



Content Analysis Of The New Cutting Edge Intermediate: Its Suitability With The Plos & Clos Mapping For The School Of Business At A Private University In Dubai

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1: Abstract

Nothing in this world has been considered to be without flaws and so are the textbooks. Each textbook in use has different strengths as well as the area where it is disadvantaged considering the content and the teaching process applications. This article is intended to analyze what new features the New Cutting Edge Intermediate (NCEI) textbook presents. In addition to this, the article will focus on its strengths and weaknesses. The data used to get information concerning the contents, the design, the layout, activities and tasks, grammar and all the other skills in the book are all acquired using the Program Learning Outcomes (PLOs) and Course Learning Outcomes (CLOs) of this textbook and its appropriateness for the school of business students at a private university in Dubai. A content analysis approach was used to collect the data and contents of the book aligned with the Garinger Checklist used for evaluating textbooks (2002) (see appendix 1 & 2) together with an interview guide were implemented.

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2: Introduction

Several experimental and theoretical studies have been carried out to determine whether the use of textbooks is effective to teach languages (Allwright, 1981; Harmer, 2007; Hutchinson & Torres, 1994; O'Neil, 1982; Tice, 1991; Thornbury & Meddings, 2001). The studies conducted ended up sparking different outcomes becoming one of the most controversial topics in the contemporary world. The bone of contention lies where textbooks act as labor-saving tools, which are both useful and effective since they provide useful materials to use in class. Textbooks also sharpen the skills of students since they contain several tasks and exercises after every learning session. However, despite all these advantages, there is the issue of bad development for both the teachers and students since they limit them to what they can achieve and leave no room for creativity (Tice,

1991). Some scholars state that textbooks are not even factual and just act as a means of marketing some concepts not adding any educational value to the people using them (Brumfit, 1980). If it is proved to be true, then textbooks could be in fact a drawback since it hampers on the development of teachers as most of them rely on what is contained in the books.

Of the issues to be considered, the most important one should be the textbook selection. Since textbooks have a significant impact on the development of language and the teaching process, the selection of right books for this activity remains crucial due to relevance especially for the second language teachers denoted as (SL). It is quite possible that a whole curriculum or the method of teaching could be based on what book was selected at the beginning of the learning session (Harmer,

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2007; Garinger, 2002). This is because most may be tempted to rely on what is given in the textbooks (Cunningsworth, 1995; Harmer, 2007). With this in mind, we can thus carry the following study with an attempt to show how the New Cutting Edge Intermediate (NCEI) manages its layout, organization, content, the grammar and the skills taught. In addition to this, the article will examine the principles that underlie how the textbook is designed. More importantly, the PLOs and CLOs mapping and NCEI compatibility question will be answered since the article will be providing detailed information on the same.

2.1: Research Questions

The problems of the study have been translated into the following research questions.

- 1- What are the major features of the New Cutting Edge Intermediate (NCEI) English textbook and what makes it the best for the school of Business at the undergraduate University in Dubai?
- 2- What are the features that make the textbook weak?
- 3- Is the textbook compatible with the PLOs & CLOs mapping of the School of Business at a private university in Dubai?

2.2: Research Objectives

Based on the research questions above, the objectives of the study are to identify the strong features of the NCEI textbook, the weak features and finally to analyze whether the NCEI textbook is compatible with the PLOs & CLOs mapping of the School of Business at a private university in Dubai

3: Literature Review

Most teachers believe that by using textbooks, they save a lot of time and resources for the school, therefore; translating to not much being done without the assistance of textbooks. As compared to other resources such as DIY (Do It Yourself) or other materials developed by teachers are thought to be quite expensive and eat up a lot of the teacher's precious time. As Hutchinson and Torres (1994) have stated in their text, the textbook is considered to be a universal element when it comes to teaching the English language (Liz, 2005). There are millions of textbook copies being sold all over the world every year, and several regions are setting up aid projects to help produce them. As it seems,

textbooks seem to be a vital part of the school these days (p. 315). Another scholar Tomlinson believes that there are two groups to this issue; proponents and opponents (Tomlinson, 2001). The former, she states, believes that textbooks are educational materials that present the teachers with a better presentation media because they can offer consistency, continuation, cohesion and progression in a steady manner. On the other hand, the latter contends that textbooks are so insincere and reduce the reporting that teachers can cover and therefore not capable of satisfying the diverse needs of their users. Proponents find value in textbooks while opponents believe that they have shortcomings, especially in the coverage.

There are very many disagreements between who is and who is not right, but the one thing that is common is that textbooks are regarded as tools of great value when trying to teach and for those who are learning (Cunningsworth, 1995; Haycroft, 1998; O'Neil, 1982; Sheldon, 1988). There are several reasons why textbooks should be evaluated to find their value (Sheldon, 1988). One of the reasons is because choosing an English language teaching aid demonstrates educational and administrative decisions that require an immense number of professional, financial and political input. There are three levels of material evaluation in which this can be achieved. The first is through prognostic or through a pre-use assessment which is planned to evaluate the performance of the textbooks in the future. The second method uses the in-use evaluation which evaluates all current materials. Finally, there is the retrospective or post-use evaluation which is the evaluation of textbooks which have already been used in other institutions or similar situations. The study that this article accomplishes will use an in-use evaluation of the textbook and the results will be compared to an already established checklist.

3.1 The Purpose of Textbooks in Classrooms

The definition given to describe textbooks is that they are published books that are intended to assist all people learning languages so that they can improve their linguistic abilities and the manner in which they communicate (Sheldon, 1987). They do not only aid in learning, but they can also be used to guide the teacher and support the other materials they use to teach (O'Neil, 1982, & Ur, 1996). In



addition to the book, other things such as a workbook, the teacher's book and sometimes even multimodal texts they can use for referencing come with the textbook package (Masuhara & Tomlinson, 2008). These instruments are used to offer more cohesion for teaching and learning the language since it provides additional support and activities related to the language so that students can have more practice (Mares, 2003). Thus; making the learning process more efficient (Cunningsworth, 1995)

3.2 Why Evaluate Textbooks

Due to the increasing amount of textbooks in the market, making the right of choice continues to get more difficult (Cunningsworth, 1995, Green 1926). The choice of books can impact the outcomes of learning and teaching language in a large way (Cunningsworth, 1995; Harmer, 1991; McGrath, 2002). In an ELT course, the quality of the textbook chosen can thus determine whether the students will succeed or fail (Green 1926, Mukundan 2007). Even with this in mind, most people continue to make purchases without making a scrutiny (Green, 1926, McGrath 2002). Many mistakes the choice of textbook for the prestige value of the author or publisher rather than the intrinsic value contained in the book (Green 1926, McGrath 2002). Sometimes, buyers are even persuaded by skillful marketing techniques by the publishers (Green 1926, McGrath 2002). Having known these facts about this, most of the publishers then develop ELT textbooks for commercial purposes and they contain no language principles as suggested by academics and instructors (Tomlinson, 2003, 2008 & 2010). Textbook publishing has thus translated to basing textbooks on financial success (Sheldon 1988, Litz 2005, Tomlinson, 2003). They are now considered to be part of merchandise, and the ultimate objective here has now become commercial success (Dendrinom 1992:35)

There are two causes of failure when it comes to learning (Tomlinson, 2008). The first is as stated above, the need for commercial success which basis its publishing on public demand and the need for teachers to choose books that require minimum preparation (Dendrinom, 1992, Tomlinson 2008, & 2010). The second reason is that most textbook producers rely on intuition and not focusing on how the books can benefit the

users (Tomlinson, 2008:7). They tend to be more biased to perception rather than the actuality of the consumer needs (Tomlinson, 2003). As much as the professional authors may have given good quality in these books, they still lack the creative and imaginative qualities that textbooks require (Tomlinson, 2003). Other scholars have noted that the ELT materials in textbooks are socially and culturally biased; therefore, giving rise to a form of English that is gendered (Banegas, 2011, Litz, 2005: 6). All of these issues compound to the fact that there needs to be a serious ELT/EFL textbook evaluation so that teaching objectives can be achieved effectively. At the same time, learning systems can save time and economize in a way that teachers and students are not adversely affected. The wrong choice of textbooks will affect teaching and learning negatively. It will also be a total waste of financial resources since the books will eventually be a waste (Mukundan, 2007; Sheldon, 1988).

3.3: Past Research Conducted on Textbook Evaluation

To avoid problems when evaluating what textbook to choose, one has to do it in a systematic and efficient way (Mukundan, 2003). The point being made here is that universal criteria may not be able to work on some local learning environments without having some modifications done. The English Pre-University textbook for the Karnataka State in India was conducted by Nemati (2009) considering what its strengths and weaknesses were when it came to teaching specific vocabulary teaching. The results showed that the textbook contained the necessary and essential criteria which could be used to present the four main language skills in the English language. The textbook had appropriate content and the topics incorporated different customs and cultures of various countries including the English countries. It was well organized, and the grading criterion began from easy branching out to the more challenging ones. Further results showed that it taught how to write paragraphs and did not neglect speaking skills: dialogues and role plays and other communicative activities. Nemati (2009) conducted vocabulary analysis as well and found it better to have the texts with frequent vocabularies appear first while the ones with rare vocabularies come later in the textbook.



In Turkey, three English textbooks were evaluated for the students in grade 4 classes by Kırkgöz (2009). The results of this study helped conclude that there was a great balance between the responses made by the students as well as the teachers themselves. In addition to this, the interviews and the questionnaires provided showed consistent results. The books that were presented to them were well appreciated since the layout made it easy to follow the illustrations as they had attractive designs. Some of the other features found in these textbooks were interesting and well-presented vocabulary, instructions that were clear and understandable and finally, the content was authentic. Through this, the textbooks were able to promote a balanced development of all English language skills which are speaking, writing, listening and reading. Finally, Aroo (2012), spearheaded the evaluation conducted on English Year 2, which was a textbook that has been newly introduced. This book was also considered to be highly valuable as the teachers recommended it. The first rating was 2.90 (upon 4.00) which was lower than the second rating ($M = 3.10$). However, both scores fall under the same level which is that the textbooks are of "high suitability" (Mukundan and Nimehchisalem, 2011). In comparison to the overall suitability of the book, teachers were dissatisfied with speaking, reading and writing activities of the book despite them being designed to fit the syllabus objectives.

4. Research Methodology

The method used to conduct the research was content analysis. This method uses several procedures in a bid to determine the quality of documents, books, or discourses (Moleong, 2011). Another research showed that content analysis identifies how texts, images, and other expressions are interpreted (Krippendorff, 1980). The subsequent nature of the study is thus a qualitative one. The reason why qualitative studies are carried out is to examine and understand any given matter, process or occurrence more deeply (Moleong (2011). The study is supposed to analyze the NCEI textbook, 2nd edition as was edited by Sarah Cunningham and Peter Moor in 2010. Its principles and the level of compatibility were compared to the standards set by the PLOs and CLOs mapping for the school of business students at a private university in Dubai. Content analysis was also

used to collect the data and contents of the book aligned with the Garinger Checklist used for evaluating textbooks (2002) together with an interview guide.

5. Findings

5.1. Contents of the Textbook Package

The opening pages of the NCEI textbook provide the syllabus guide for the lessons to be conducted in the classroom. The content contained here consists of several tasks that the students need to perform in the language they are learning. There is also a systematic buildup of vocabulary which focuses on the words and phrases that are frequently used. Word spot is the word combinations in the book which introduce accurate combinations to build on vocabulary. In addition to this, there are also the pronunciation exercises contained in this textbook and use the pronunciation spot to offer accurate word pronunciation on page 31 and the stress put on sentences on page 7. On page 15, there is more specific pronunciation on specific words. There are complementary teaching materials such as audio CDs for the class and students, a workbook, resource book for the teacher, videos, tests and a companion website found at www.longman.com/cuttingedge.

5.2. Layout and Organization

The arrangement of language items, tasks, and activities of the textbook is contained in the table of contents. There are four modules together with reviews after each module. The authors of this textbook have made their work and activities look like a cycle organization which follows a consistent sequence. For the textbook design, a similar recycling principle has been applied to the modules contained in the NCEI textbook. The skills contained in the previous module have been manipulated to fit the new skill in the new module. It could be a new skill or a different activity and with new focus but the materials work the same way.

5.3. Activities and Tasks

The NCEI uses a task-based approach to structure the content in the book. They are organized as follows. The warm up activities involve some pre-task activities that check for questions and vocabulary. It prepares the students for later work by evaluating their comprehension of grammar, vocabulary, and



content. The second task is a listening task which covers listening for specific information, making inference and gist listening. After completion of this task, students are expected to explain what language was used. To complete these tasks, the NCEI textbook encourages group work for most activities which encourages vocabulary expansion in different situations and interlocutors. For each module, there exist some practice questions set to measure what the students have learned, their proficiency and comprehension of the materials used. Such layout and organization fit the TBL learning stages such as the pre-task, task cycle and the focus on language (Willis, 1996).

5.4. Grammar

The skills used in the tasks and activities have been integrated into the grammar sections. Once students have completed all the duties and activities, they were also encouraged to analyze the grammar that had been used in the completion of those activities. An analysis box and other sample exercises were used so as to assist the learners using the NCEI. This is an advantage since students can learn grammar from the context. This translates to the textbook taking into account meaning and form and integrating them into one form. As the element of grammar in the textbook continues to develop and becomes more challenging, so does the skill activities. When the dialogues were examined even more closely, it revealed that they became more complex as the learning units progressed. In a similar manner, the listening packages and reading texts become lengthier and have to be read even quicker, with a non-standard dialect or accent since the discourse structure continues to become more complex.

5.5. Skills

5.5.1. Reading

The standard competency of PLOs and CLOs state that all materials included in the textbooks should include some functional texts such as posters, pamphlets and banners. In addition to this, there should also be some scientific reports or essays, spoofs, hortatory exposition texts, narratives and analytical expositions which should aid students in learning. Unfortunately for the NCEI textbook, there were very few and short functional texts. However, this could be because the textbook is meant for students at

the intermediate level which are the B1 and B2 levels according to the Common European Framework. These students are expected to understand the main ideas contained in the complex texts in these textbooks. The few short functional texts are such as emails on page 14, advertisements on both page 44 and 45, and finally, notes and cards found on page 89.

5.5.2. Speaking

This is by far the dominant skill in the NCEI textbook based on what is included in the table of content. This could be because all the activities and tasks in the textbook rely on some speaking, whether it is introductory or the core activity of that segment. Speaking has been included in the verbal presentation, and when practicing new language items especially in the work that requires dialogue as seen on page 13, role playing on page 23, class activities on page 67 and group work found on page 32 and 33. According to the PLOs and CLOs standard competency, there should be some form of expression and opinion asking, giving advice and warnings, showing satisfaction and dissatisfaction in all textbooks. Also, they should include such activities that help express emotions in the textbooks that are published. The NCEI textbook has to express and asking opinions provided on page 13, giving advice and warning on page 74 and page 65, expressing satisfaction and dissatisfaction. The activities that help to express emotions are not included in the textbook, however. Instead, they introduced interpersonal conversation expressions such as remembering and forgetting found on page 23, recommendations on page 33 and admiration on page 43.

5.5.3. Listening

This section follows that the NCEI textbook is reinforced with audio CDs which has conversations and talks recorded on these mediums with a normal rate of speaking. The main accent used for these audios is British, but there are other registers and non-native accents that can be heard in the background. The teachers thought this was good for learning since it takes diversity into account. When we compare this with the standard competency of PLOs and CLOs, there should be something concerning how students should respond to expressions. The NCEI textbook has included some competencies such as asking for opinions



on page 13, giving advice and warning found on page 74, how to express satisfaction and dissatisfaction on page 65. As much as it included these aspects, the textbook failed to include express for emotions such as relief, pain or pleasure and instead they included other interpersonal conversations. These include the asking and answering of questions on page 6, finding common things in elements on page 12, how to design a tour on page 32 and book a flight on page 34.

5.5.4. Writing

The PLOs and CFOs requirements for writing are the same as those for reading. However, just as seen in the reading sections, there are few functional texts, report samples, and narratives. The NCEI textbook presents a segment that allows the students to have skills in some interpersonal tasks. These are writing emails on page 14, making consumer reviews on page 66, curriculum vitae on page 45, and cover letters on page 56, more stories and notes on page 104. On taking a closer look, there was no introduction made on the generic structure of texts included in the textbook and no model for spoofs, analytical or hortatory exposition texts. The reason given is that the textbook was not meant to rely on the genre approach

6. Discussion

So as to understand how NCEI textbooks are compatible with the PLOs and CLOs mapping for the school of business students at a the private university requires that the relevancy is measured using some criteria. Some of these include the aspect language coverage, cultural implication and the approach used to teach.

6.1. The Language Standpoint

The NCEI compared to the PLOs, and the CLOs mapping are undoubtedly bearing different perspectives on what language should be. The NCEI view language as a social communication core factor which assists in the development of a meaningful nature in the social life using a task-based approach (Sealey & Carter, 2004). When the teachers using the NCEI textbook cooperate with the appropriate interlocutor such as native speakers, this will go a long way into helping the L2 learners in their language performance. It is only through socially situated cognitive processes that learners can construct their linguistic knowledge (Dobao, 2012). The

activities in the NCEI textbook are meant for real life situations and create opportunities where it gets easier for language acquisition. Some of them include playing games on page 23, solving problems on page 44 and sharing experiences or information on pages 32 and 33. Basing this argument on language, NCEI and the PLOs and CLOs mapping are differing. The NCEI focuses more on sentence level than the text level as is with the PLOs and CLOs mapping. This presents the basis on which the relevancy of the NCEI textbook to be questioned.

6.2. Language Teaching Approach

The NCEI textbook uses a task-based approach when it comes to teaching language as compared to the genre approach used by the CLOs and PLOs. Using the TBL approach, the NCEI has made it possible for students to learn how to book a flight on page 26, and other things as requesting politely as found on page 70. It involves purposeful interaction in the target language as highlighted in communication. Also, there are academic texts such as writing curriculum vitae on page 45, questionnaires on page 48-49, how to explain the best candidates on page 54-55 and how to write a cover letter on page 56.

6.3. Cultural Implications

The NCEI textbook takes into account the diverse cultures of the target students in its content and the materials used to teach. The NCEI textbook is not aimed at particular students and is meant for international students. Therefore, the textbook comprises of several cultures, among them being Thai, Russian, Hong Kong and so on, in addition to English. The benefit of such a feature is that it includes a lot of cultural information that would thus expand the horizon for the understanding of the readers and the learners. For students who are willing to broaden their horizons and study abroad, this textbook provides convenience. It does not, however, mean that local culture is left out. Most of the data that was included in the checklist and the subsequent interviews, NCEI was considered to be quite sensitive to cultural interests and background of the students. Most of the tasks ask the students to describe what their culture entails at the beginning or the end of the task as seen on page 33.

7. Conclusion and Suggestion



Conclusion

This research was conducted so as to determine whether the New Cutting Edge Intermediate (NCEI) English textbook is compatible with the current PLOs and CLOs mapping that are implemented at the undergraduate level. The NCEI textbook was published targeting the international students, and these include both adult and young learners. The NCEI may find it quite difficult to apply both the CLOs and the PLOs due to its diverse approach towards language acquisition. The textbook can be concluded to have been designed in such a way that it does not abide by the PLOs and CLOs mapping of this particular private university. In a more detailed discussion of the book, it has been noted to focus on four English skills which are all offered using different manners. Most of the generic structures which are required by the PLOs and CLOs to be included in all textbooks are missing. The NCEI does not seem to have some text types such as analytical, hortatory expositions and spoof texts in their structure. All of these reasons point to the fact that the NCEI textbook is not compatible with the standard competencies as provided by the CLOs and PLOs. It should be noted that despite it not being compatible with these competencies, it does not mean that the textbook is unqualified to be used in teaching and for learning purposes.

Some of the strong features of the book are that it comes with supplementary teaching materials to make it easier to teach and learn the English language. The text included in the textbook has been printed on paper that is of high quality and more durable making the presentation of information more clear, concise and friendly to all users. The linguistic elements used in the textbook can strongly be linked to the skill-base. There is a mini dictionary which allows clear pronunciation and definitions, synonyms, antonyms and examples of how the words can be used in context. There is also a language summary which is offered as an appendix. It avoids simplified input of the foreigner talk discourse so that it facilitates the comprehension by the students. It also takes the diversity of all English accents and a product and process approach towards teaching. Some of the weak features that the NCEI textbooks have are that there is no mention of page numbers for the tasks and activities in the table of contents. The other weak feature of the textbook is that the ESL/EFL students may find the real rate

utterances quite difficult to comprehend especially if they are using CDs for the native speakers.

Suggestions

If teachers are ready to maximize the use of the textbook, it is important that a few suggestions be made to make the teaching and learning process better especially for the ESL/EFL students. The reason is that it would make communication and progression of their proficiency in writing better and up to standard. Some of the suggestions that should be considered include allowing the teachers to make a selection of what they think are the textbooks that have appropriate content so that they can cover the needs of the students effectively. A textbook evaluation is thus appropriate in this case and should be done before selection. Another suggestion would be to have all the teachers adapting all the NCEI contents to the requirements of the PLOs and CLOs. Most of the data that was used for this study was collected from the local teachers, and only one foreign teacher was interviewed. The final suggestion would be to allow further research so that more insights can be gained about the NCEI textbook

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