topics and activities will be determined by needs analysis, which involves a close study of the target-language-using situations. It involves careful observation, recording and analysis of language in use. But it pays off in the classroom by ensuring that learners’ time is well spent because they focus on topics and activities that are important for them.

2.9 English Syllabus for General Purposes

English for general purposes aims to teach learners general language proficiency because learners often want English for everyday purposes, in order to interact with other users of English in a range of settings – as friends, tourists, providers of goods and services, and so on. Many learners’ classes contain students with a variety of different needs. If we are to define a syllabus for such general learners we need to list what it is that learners want to do with their English, the situation in which they will want to operate and the topic they will want to cover. They need course material in the field of
general English. This course material needs to be interesting to the learners by incorporating variety in material, integrating the tasks and activities in the form of an illustrated course-book.

2.10. Syllabus Design

Syllabus design is one of the most important elements of the teaching process. It is a key document in pedagogical planning that refers to objectives of a course. It generally refers to procedures for deciding what will be taught in language programme, and it includes how a syllabus will be carried out.

For example:

a) What teaching method and materials will be needed to achieve the objectives?
b) How much time will be required?
c) How will the classroom activities be sequenced and organized?
d) What type of placement test, achievement test and other types of tests will be used?
e) How will the programme be evaluated.²

2.11. The Process of Syllabus Design

The syllabus design begins from the assessment of learners’ needs. After we have determined needs and topics, we can begin to specify target tasks. When we have a series of tasks and associated text we need to organize these into a
syllabus. To move from text syllabus to a language syllabus we need to analyze the text we have collected, the pedagogy, and the effectiveness of activities in classroom. We need to record materials where necessary grammar, frequent words and phrases, phonology are worth highlighting.
A Summary of the Syllabus Design Process (Diagram -1)

Diagram -1

- Identify learners’ needs. What do they want to do with the language?

- Select appropriate topics. What do learners want to read/write/talk about?

- Design task sequences. Select or create appropriate texts

**Task syllabus**

Check tasks and texts for level of difficulty. Make adjustments according to parameters of task design and order task sequences to produce a task syllabus.

**Language syllabus**

Analyze texts (pedagogic corpus) for relevant language coverage (grammar; vocabulary; phrases; phonology; functional realizations). Design activities to focus on form

Monitor the effectiveness of activities in the classroom and refine and re-order materials where necessary

*Figure.1 Syllabus design procedures*
2.12. ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEXTBOOKS IN IRAQ

English is undoubtedly an international language used for communication in the global village, enabling the foreign learners and native speakers to share their interests and ideas. It is the lingua franca for millions of people all over the world. The other reason for English gaining so much prominence is that it is an instrument for acquiring cultural and scientific knowledge, gaining access to technology. In the light of this fact, English language is taught in Iraq as a foreign language. Although it is not used as a regular means of communication and it is not spoken in the country outside classroom but it may be spoken by visitors and as lingua franca among foreigners. Generally in Iraqi society, there is a demand for English among the students, their parents, members of the educational field, higher education and professional colleges and they use English exclusively as the medium of instruction. Therefore there is a need for learning it to meet the Iraqi society’s needs, especially for international interaction and benefits. The teaching of English has received careful attention from the Iraqi ministry of education to cater for the present and future teaching and learning needs of students. Tremendous efforts have been made to ensure the teaching of English a success and provide both the pupils and teachers with English language skills and equip them with the modern ways of learning English. Inspite of these efforts, the teaching of English has not succeeded in achieving the desired goals.
2.13. Definition of a Textbook

1. American Textbook Publishers Institute: A true textbook is one especially prepared for the use of the pupils and teacher in a school or a class, presenting a course of study in a single subject, or closely related subject.

Webster’s Dictionary: A Manual of instruction, a book containing a presentation of the principles of the subject used as a basis of instruction.

2. Bacon: A book designed for classroom use, carefully prepared by experts in the field and equipped with the usual teaching devices.

3. Encyclopedia of Educational Research: In the modern sense and as commonly understood, the textbook is a learning instrument usually employed in schools and colleges to support a program of instruction. In ordinary usage, the textbook is printed, it is non-consumable, it is hardbound, it serves an avowed instructional purpose, and it is placed in the hands of the learner.³

Textbook is an important source of information and knowledge available to the teacher as well as the learner. Therefore this instructional material should be designed according to the needs of learner, and teaching of language is to
be structured and graded by experts. Some textbooks fail to tackle real issues and focus on controversial topics. By doing so they cease to be acceptable as they do not reflect students’ needs and interests, hence they require modification.

2.14. SOME STANDARDS FOR THE DESIGN OF TEXTBOOKS

Language teachers rely excessively on materials for teaching. It is certainly a difficult task to find suitable materials to teach a second or foreign language. The notion that any material can be used to teach a language is baseless. It is rather unreasonable to consider books written in for teaching that language unless they are written for that purpose.

Textbooks have to be planned in advance. They should be seen as a resource that has to be exploited wisely and effectively. They are to fulfill certain requirements to achieve the goals set. However, even the best textbooks will not prove successful unless they are taught properly. Adopting modern and up-to-date methods to teach L2 is essential.

A professional teacher of language should be acquainted with the modern techniques of teaching a language. They must be well-trained to teach a language, especially teaching a second (L2) or a foreign language (FL).
Fouad S. Jijji (1980:2-3) writes: The textbooks writers should take into consideration various factors in order to produce suitable materials. They should ask themselves certain questions such as:

(1) Who are they planning the materials for?

(2) When are materials going to be used?

(3) Where will materials be used?

(4) Why are they writing the textbooks?

(5) What objectives are they trying to achieve?

(6) How are textbooks going to be used.

Materials as well as all learning experiences should be designed on the basis of clearly stated objectives that are educationally sound and are logical and practical.

Objectives should be clearly-stated. They are expressed in terms of student behavior and they are educationally sound. Teaching materials are supposed to meet the objectives set by the authority and to serve the students’ needs.

It is necessary that materials should suit the learner, i.e., his age, his needs, his abilities, his previous education and experiences as well as his
interests. As far as the textbook writers are concerned, the materials are to meet the aims and objectives that are stated by the authority which is usually the Ministry of Education.\textsuperscript{5}

The curriculum should be based on contrastive analysis, tried, experimented, revised and then followed by error analysis. The difficulties can be anticipated if the materials are based on contrastive analysis.

Materials should, be graded according to the students (i.e. age, previous experience, etc.), as well as to other factors.

The materials must be realistic and at the right level for the student, so that the transition to a new language is logical and appropriate for the students. There will be some connection between what they have just leant and what they are learning now. The textbooks have to be clear, easy to follow and to have clearly stated objectives that both students and the teacher can understand.

Textbooks have to be tailor-made rather than readymade. They should cater to the needs and the tastes of those for whom they are prepared. Must be
well graded. Facts and knowledge in textbook must
be clearly, simply and logically set out.\textsuperscript{6}

It is advisable to present systematic and regular materials first then the
irregular and difficult topics should follow. Simple language should be used
before more complex language; it is preferable to delay the forms that cause
difficulties.

The textbooks should also contain materials that deal with factual and
substantial subjects rather than legends and myths. The textbooks should
contain a sufficient number of exercises that cover vocabulary and new
patterns in each unit.

The language learner is expected to respond positively to his exposure to
language. For language learning to be entirely effective, the learner must be
provided with good opportunities to discover the benefit of learning L2. He
must realize the need to study that language. The textbook that succeeds in
motivating the students to learn, helps them as well as the teacher to achieve
the target.

Motivation of learners is one of the most important factors in teaching.
Without motivation there can be no learning. The learners who are motivated
by the language can be very productive. They will feel the need to
communicate and will recognize the function of the language and that will provide a very powerful motivation for learning the target language.

Motivation is a process by which the pupils’ will to work is maintained, particularly in tedious occupations or in the face of difficulties, until success is achieved. It is for this reason, that effective motivation is the first and foremost single principle of learning.7

It is a frequently stated fact that motivation has an effective role in teaching any subject. It is a process by which the pupils’ will to work does not wither despite facing difficulties, until success is achieved.

2.15. SYLLABUS IN IRAQ

Any course or programme of study has its own syllabus that specifies the work in terms of the objectives, for a particular group or class. It also specifies the time and the order in which the materials have to be taught.

The textbook [the new English course for Iraq (NECI)] has been strongly criticized in a number of recent researches.
2.16. The new English Course for Iraq (NECI)

This textbook is part of the NECI series.

The NECI was first introduced in 1973 and the co-author, the late Badeel Hamo, who had been a teacher of English and later a supervisor, was the main member in writing Books One and Two for the primary school. The Committee, headed by Dr. AL-Hamash worked hard and experimented with their work to produce a new book for the new class each year. All the primary and intermediate classes were successfully covered and the secondary level was supposed to be covered by 1981.8

So Iraqi critical textbook (VII) for 5th grade was produced in 1980. Furthermore this series was replaced by the series “Iraq Opportunities” by Michael Harris, David Mower and Anna Sikorzy Ska; for both levels [primary and intermediate (class 9)] while in Kurdistan region it was replaced by the series “Sunrise” by Nick Beare, from class first to class twelfth(10+2). The syllabus under study is that which is used for specifying the materials for the class Fifth secondary (10+1) at present in Iraq. In the attempt to examine
the materials Book 7 (NECI), the researcher has tried to evaluate them from different perspectives and ascertain whether they are suitable for the students or not and what are the strengths and weaknesses of these textbooks.

This chapter explores and identifies issues through a content analysis of Iraqi’s secondary school textbooks, all of which were produced before 1980. By examining the different units, subjects within the unit, and themes, the researcher has attempted to determine whether the current curriculum meets the needs and the interests of the students and whether it, encourages them to learn the values of modern society, and to recognize their personal stake in public problems (global and domestic). It is important to note that the eleventh (book VII) curricula are divided into two tracks: students book and a literary reader.

Before analyzing how the textbooks aim to cultivate good students, it is important to describe the structure of the textbooks. The new English course for Iraq (NECI) textbooks at the state schools (book VII) for 5th secondary grade are divided into fifteen units, which have remained more or less the same over the past thirty-two years.
2.17.1. The main features of textbook evaluation are:

1. External evaluation
2. Internal evaluation

It is important to know that book 7 of the (NECI) for Iraq used for class fifth secondary (10+1) was produced by the Ministry of Education, Iraq in 1980.

2.17.1. External evaluation

This criterion is not related to the language itself. It is related to these factors:

a. The student (learner)

The learners of class fifth secondary (10+1) are a heterogeneous class of different backgrounds, their age ranges from 17 to 19 years.

b. Proficiency level.

Students join this class after completing class fourth secondary (10) where book 6 was taught. Although they had studied the same materials but their proficiency is not the same. The materials are produced for general English language teaching purposes (ELT) and not for English specific purposes (ESP).

c. Learners’ aims: No specific aim is there except understanding English materials and developing general communication competence. Therefore
the aim is for development of the pupils’ communicative skills and understanding materials.

d. Presentation and organization of units and lessons.

The English language syllabus is divided into 15 units for the whole academic year. Each unit consists of three major divisions.

The first division involves the training the receptive skills (listening and reading). It contains twelve passages that are to be used for listening comprehension practice, and twelve passages for reading comprehension practice.

The second division involves language training and contains sections carrying the following titles:

1. Dialogue
2. Pronunciation
3. Oral practice
4. Written work

The third division is a literary reader. Charles Dickens’s *Oliver Twist* has been chosen for this purpose. It has been simplified and supplied with vocabulary notes as well as comprehension exercises.
Book VII contains all the material in the first and second divisions of the syllabus and includes the comprehension exercises of the third division, i.e. *Oliver Twist*, is published separately under the title: *Literary Reader*.

2.17.1. (a) The horizontal structure of the syllabus

Book VII consists of fifteen units. The *Literary Reader* is divided into thirteen chapters. Each unit of the language book is introduced together with a chapter of *Literary Reader*.

2.17.1. (b) The Vertical Structure of the Syllabus

Each unit of book VII comprises comprehension passages. These are: The school that travels, road safety, library, language, the Prophet of God before Hijrah, the Prophet of God after Hijrah, school and the computer, Ibn Sina, two injured by blast in caravan, newspaper and at the youth club.

It is followed by a list of new vocabulary items, their meaning and pronunciation, a dialogue pronunciation section, oral practice, written homework exercises, one chapter from the Literary Reader and one listening comprehension passage.

1. Reading Comprehension

The twelve reading comprehension passages vary in contents as well as style.
2. Pronunciation

Pronunciation exercises continue the training on the recognition and production of the segmental aspects of the English sound system.

3. Dialogue

The dialogue in each unit comprises a situation where different language elements are introduced in specific social setting. The dialogues respectively are: an interview, at the chemist’s, doing homework, booking a flight, Martin’s birthday, doing some shopping, a visit to Basrah, father is in hospital, handing in an essay, at a shoe shop, taking about Al-Ayyam, invitation and at the youth club.

4. Oral practice

Each oral practice section is composed of three sections: Structure notes, Situations and Drills. The structure notes offer a summary of grammatical point that is going to be introduced. The situations contextualize the use of the discussion and writing work. The Drill draws the pupils’ attention to certain aspects of grammatical points.

The grammatical points that are introduced and practised include:

a. Tenses, including all types of morphological changes and time statements.

b. Passive voice

c. Direct and Indirect statements.

d. Questions and commands.
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e. Notions, such as the notion of intention or possession.

5. Written work

This section comprises three types of activities. The first is a set of written exercises that aim to reinforce the grammatical points introduced in the oral practice section. The second is controlled composition work with the aim of helping the pupils to write correctly one or more paragraphs. The third activity includes pronunciation exercises in writing.

6. Listening Comprehension

The aim of the course is to enable pupils to communicate. Aural comprehension is an essential part of comprehension. The twelve listening comprehension passages offer a programme of purposeful listening.

2.18. LITERARY READER 2

_Literary Reader 2_ is a simplified version of Charles Dickens’s _Oliver Twist_. It has been divided into thirteen chapters.

Although the _Literary Reader_ is printed separately, it is incorporated into the general plan of work. For example, chapter two of _Oliver Twist_ is treated as part of Unit Two of Book VII, chapter three as part of Unit Three and so on.

The _Literary Reader_, however, is meant to be read and enjoyed by pupils at home, not in class.
2.19. Internal Evaluation

a. The materials are topic-based, but these topics were chosen haphazardly.

It is clear that it is an integrated syllabus. Not only is it topic-based syllabus, but it is also a Notional/Functional/ Situational syllabus in the sense that learners are required to ask appropriate questions, make comments, describe, give suggestions, and so on. Structure and vocabulary are presented and practised in context. For example in teaching tense (present, past, future) and vocabulary, learners are required to use these elements in different contexts and situations. Because the textbooks should contain a sufficient number of exercises that encompass vocabulary and new patterns in each unit.

For example in students’ book, Unit 12, reading comprehension (newspaper) the students have to give replies.

b. Gradation and Sequencing

Students and teachers need a graded textbook in terms of structure and vocabulary of functional English as the existing lessons in the new English course for Iraq’s textbook are not properly selected and graded. The materials are not graded and sequenced, although they are based, to some extent on basic language skills. Almost all the units have the same pattern of exercises such as choose or find from the reading passage words or phrases, answer the following questions, etc.
c. Authenticity of materials

Most of the materials are newspaper articles and magazine texts such as the topic ‘newspaper’ of unit 12 reading comprehension 11.1 (The following is an extract from a British daily newspaper: Two Injured by Blast in Caravan. The other topic was a sketch of the historical figure ‘Ibn Sina’, the instructional topic ‘Road Safety’; unit two and so on. So most of these are authentic, appropriate texts and they are valuable for different levels of learners, authentic texts are important and increase students’ motivation for learning, expose the learner to the real language (Jordan:113). Presentation of content, titles, pictures, etc. is designed for general English teaching (ELT) and specific nature. The existing exercises are based on the understanding of prescribed texts. There is no scope for teaching literature except Literary Reader books: book I Kipps by H.G. Wells, book II Oliver Twist by Charles Dickens, and book III Merchant of Venice by William Shakespeare.

d. Continuity

Continuity is maintained. It relates language study with its future use. At the structural level, different structures are discussed, for example, how to use superlative and comparative degrees, how to use simple past tense and when to use it in giving suggestions, expressing thoughts in an appropriate and
acceptable language. Most of the vocabulary is helpful in real life situations. For example, in unit 8 which is about computer, different items are used and learners may face the same situation while handling computer so they can use suitable vocabulary in that situation.

e. Usability factor

The syllabus covers most of the language items. These items could be widely used by the learners in their day-to-day communication.

f. Teachability

The materials should be easy to teach. Teachers are guided by the teacher’s book which includes how to teach every lesson, how to deal with the classroom situation and what should be done to tackle materials.

g. Learnability

Since the syllabus is attractive, interesting and of the learners’ level, it can be taught easily and learning will take place more easily.

The textbook seems to pay little attention to the culture of the second language in an attempt to show the Arab education and Iraqi civilization. The culture of second (L2) is an important element in teaching materials.

Cultural anthropology is useful to the language teacher in determining the cultural
content of what he teaches. He must decide how the cultural content is to be learned, the order of presentation, and what content beyond the scope of anthropology must be learned in a language course in order to contribute effectively toward the development of educated individuals in a society.9

Because students learning L2 will always interpret and imagine the situation of L2 through their L1, thus they will choose their meaning and then produce the forms that in their native language signal those meanings. Language cannot be properly understood without familiarity with the features of the native culture.

Learning of foreign culture is accepting and the role of culture in the materials is to create learner’s interest in the target language, therefore these should be a variety of culture in the materials, not a specific one.

The students’ attitude towards L2 for historical, social and other reasons can affect the teaching of the language. The situation may lead to positive or negative results.
2.20. Some other critical remarks on Book VII of New English Course for Iraq (NECI)

The present textbooks of the new English course for Iraq have not included one act plays. The printed matter in the present textbooks is of traditional type. Syllabus of the NECI does not allow teachers to be innovative during the teaching or learning process. Teachers also do not find enough time to present and share their experiences as well as provide feedback to the students. Students copy notes from the teachers’ dictation, learn them by rote and reproduce them in the examination. Students and teachers need a graded textbook in terms of structures and vocabulary of functional English as the existing lessons in the NECI are not properly selected and graded. The syllabus is not always in tune with the real needs of learners and the textbooks’ writers have not focused properly on the objective of the curriculum. The structures applied dialogues and the other drills seem to be prescribed and imposed on the students. For the choice of vocabulary, no research was carried out to find out essential words needed to be taught in each textbook. Overcrowded classes and excessive curriculum in the allotted time and the lack of audiovisual materials are also problems and the repetition of the same limited themes in all classes. English language teachers in Iraqi secondary schools do not often use modern instructional technologies and variety of teaching techniques in their English language
lessons. It was noticed that students in some areas learn under harsh environment and congested classes poor mastery over the English language and lack of requisite technical skills. Shortcomings were particularly observed in oral and written communication in some of the other secondary schools level of Iraq. The literature in the textbook is not properly graded. Students are unable to understand the literary language. It is clear that the textbooks have been prepared and designed in isolation, without consulting English language teachers.

2.21. Analyzing textbook VIII of Series NECI for the Class 6th Secondary Level (10+2) of the Iraqi Schools

The other textbook the researcher has tried to evaluate is Book VIII of the series NECI for class sixth secondary level (10+2) which is presently in use in Iraq. The attempt is to examine the materials from different aspects and ascertain whether they are suitable for the students or not and what are the advantages and disadvantages.

Book eight of the New English Course for Iraq has the following basic components:

a. The Pupil’s book, which contains the basic language materials

b. Literary Reader III, which is a simplification in the narrative form of William Shakespeare’s well-known play: The Merchant of Venice.
Book eight is very similar to Book Seven in the components it includes, the number of units (i.e., 15 units for each) and the types of language activities included in the programme. The policy for handling of the material adopted in Book Seven was also adopted for Book Eight.

In both books the literary reader is to be read by the pupils at home, objective exercises on it are given in the Pupil’s Book and open ended questions (as has been mentioned earlier) are included in the Teacher’s Guide.

Both Book Seven and Book Eight are accompanied by tapes on which much of the material is recoded.

However, the major differences between the two books are the following:

1. Book Eight has no listening comprehension sections.
2. Practice exercises are meant for use in oral practice as well as written homework.
3. Spelling exercises have been introduced in Book Eight.
4. The fifteen units of Book Eight fall into two categories:
   a. Units One to Twelve present new language materials.
   b. Unit Thirteen constitutes review and sets the pattern for the Ministerial Examination. The exercises in the last three units are meant to set
examples how the examination papers in the Ministerial examination baccalaureate will be.

2.21.1. The Pupil’s Book

An examination of the horizontal structure of the Pupil’s Book shows that it starts with a preface presenting the major features of the course. Then the fifteen units that follow are divided thus:

a. The first twelve units which present new materials and which should be taught under the supervision and guidance of the teacher.

b. The last three units which should be done at home by the pupils.

The vertical structure of the book shows that Units One to Twelve have more or less different activities from those found in Units Thirteen to Fifteen.

2.21.1 (a) The First Twelve Units of Book VIII

Each of these units has the following types of activities: a reading comprehension passage, a vocabulary list, comprehension questions, vocabulary study, a dialogue, followed by pronunciation notes in every odd-numbered unit, a spelling section in every even-numbered unit, a vocabulary list, practice exercises, exercise on Literary Reader III and composition work.
Each of these activities is briefly discussed below:

1. Reading Comprehension

Each of the twelve passages is about 2-3 pages in length. They all are centered around descriptive topics such as “Higher Education in Iraq”, historical themes such as “Ibn Rushd” etc. In the selection of these passages emphasis is placed on modern idiomatic English.

After each passage a list of vocabulary items is supplied. The order of the items is decided by their occurrence in the passage. The phonetic transcription and the Arabic equivalent of each item are supplied.

2. Comprehension Questions

Every passage in the Pupil’s Book is followed by two comprehension exercises. The first exercise usually takes one of the following three forms: matching beginnings with endings; supplying missing bits of information; correcting false statements. The second is a multiple-choice exercise. These exercises are designed to check reading comprehension and can be assigned as written homework after the whole passage has been covered.
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Vocabulary Study

The purpose of these exercises is to cover the use of some of the words used in the reading passage. The items used are usually two fill-in-the-blanks type drills.

3. Dialogues

The six dialogues are similar to those used in earlier books in that they deal with everyday situations and they use conversational forms.

4. Pronunciation/Spelling

There are pronunciation notes in every odd-numbered unit and a section on spelling in every even-numbered unit of Book Eight.

5. Practice Exercises

They are intended for both oral practice and written homework. They centre around notions not structures. For example, instead of having an exercise on the structure of a tense or a number of tenses, the starting point here is the notion of say “contrast” or “similarity” or classification. The structures and expressions relevant to these notions are presented. Thus, they manifest a systematic presentation of notions, not structures.
Some of the exercises in this section include explanations and discussions of the notions presented with the linguistic modes that express them.

6. Exercises on the Literary Reader

Usually one multiple-choice and one matching or completion exercise are presented in each unit. The literary reader is divided into sections that match the number of units adopted.

7. Composition

In each unit of Book Eight, there is one composition exercise based either on the reading passage or on Literary Reader III. Unit 3 and 9 have each an oral composition as well as the written one in each case: a clear outline of the paragraphs or subtopics is provided.

A. The Last Three Units

In each of the last three units, the following types of language material are presented.

1. Reading Comprehension passages are chosen from among those that introduce some vocabulary to pupils. The meaning of the new words presented can be guessed from the context. No vocabulary list follows the passage.
2. **The Comprehension Questions** are very similar to those used in the first twelve units.

3. **Vocabulary Study Exercises** are two or three types; matching works with their equivalent expressions, filling in the blanks and multiple-choice items.

4. **Pronunciation and Spelling**

The exercises in this section provide a general review of the material presented in the pronunciation and spelling sections in the first twelve units.

5. **Structures and Notions**

These includes grammar exercises on notions and vocabulary items. They are very similar in nature to the practice exercises in the first twelve units.

6. **Composition**

In this section two types of composition exercises are presented. The first is a general composition on *Literary Reader III* and the second is a general guided composition on the subjects touched upon in the reading passages of the first twelve units.
2.22. Literary Reader III

As has already been mentioned. *Literary, Reader III* is a simplification and restatement of William Shakespeare’s *The Merchant of Venice*. The horizontal structure of the book is as follows:

1. A list of characters arranged with the phonemic representation and a very short account of each.
2. A list of places (cities, countries, etc.) arranged according to the order of their occurrence in the story with the phonemic representation of each one of them.
3. A short preface outlining the prominent features of the book and how the sections of the Reader match the first twelve units of the Pupil’s Book.
5. The body of the Reader is arranged into twenty sections. The first sixteen sections are relatively short and they should be covered at the rate of two sections per unit of the Pupil’s Book. The last (i.e., 17 to 20) are relatively longer and should be covered at the rate of one section per unit of the Pupil’s Book. Each section of the books is followed by a vocabulary list in which all the new words used are listed in accordance with their occurrence in the text with the
phonemic notation and the Arabic equivalent or equivalents of each one of them.

6. The book ends with a general word list or all the vocabulary items used in the *Literary Reader* and the Pupil’s Book arranged alphabetically with the number of the unit in which the item appears for the first time and the phonemic notation presented. The words used in the *Literary Reader* only are marked LR.

### 2.23. Language Skills

In language teaching, the mode or manner in which language is used i.e. listening, speaking, reading and writing are called the four language skills Richards et al (1992:205).

In psychology, the term “skill” is a label for a specific category of behavior: “Particular more or less complex, activities which require a period of deliberate training and practice to be performed adequately and which often have some recognized useful function” (Downing and Leong, 1982:13).

According to Goodman and Burke (1976:97) “Language — both oral and written – is an active process. Oral language, during speaking and listening, is the phonological system that communicates meaning. Written language, in reading and writing, is the graphic system that represents language”.
They also state that “the four aspects of language (reading, writing, speaking, and listening) have the three language systems: grapho-phonic, syntactic, semantic in common”. When a speaker or writer is producing language, he is actively doing many things to make sure that his listener or reader will understand what he has produced. Goodman and Burke (1976:96) have a diagram illustrating the relationship of the receptive and productive language processes (Figure 1).
Al-Hamash and Younis (1980:16) state that language learning is the acquisition of a set of skills.

Two of the skills, i.e., listening and speaking are aural-oral, and two, i.e., writing and reading are written. Some skills are related to the recognition of vocal and graphic symbols, i.e., listening and reading, which are passive skills, and some are related to the production of symbols, i.e., speaking and writing, which are active skills.

These observations are summarized in the Table below (Table 1)

**Table (2)**

**Schematic Representation of the language Skills**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Recognition (Passive) Skills</th>
<th>Production (Active) Skills</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Aural-Oral Skills</strong></td>
<td>Understanding (Listening)</td>
<td>Speaking</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Graphic (Written) Skills</strong></td>
<td>Reading</td>
<td>Writing</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Equal attention should be paid to these skills to have a good command over language many people, including native speakers are good at speaking but not so competent in writing. Or they are good in writing but not so good in
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speaking. Yet there is a need to focus on these skills for effective communicative competence. Different aspects related to each skill, for example, speaking, listening and reading require good pronunciation. Good pronunciation is required to achieve intelligibility (i.e. the degree to which a message can be understood). Accent, word stress, syllable division, and intonation are related especially to listening and speaking skills. In writing we have punctuation marks such as full stop, comma, question mark etc.

2.23.1 Listening Skill

Listening is a very important skill. It is related both to speaking and writing. One should be a good listener. This can be achieved by having enough exposure to the target language spoken by native speakers in their normal speech at normal speed. Different exercises are given in almost each unit focusing on listening. Insufficient time is given for this skill especially if we compute the time devoted to these exercise. For example, people talking unit 2 in listening comprehension 2.7 this exercise exposes the learners to long stretches of both formal and informal types of spoken English. Some syllabus designers believe that the only way to improve aural comprehension is to spend sufficient time practising listening. Aural comprehension is defined as ‘listening with understanding’. It emphasizes language skills beyond basic auditory discrimination (practised in the Pronunciation
section). Learners are required to listen, to guess or obtain information but what about normal communication or when they are in real life situation where they are required to listen and respond instantly.

Certain phonemics may exist in L1 and L2 but with little difference in the points of articulation which does not cause any phonemic differences, e.g. the English /t/ is alveolar whereas the Iraqi /t/ is not pure alveolar. The tongue touches the inner side of the upper teeth as well.

Another fact is that in English there are 26 letters and 44 sounds. Some sounds exist in English but not in the learner’s mother tongue. For example the phoneme /p/ exists in English but not in Arabic. What should be done to overcome this problem? This will lead to a real problem in pronunciation and listening unless due attention is paid to solving this problem.

2.23.2. Speaking Skill

Another important skill is speaking. Spoken language is very important in oral communication. Speaking skill can be focused upon though accurate pronunciation. In the course content little focus is on pronunciation. Although learners are asked to speak through different types of exercises such as discuss, find out etc. without having a good command over pronunciation they cannot produce an intelligible sentence. Some exercises are there to focus on pronunciation but they are few and they only ask learners to listen then to
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decide which word is the correct one according to the cassette, but what about their pronunciation? Learners must be aware of accent, word stress, intonation and syllable division. Without these one cannot ascertain the attitude of the speaker. For example, a sentence can be a statement, a question, or a polite or an impolite request. These elements are important for effective communication. Otherwise gaps in communication would be there.

2.23.3. Reading Skill

Effective communication requires good reading and comprehension. In these materials, learners are required to read the text silently in each unit and find out the answers to the questions. In case of those who are not good at reading if they cannot read, what can be done to encourage them to read or improve their reading? Whether or not supplementary or remedial materials can be given and when? Sometimes some students are not able to read and even those whose reading is good, more practice is needed.

Vocabulary: Generally speaking, most of the vocabulary is acceptable, useful and in line with learners’ level and age. Vocabulary is easily understood with the help of teacher and other aids. However, learners should be asked to use these in their own sentences in order to master their meaning and appropriate use.
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2.23.4. Writing Skill

Writing well was once a central goal of education. Writing as a productive skill can be taught like other skills with some focus on it. It could be developed through practice as well.

Different types of activities for teaching this skill are there in these materials. Learners are required to write a well developed paragraph by giving a model or sometimes by asking them to fill the gaps in the given paragraph. In other words, paragraph guided type letters and of formal type also are discussed. Modern writing instruction recognizes that students need to write clearly and for a wide variety of real-life purposes.

Despite the need for flexibility in writing skill, classroom instruction sometimes overemphasizes certain forms of writing over others. The process writing approach involves a number of interwoven activities, including creating extended opportunities for writing; emphasizing writing for students; stressing personal responsibility, ownership of writing projects’ individual needs. Iraqi students need to be taught writing clearly through written work activities such as guided composition, gap filling, etc. It is unfortunate that some teachers do not pay any attention to some of these activities although they are there in the NECI series.
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References:


5. Ibid; P.3


