

A STUDY ON THE CONTENT ANALYSIS OF 5TH GRADE ENGLISH TEXTBOOK IN PUNJAB, PAKISTAN

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Abstract

This evaluative study was conducted to analyze the contents of fifth Grade English textbook published by the Punjab Textbook Board. Evaluation of the textbook was done by following Evaluation Criteria presented by Cunnings worth. Evaluation was done through content analysis. Aim of this research was to evaluate strengths and weaknesses regarding its alignment with educational standard. The evaluation identifies three primary weaknesses: inconsistency with Grade five learning levels, complex language structures that may hinder comprehension of fundamental concepts, and limited alignment of reading activities with the four foundational language skills (listening, speaking, reading, and writing). The study also explored decrease students' motivation and learning outcomes due to vocabulary and grammar structures that exceed the cognitive abilities of typical Grade five learners. This study provides insights for educators and textbook developers to revisit the textbooks and inculcate the materials for enhancing English language instruction and the required language skills necessary for learners at primary level in Punjab.

Key Words: Content Analysis, English Textbook, Fifth grade Level.

Introduction

Textbooks are generally considered as a meaningful source in the teaching-learning process. It helps the learners to approach a particular area of knowledge in a systematic manner. Textbook is a complete and all in one package, guiding teachers and students for achieving their goals in their respective roles (Shim, Cho & Cassady, 2013). Both of them depend on the textbooks in their academic pursuits. Although in

the classroom, teachers may take help from different sources such as textbook, notes and internet etc. But textbook has crucial importance among all the teaching-learning sources (Mithans & Grmek, 2020). It facilitates both teachers and learners in every way to lead the students towards the achievement of general and specific objectives. Textbook provides the content, methodologies and assessment procedure for teachers to be utilized in the classroom (Knight, 2015; Pepin, 2018).

Textbook is a media that facilitates the teachers in preparing and arranging the teaching materials at all levels in the teaching-learning processes. Cunningsworth(1995) considers textbook helpful as it contains all the necessary elements for the essential development of a child (Saud, 2023). Textbooks are important not only because it provides all the necessary materials to teachers, but also because they are made to fulfill the learning needs of students in achieving the objectives. The combination of a well-prepared teacher and well-developed textbooks can ensure the achievement of maximum objectives (Bahar & Zaman, 2013). Therefore we can say that textbook is an integral part of the entire teaching learning process. A textbook actually surrounds all the aims and objectives of the educational system. That is why the quality of a textbook cannot be compromised. Considering the overall quality and standard of a textbook regarding the aims and objectives covered by its content is unavoidable, as a dull book can seriously affect the performance of a class (Cuttler, 2019).

In Pakistan, English is considered as a foreign language, the concerned authorities should be vigilant in every aspect of English and should be careful in developing its curricula across the country (Shamim, 2011). Such a vigilance is inevitable in case of Punjab where the majority of people uses local languages other than Urdu and English. Punjabi societies have distinct and unique socio-cultural and economic environment. According to Tarigan, Perangin-Angin and Saragi (2021), "Textbook is designed for the use in the classroom, being arranged and prepared carefully by the experts in the field and being completed with suitable and compatible teaching aids. The content, the methodologies and the strategies should be planned and arranged in such a way that reflects the aims and objectives considering their needs and life style (Amerian & Amerian, 2014). In the process of English Language Teaching (ELT) programs, "Textbooks have been viewed as the main

resources in achieving aims and objectives that have already been set in terms of learners' needs (Al-Qahtani, 2015; Akbar, 2016)". However, general observation is that textbooks are given scant attention to their selection and evaluation in our educational system.

Content analysis is one of the momentous and complex research methodologies used in social sciences. It is a quantitative analysis of a message in a systemic and an objective way. It contains both computer aided text analysis (CATA) and human-coded analysis. Content analysis is "a research technique for making replicable and valid inferences from texts or other meaningful matter to the contexts of their use (Krippendorff, 2004). The current research study aimed to analyze the content of 5th grade textbook of English at primary level in Punjab. It only focuses on the materials given in the content of the book. Identifying the strengths and weaknesses of 5th grade textbook of English using a qualitative content analysis method.

Research Questions

The following research questions were made on the bases of above literature.

1. What are the strengths and weaknesses of 5th grade textbook of English at primary level in Punjab in light of the Cunningsworth (1995) evaluation criteria?
2. How and to what extent does the 5th grade textbook of English at primary level in Punjab meet the Cunningsworth (1995) criteria of good English textbook?

Objectives of the Study

Major objective of the study was;

- i. To analyze the 5th grade textbook of English at primary level in Punjab in light of the criteria about good English text book presented by Cunningsworth (1995).

The major objective was split up into two sub objectives.

- i. To explore the strengths of 5th grade textbook of English at primary level in Punjab in light of the Cunningsworth (1995) criteria of good English text book.
- ii. To identify the weaknesses of 5th grade textbook of English at primary level in Punjab through the criteria presented by Cunningsworth (1995).

Significance of the Study

Findings of this study may help teachers to know about the pros and cons of the 5th grade English textbook they usually teach in their schools. Results of this study may

likely be helpful for the text book designers for knowing the strengths and weakness of the existing textbook. They may enable to overcome the weakness of the text book, when they design it in future. The practitioners may also be able to eliminate the weaknesses of the text books during its application in the field.

Delimitations of the Study

Text books can be analyzed through various ways but because of time constraints, this study was delimited to analyze the book only according to the criteria established by Cunningsworth (1995). This study was also delimited to focus on the investigation of strengths and weaknesses of 5th grade textbook of English at primary level in Punjab.

An Overview of 5th Grade Textbook of English

In all the government primary schools, 5th grade English textbook is taught. This book is published by Leading Book Publisher, Lahore-Punjab. The same book is also taught in some private schools in Punjab as well. The mentioned textbook is developed according to the National Curriculum 2006 and approved by Punjab Curriculum and Textbook Board, Lahore, Punjab. It is endeavored to analyze the contents of the book applying Cunningsworth's criteria of a good English textbook.

Methodology

Research Design

Content analysis is a common research method used for evaluation of a textbook. In the current study an evaluative-descriptive content analysis through adopting descriptive qualitative method was utilized. This method is useful for the researcher to takes into consideration the big picture of a phenomenon rather than splitting it down into variables. It enabled the researcher to understand and describe the phenomenon through in-depth analysis of the contents. In the analysis process the materials of the textbook were matched with the criteria given by Cunningsworth. For supporting and more authentication of data analysis, sampled teachers were also interviewed.

Instruments and Sources of Data Collection

In qualitative study the researcher is the key to identify and understand the research tools for investigating the problem in hand. In this study, checklist and interview were used as two research instruments. The data in this study was collected with the help of a checklist and face to face interview. The checklist for collection of data was prepared by the researcher through applying textbook evaluation criteria given by

Cunningsworth. Firstly, in light of the well-prepared checklist, the primary data regarding analysis of 5th grade textbook of English at primary level in Punjab, Pakistan was gathered. Then the researcher also collected the data from teachers directly by interviewing them by using the same checklist so that to get in-depth understanding teachers' views pertaining to the course content of 5th grade English textbook.

Research Process

The current research was completed in five steps. Firstly, 5th grade textbook of English at primary level was studied. After studying the whole book some contents were selected as sample from the book. Further, teachers were also randomly selected for interview. The sample contents selected for analysis were compared with the criteria of a good textbook given by the Cunningsworth to know to what extent it follows the said criteria. Finally, in order to crosscheck the data collected through check list, the selected teachers who were engaged in teaching to the primary classes, especially to the class five were interviewed. Data was analyzed after completing its collection. The conclusion was drawn from the results of the study.

Data Analysis

The 5th grade textbook of English comprises 102 pages a long with cover pages; encompasses 13 units containing topic-wise lessons, vocabulary, oral communication skill, comprehension, grammar, and writing which are taught to the 5th grade students in each academic year. The contents were analyzed keeping in view of the following eight various aspects mentioned by Cunningsworth (1995).

1. Aim and approaches
2. Design and organization
3. Language contents
4. Skills
5. Topics
6. Methodology
7. Teachers' books
8. Practical considerations.

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Aims and Approaches

Aims and approaches of 5th grade textbook of English can be matched closely with the aims of the teaching program, whereas those aims and approaches are not matched with the needs of the learners. Aims and approach of the 5th grade textbook of English are above the level of the students at this stage. For example, oral communication is one of the course book's aims which include discussion on the qualities of "Hazrat Muhammad (SAW)" (Unit 01, p.05), group discussion on a folk tale (Unit 02, p.9), Invention of Glass description and composition (Unit 08, 11, p.49, 52), and storytelling (Unit 12, p.81), discussion on An Ant's Language (Unit 13, p.89) etc.

Writing is another aim of the 5th grade textbook of English in which the students are to cover paragraph writing, letter writing, summary and essay writing etc. The above-mentioned activities and learning items in the respective aims are indeed useful, but the students' level is lower and very basic to attain these aims. Further, there is no such materials about writing and oral communication, their types, and composition etc. Before teaching and learning oral communication and writing activities, students need to know about communication, oral communication and writing and its various kinds etc.

The 5th grade textbook of English does not suit the teaching-learning situation. In Punjab, almost half of the government primary schools are in rural and hilly areas. Where one cannot expect an advanced level of learning-teaching environment. The study is conducted in an area where most of the people are poor and their parents prefer to engage their children in domestic work instead of their schooling. This non preference of parents towards their children's schooling, majority of the students are lazy and passive towards learning. Parents hardly know their children's level or grades. In half of the government primary schools, the number of teachers is less than the number of classes or grades. So, teachers are simultaneously engaged daily in more than a single classroom. In such situation, controlling and managing the learning and teaching process is difficult for teachers. Hence, teachers are unable to complete the entire needed activities given in the existing 5th grade textbook of English.

Design and Organization

With the current textbook of English, there are no supporting materials like teachers' book, workbook and cassettes etc. In 5th grade textbook of English, contents are

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organized according to topics, for example, Unit 1. “Hazrat Muhammad (SAW)”, Unit 2. “The Strange kettle”, Unit 3. “The Truthful” etc. and sequenced on the basis of usefulness, for example, the lesson of our Holy Prophet (SAW) is placed in the first place as in Unit 1., to make the students aware of our Holy Prophet (SAW), his qualities, forgiveness and his lifestyle. In order to give maxims for living life, “The strange Kettle” is placed in Unit 2. to make the students bear in mind and do not greed, once you lose something then forget about, do not make sorrow after; do not believe in impossible things so as not to be tricked by in your life.

In grammar section, noun and its kind being the most important and useful part of English language is placed in the first section of the textbook. The textbook contains no reference section for grammar and other relevant materials for individual study. The layout of the textbook is clear and distinct. The text is surrounded by relevant and vibrant pictures and images which make it more evident and easier to read.

Language Content

The language portion of the 5th grade textbook of English carries the key grammar items such as noun and its kinds, pronoun and its kinds, adjectives and its kinds and the comparisons, similarly, verbs and its kinds, articles, prepositions, adverb and its kinds, tree structures of tenses (present, past, and future) etc. but they are not compatible with the level and needs of the learners. For example, in the grammatical section of the first four units (Unit 01, p. 02, Unit 02, p. 09, Unit 03, p.20& Unit 04, p 28) nine types of nouns (common, proper, countable, uncountable, abstract, concrete, collective, gender and compound noun) given. Similarly, plural formation (p. 27), noun-pronoun agreement, consonant cluster (p. 64), homophones and homonyms (p. 94) and sentences arrangement (p. 79) etc. These grammar items neither suit to the classroom environment and socio-cultural background of the learners nor according to need and mental level of the students. Despite of these concepts, only names and pronunciations are enough for fifth grade level students.

The textbook contains an adequate number of materials for vocabulary within the range of the students’ level. There are different kinds of strategies used for vocabulary development for both individual and group learning. For example, exercise for countable and uncountable noun (Unit 04, p. 28) is given along with visual

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presentation of objects. There is a picture of a cup of tea with two blanks in which the students will first write the name of the object in one blank and then in the second blank they will write whether the object is countable or uncountable. Similar vocabulary have been included in the form of honey, egg, sugar and banana etc. Through such pictorial activities, students can learn and retain the grammar and the vocabulary items very easily. Another strategy (Unit 03, p. 19) for vocabulary development is matching columns of opposite genders with pictures i.e. saint, with a saint picture matched with opposite gender weep, with a weep picture.

Skills

The 5th grade textbook of English contains insufficient materials required for the acquisition of language skills i.e. listening, speaking, reading and writing. There are only activities-based skills for the students but they are also difficult and above the students' level. When skills are taught to the students, it means what they are. For example, what listening is, its strategies, and how to improve it etc. in reading skill, what reading is, its types (intensive, extensive, skimming, scanning, speed reading, pre-reading, while-reading and post reading) and how to improve it etc. The textbook does not present such things as skills as they should be. Activities come after when the students first know the nature of the skills of listening and reading (receptive skills) also speaking and writing (productive skills).

In the listening and speaking activity (Unit 08, p. 58), it is instructed to discuss with your classmates about the heroes of your country and engage them in conversation about what about their achievements and then present in front of the class. Another activity (Unit 02, p.16), after reading out conversation of three students having different opinions, and points of agreement and disagreement, students are instructed to make a conversation of their own on the topic, "The Strange Kettle". In which the students will give their own opinions, agreements and disagreements. In creative writing activity (Unit 05, p. 34) students are instructed a paragraph on the "Quaid –e-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah" in your notebook with the help of word bank. In summary writing (Unit 09, p. 66), to write a summary of the story, think about the most important things that happened to the characters. The easiest way to write a summary is to find the main idea and very important details related to the main idea from each paragraph.

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Listening is the first and foremost skill to be taught and developed by the learners. Unfortunately, there is no recorded material for listening in 5th grade textbook of English reflecting life like conversation or exchange of talk accompanied by questions and activities for comprehension. Students do need authentic listening materials in the form of audios and videos to be listened to by the students in the target language; not in the form as given in the activities of the textbook in which one student speaks and the other listens. Doing such exercises, the students will never get the target language's tone, stressed, unstressed syllables and words and intonations. They will never experience how the change in tone in the target language results change in meaning. In government primary schools, teachers of different subjects (Science, Maths, Urdu, etc.) teach English to the 5th grade students without having any ELT qualification and training.

Topic

The 5th grade textbook of English comprises 13 topics carrying enough variety and taste. For example, Unit 1 is about "Our Holy prophet (SAW)", Unit 03 is about "The Truthful", Unit 05 is "Father of the Nation", Unit 07 is "The Youngest Genius Arfa Karim", Unit 12 is "The First Straw" etc. These topics are elaborated in limited and short texts and discourses within the range of 5th grade students. The topics are sophisticated in content but difficult in nature and above the students' level. The students' target language level is not developed up to the level to stimulate their curiosity and understand such an extended text in English language. Because of this, may not take any interest in particularly in some topics and generally in the whole English subject.

Teachers can only make efforts to develop students' interest and understanding through translation of the topics and text into their mother tongue. Without such efforts, the students will be unable to understand and relate themselves to the social and cultural context presented in the textbook. For example, in order to teach the lesson "Hazrat Muhammad (saw) Kindness and Forgiveness" (Unite 01) to the students, the teachers will describe them their local, cultural and religious and "The Strange Kettle" etc in Punjabi language along with the written text in the textbook. Similarly, other lessons as "Father of the Nation" (Unit 05), "The Youngest

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Genius Arfa Karim” (Unit 07) and “The First Straw” (Unit 12) etc. will be described in their local context and language.

There is no gender discrimination in the content of the textbook. Men and women are portrayed and represented equally. For example, (Unit 05, p. 31) there is picture of Quaid-e- Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah with his achievements showing in the form of new homeland for the Muslim of subcontinent. There is a separate unit (Unit 03, p.17), “The Truthful” showing that the truth is not only necessary for a man but also for all human being. It also presents all society positivity and this kind of act to make the development of a country.

Methodology

Pertaining to methodology, the textbook of English is constructed and arranged in such a way that can take two language learning approaches i.e. grammar-translation method and direct method. Although teacher is free to use either of the method or both in their teaching to the 5th grade students. But Students at primary level in the rural areas of Punjab are not able to learn through direct instruction in the target language without translation. The students can only learn and understand the text and context using their mother tongue. In such situation, the use of direct method is impossible for getting the desired results. So, teachers left with a single option that is applying Grammar-translation method in the classroom for teaching of English to the fifth-grade students.

There are different techniques that are adopted in the teaching of 5th grade textbook of English. For example, translation of a literary passage is a kind of technique in which students translate English passages into their first language. In 5th grade textbook of English, both teachers and students translate English texts into Urdu and their local language. There are reading comprehensions questions in each unite of the textbook which require the students to answer in English language. Deductive application of rules is another technique in which grammar rules are presented before the students with all possible information that can be given to the students relating to the grammatical rules. The rules are also explained with examples. Once students understand a rule, they are asked to apply it for some different examples. The students are given a series of sentences with some missing words. The students have to fill in the blanks with some suitable grammar items. For example, in

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Unit 03, p.20, five fills in the blanks are given in which the students have put an appropriate adverb in each sentence. Similarly in Unit 7, p.47, students are instructed to use correct form of verb in brackets. Memorization of definitions and vocabularies and compositions of given topics such as students are instructed to write a paragraph on “The Invisible Homework” (Unit 10, p. 73) and to write a paragraph of ten sentences on the exciting dream (Unit unit 6, p.41) etc. are other techniques which help the 5th grade students in learning a new language.

By and large, in each topic of the textbook, there is a separate listening, speaking and writing portion for the development of communicative skills of the students. There is individual, pair and group activities in the form of discussions and dialogues etc. in the exercises of the textbook. For example, for listening and speaking (Unit 8, p.58), students are instructed, “Discuss with your classmates about the heroes of your country who have made some invention. Here are some situations and dialogues. Practice the dialogues with your partners”.

Situation 1. There is an overloaded vehicle from people in which one person says, “Excuse me, could you move a little forward? It’s very crowded here.

The possible answers: a. Oh! Sure. b. Certainly. c. No I’m sorry, I cannot.”

Situation2. Two girls seated in two seats in which one girl says, “If you do not mind could we exchange our seats?

The possible answers: a. certainly. b. I’m sorry but I’d rather sit here. c. yes, sure”. Similarly, the third situation...

Another activity is a dialogue between doctor and student on punctuality (Unit 8, p. 57) in which one student will become a doctor and other his student in order to practice the similar dialogue in the classroom. For writing, (Unit 04, p. 30) students are instructed to write a paragraph on their hard work to give them physical description and character traits. Another activity (Unit 12, p. 87), students are guided to write a story to a friend about a “The First Straw”. “Writing a personal Narrative. Think about an exciting dream that you have had. Write a personal narrative about” (Unit 06, p. 41).

Teachers’ Books

There is no guidance book available for the teachers that support the course book. Although, there are some guide books available in markets that translate the whole

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text into local (Urdu) language and provide the key to exercises. They are provided by the private institutions and are somewhat comprehensive and are supportive in the teaching learning process especially regarding English as the translation; makes it easy for both the teachers and students to understand the text and draw meanings and themes or conclusions from it. And certainly, the writers did a pretty good job in making the course more approachable and understandable. Besides that, the government has provided no such materials to primary institutes that support the course book. The only thing that the government has done in this regard is the devising of an academic calendar that is specially introduced to tackle the time lost due to covid-19 pandemic that resulted in the closure of the educational institutions for six months. The calendar guides the teachers in skipping unnecessary or less important topics so as to cover and study the important ones.

Practical Consideration

The textbook comes with an affordable price of Rs.67 in the market although it is provided to the government institutions free of cost. And it represents good value for money. The book is worth the price and even more precious in terms of knowledge and wisdom it provides. The book is strong enough to lose for a few years and the quality of the pages is good one. It is made in such an attractive way that catches the attention of the readers. The cover page and the inside is beautiful and colorful with the pictorial graphics of lessons and grammatical concepts to make it easy for the students to understand the text through pictures.

The book is easy to obtain as discussed above but they are provided free of cost to the government schools. In the government institutions, if the stock (books) gets short then the concerned education offices are requested to supply the demand. In the private sector, if the stock gets short, then the market brokers are contacted for further supplies.

No particular equipment is required besides an audio or listening center that will help students correct their pronunciation of English language as it is the widespread weakness of the language learners who learn English as a foreign language that needs to be addressed properly. And there is no such equipment available in both government and private schools that facilitate the ELT process.

Findings of the Research

It has been explored that the contents of 5th grade textbook of English is not compatible with the mental level of the primary students. The book is complex to the extent that a 5th grader finds it difficult to comprehend even certain very common things such as the very initial grammatical structure, simple and basic vocabulary. Furthermore, the activities given in the book does not comply with the four basic skills of language.

Conclusion

The content analysis of 5th grade textbook of English, Punjab in the light of Cunningsworth's (1995) textbook evaluation criteria concludes that as whole the 5th grade textbook of English is not appropriate to be used for 5th grade students. It fulfils almost half of the Cunningsworth's (1995) textbook evaluation criteria and the other half does not properly match the criteria. The half which fulfils the criteria is further scrutinized as above the 5th grade students' level.

Based on the criteria, there are several strong things appropriate in 5th grade textbook of English. The strong aspects are as follows;

It contains different teaching and learning styles, clear layout, adequate materials for vocabulary teaching using different techniques such as pictures, synonyms, antonyms etc., materials for integrated skills, enough variety and range of topics, equal presentation of man and woman and other groups. 5th grade textbook of English allows grammar-translation method to be used in the teaching and learning of it to the 5th grade students. The textbook uses different techniques for presenting and practicing the target language such as filling the blanks, reading comprehension questions, deductive application of rules and memorization of definitions and vocabularies etc. The textbook is easy to obtain in the market with affordable price, long-lasting and attractive in appearance. The aforementioned items are considered as strengths of the 5th grade textbook of English in the light of the evaluation criteria.

Based on the aforementioned analysis, there are number of items considered as weaknesses of the 5th grade textbook of English such as most of the content of 5th grade textbook of English comprised of Pakistani national heroes i.e. "Father of the Nation" (Pakistan), "The Great Leader" (Quaid-e-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah), "The Youngest Genius Arfa Karim" (in Pakistan) etc. instead of foreign culture where

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English is spoken as mother tongue. In 5th grade textbook of English, English is used as a medium for teaching elements happened or happening in Pakistan. English as a foreign language, it should contain contents of foreign countries as British and America. Further, there is only students' book which makes up the total course package. It has no workbook, teachers' book, or cassettes etc to support it. There is an excessive amount of grammar items which are unable to be covered by the 5th grade students. For example, nine kinds of noun in the 5th grade textbook of English are too much for such a level. Materials for pronunciation work such as sounds, stresses and intonation etc. are insufficient to satisfy the students' needs.

The four skills listening, speaking, reading and writing are only limited to activities in the form of dialogues and written work. There are no materials regarding the four skills to let the students know and understand them. Students are instructed to make a dialogue and write a summary or a paragraph despite knowing the very basics or the nature of the spoken and written language. Listening is the first and foremost skill but 5th grade textbook of English has no recorded or authentic materials for the students to practice them. Activities for improving the four skills are difficult to manage by the 5th grade students.

The 5th grade students can only know and taste the variety and make interest in the topic's translation of the contents into their mother's tongue. They are not sophisticated enough to understand and experience on their own in the target language. There is no materials in the 5th grade textbook of English for the students to guide them in learning processes.

In retrospect, we cannot expect the 5th grade students to take responsibilities for their own learning. In primary schools, teachers of different subjects (Math, Science, and Urdu etc.) teach English to the 5th grade students without any supporting materials and proper guidance to help them in the teaching-learning process in the classroom. They do need a teacher's book or other proper instruction guides/manuals regarding 5th grade textbook of English.

Recommendations

1. The inclusion of simple to complex approach in teaching of 5th grade text book is recommended. The contents and activities of the textbook need to be based on the real-life environment.

2. It is recommended for the developers of 5th grade textbook of English to simplify the complexity of the content and nature of the activities appropriate to the 5th grade students' level.
3. Guide book or teacher's book and audio-videos materials containing sounds of native speakers are recommended to be provided with the books.
4. English is taught as a foreign language hence it is recommended to give literary touch to the lessons in the text book and native teaching-learning materials of the language is recommended to be included in the textbook as well.

Recommendations for Further Research

This study analyzed the whole contents of the 5th grade textbook of English. It is recommended that further study should be conducted on analyzing on a specific skill. It is also recommended that further research should be done for investigating the complexity level in different sections of the book.

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