

"An In-Depth Analysis of the English Language Teaching Coursebook 'Sunrise 12' Utilized by Twelfth Graders in Kurdistan Schools"

Saad Ibrahim Taha Al-Zeebaree¹, Sherwan Taha Ameen²

Abstract

This paper presents an evaluation of the ELT coursebook "Sunrise 12" used by twelfth-grade students in Kurdistan schools. The study focuses on identifying the strengths and weaknesses of the coursebook and determining its appropriateness from the perspective of Kurdish educators. This applied linguistics research employed a mixed methodological approach for data collection and analysis. The evaluation utilized Cunningsworth's (1995) systematic, reliable, economic, and comprehensive evaluative scheme for textbook analysis. The findings indicate that the textbook demonstrates overall appropriateness concerning aims and approaches, design and organization, language content, topics, methodology, teacher's book, and practical considerations. The degree of appropriateness of "Sunrise 12" is estimated to be approximately 72%, while the degree of inappropriateness is around 28%. The research aims to provide insights for curriculum designers, educators, and material developers to enhance the coursebook's efficacy and better meet the needs of Kurdish learners.

Keywords: *ELT coursebook, Sunrise 12, textbook evaluation, Kurdish educators, mixed methodological approach, practical considerations, second language acquisition (SLA), language learning (LL).*

Introduction

The process of language learning and teaching involves various factors, and among them, coursebooks play a crucial role as essential teaching materials for both learners and educators. English Language Teaching (ELT) coursebooks, in particular, are considered key elements in language education (Sheldon, 1988:237). These coursebooks serve as guidance for instructors in ELT classrooms, providing clear learning objectives (Richard, 2001). Therefore, selecting the most suitable coursebook that aligns with the teaching objectives is of utmost importance for lecturers.

ELT coursebooks hold significant importance as essential resources to support the language learning and teaching process. They are widely recognized as universal components in ELT, and any comprehensive teaching and learning institution must incorporate English textbooks (Hutchinson and Torres, 1994). In fact, ESI/EFL coursebooks have been instrumental in driving pedagogical innovation within educational institutions (Hutchinson and Torres, 1994).

¹ English Department, faculty of Humanities, University of Zakho, saad.taha@visitor.uoz.edu.krd

² Assistant Lecturer and Researcher at English Language Department, College of Basic Education, University of Duhok, Kurdistan Region, Iraq, sherwan.ameen@uod.ac

The focus of this research study is to investigate the potentials and limitations of the ELT coursebook titled "Sunrise 12" (McLever, Prowse, and Sprenger, 2012) using the evaluative methods outlined by Cunningsworth (1995). The evaluation criteria encompass various aspects, including the approach, aims, language content, organization, design, skills development, teacher's guide, practical considerations, and topics covered in the coursebook. The ultimate goal is to determine the appropriateness of "Sunrise 12" and identify areas for potential development and improvement.

ELT materials encompass a wide range of resources utilized by learners and educators to facilitate the language learning process. These materials can include DVDs, videos, workbooks, websites, applications, visual materials, dictionaries, and even emails (Tomlinson, 2011). They can be broadly categorized into in-house (teacher-generated) and published (global) materials, with the latter being authored by renowned publishers such as Oxford and Longman. These published coursebooks are commonly employed as primary sources for English learning and teaching in classrooms, with textbooks like Top Notch, Interchange, Total English, Face2face, and Cutting Edge being prominent examples (Alemi, Jahangard, and Hesami, 2013). However, different opinions exist regarding the effectiveness of each type of material.

The development of ELT materials holds immense significance within the field of language pedagogy. Textbook development entails a systematic evaluation of coursebooks in terms of their objectives and their alignment with learners' goals (Tomlinson, 2011). While not all educators possess the expertise to develop ELT materials, they should have the ability to select and adapt effective and efficient textbooks for ESL/EFL programs that cater to learners' specific needs (Dudly-Evans and St. John, 1998). In this context, the evaluation of ELT coursebooks serves as a crucial process to assess their value, enabling materials developers, curriculum designers, and instructors to identify key areas of improvement.

To address these research objectives, a mixed methodological approach has been employed to collect and analyze data. The evaluative scheme proposed by Cunningsworth (1995) has been adapted for this study due to its systematic, reliable, and comprehensive nature, making it ideal for analyzing textbooks. The research will seek insights from Kurdish educators, who are the target users of "Sunrise 12" coursebook, to provide valuable perspectives on its appropriateness and effectiveness.

Literature Review

The evaluation of ELT coursebooks is a crucial process that ensures the effectiveness and appropriateness of teaching materials in language learning and teaching contexts. The selection of the right coursebook plays a significant role in facilitating successful language acquisition and providing learners with the necessary language skills.

To assess ELT coursebooks, three main categories of evaluations have been identified in the literature:

1. **Predicative or Pre-use Appraisal:** This type of evaluation focuses on examining coursebooks before their implementation in the classroom. Educators and curriculum developers carefully analyze the content, organization, language materials, and teaching approaches of the coursebook. The aim is to determine its potential performance and whether it aligns with the desired instructional objectives and the specific needs of the target learners (Cunningsworth, 1995).
2. **In-use Evaluation:** During in-use evaluation, coursebooks are assessed while they are actively being used in an ELT program. Feedback is gathered from both teachers and students regarding their experiences with the coursebook. This type of evaluation helps

identify the strengths and weaknesses of the coursebook in practice and allows for improvements to be made based on real-world feedback (Ellis, 1997).

3. **Post-use or Retrospective Evaluation:** Post-use evaluation is conducted at the conclusion of a pedagogical course. Its purpose is to assess the overall effectiveness and relevance of the coursebook in achieving the intended learning outcomes. Feedback from administrators, assessors, and practitioners is taken into account to make informed decisions about whether to continue using the coursebook in future courses or seek alternative materials (Cunningsworth, 1995).

Textbook analysis is a fundamental part of the implementation and planning of ELT materials. Evaluative processes offer valuable insights into the potential benefits and limitations of coursebooks, helping educators make informed choices about their adoption. Neglecting to evaluate pedagogical coursebooks may lead to an unclear curricular system, hindering the language learning process (White, 1988).

Numerous evaluative frameworks have been proposed by eminent theorists in the field to enhance the sophistication and competence of textbook evaluators. These checklists typically include common criteria to investigate ELT coursebooks from various perspectives, including those of learners, tutors, and evaluators. While no one-size-fits-all scheme exists, evaluators have the flexibility to adapt checklists to suit the specific teaching and learning context (Sheldon, 1988).

Scholars such as Sheldon (1988), Williams (1983), Harmer (1996), Cunningsworth (1995), Griffiths (1995), Richards (2001), Garinger (2001), and Brown (1995) stress the significance of considering physical characteristics, organizational features, aims, methodologies, and approaches in the evaluation of coursebooks. Additionally, other crucial criteria include evaluating the coursebook's ability to meet learners' needs, its functions, grammar content, language materials, and skills development (Litz, 2005).

The process of evaluating ELT coursebooks is dynamic and continuous. By engaging in thoughtful and rigorous evaluations, educators can select the most appropriate and effective coursebooks to enhance language learning outcomes for their students.

Methodology

Research Questions:

The primary objective of this evaluative study is to critically examine the ELT coursebook titled "Sunrise 12" (McLever, Prowse, and Sprenger, 2012). To achieve this goal, the research study poses the following comprehensive research questions:

1. What are the specific strengths and weaknesses identified in the "Sunrise 12" coursebook?
2. To what extent does "Sunrise 12" (McLever, Prowse, and Sprenger, 2012) align with the learning needs and preferences of Kurdish students in Kurdistan (the region in the north of Iraq)?
3. In what ways can the shortcomings of the coursebook be addressed, and what recommendations do experienced evaluators propose for its further development?

Target Textbook:

The focal point of this evaluative study is the ELT coursebook "Sunrise 12" (McLever, Prowse, and Sprenger, 2012). Designed for 12th-grade students, this comprehensive coursebook is an integral part of the formal curriculum implemented in state institutes and schools across Kurdistan. Offering a series of levels ranging from beginner to advanced, "Sunrise 12" comes complete with supplementary materials, including a CD,

teacher's book, activity book, and students' book, aiming to provide a well-rounded language learning experience.

Instrument:

In order to conduct an in-depth analysis of the ELT coursebook, a carefully constructed evaluative checklist was employed. Drawing from the insights of McGrath (2002), the selected evaluative scheme is both economical and comprehensive, encompassing all relevant criteria essential for a detailed examination. The checklist facilitates the assessment of the pedagogical value of materials, allowing evaluators to gauge their appropriateness and responsiveness to learners' needs. To ensure the utmost relevance to the research context, the evaluative model of Cunningsworth (1995) was thoughtfully adapted for the evaluation of "Sunrise 12."

Participants:

This research study engaged a diverse cohort of 25 educators from three key cities in Kurdistan—Duhok, Erbil, and Sulaymaniyah. These esteemed educators, representing a range of ages from 25 to 55, hail from both state and private schools. As active practitioners, their perspectives and experiences provide invaluable insights into the strengths and weaknesses of the coursebook.

Data Collection:

Data collection for this applied linguistic study centered around the evaluative checklists thoughtfully completed by Kurdish practitioners in the region. The evaluative checklist, comprising eight comprehensive criteria with multiple sub-criteria, offered evaluators a structured framework to express their views on the appropriateness of each component in "Sunrise 12."

Data Analysis:

Upon the collection of evaluative checklists, a meticulous numerical analysis was undertaken to ascertain the degree of appropriateness or inappropriateness of each component within the "Sunrise 12" coursebook. Furthermore, the invaluable perspectives provided by the evaluators were synthesized with established theories of second language acquisition (SLA) and language learning (LL). This holistic approach ensured a comprehensive and well-grounded analysis of the coursebook's effectiveness and suitability.

Methodological Approach:

For this applied linguistic research, a mixed methods approach was considered essential. By combining qualitative and quantitative methodologies, the study aimed to attain a deeper understanding of the evaluation process. The qualitative phase involved the collection of evaluative checklists, providing a wealth of rich perspectives. Subsequently, the quantitative analysis enabled a statistical evaluation of the responses, offering valuable numerical data. The integration of SLA and LL theories further enriched the research, culminating in a nuanced evaluation of "Sunrise 12."

Results and Discussion

In this section, the outcomes of the applied linguistic research are presented and discussed to reveal the strengths and weaknesses of the coursebook "Sunrise 12." The evaluative framework consists of criteria, including approach, aim, language content, organization and design, skills, teacher's guide, practical considerations, and topics. To provide a strong theoretical foundation, the results are underpinned and elucidated by the principles and theories of Language Learning (LL) and Second Language Acquisition (SLA). Additionally, valuable recommendations of the evaluators will be discussed to develop

the coursebook. It is worth saying "textbook evaluation is subjective, and neat formula, grid or system will ever provide a definite yardstick" (Sheldon 1988:245).

Appropriateness of Aims and Approaches: According to the responses from the evaluators, the aims and approaches of "Sunrise 12" align well with the curriculum in Kurdistan, particularly for 12th graders. Notably, the coursebook's classification as EGP (English for General Purpose) contributes to its adaptability and comprehensiveness (McDonough and Shaw, 1993). However, further consideration should be given to incorporating more application-oriented exercises to enhance English language usage.

Design and Organization: The design and organization of "Sunrise 12" are found to be appealing and well-structured. The inclusion of supplementary materials such as the workbook, teacher's guide, and CD with audio tracks enhances the learning experience and aids Second Language Acquisition (SLA) (Tomlinson, 2003). Nevertheless, the absence of videos and assessment samples may limit its effectiveness, particularly for novice educators. Incorporating visual materials can be beneficial, as learners in the 21st century tend to prefer audio-visual resources (Allam and Elyas, 2016). The revisions of units could also be improved, with more application-based content for English language use.

Language Content: The language content of "Sunrise 12" is considered effective and efficient, promoting accuracy and fluency among Kurdish learners. However, the lack of adequate phonetic tasks addressing individual sounds, word stress, and intonation may hinder learners' articulation and acoustic proficiency. The presence of a grammar reference at the back of the coursebook is commendable but can be further enriched.

Skills: The coursebook proves to be efficacious concerning receptive (listening and reading) and productive (speaking and writing) skills, as well as integrated skills. One of the characteristics is that it starts with input and output in each teaching unit, focusing on listening and speaking first and then presenting the main grammatical and lexical topics. Afterward, it covers reading and listening skills. The vast majority of the tasks are integrated, covering multiple skills, which embodies the key features of communicativeness.

Topics: The selection of topics in "Sunrise 12" is intriguing, interesting, and relevant to Kurdish learners. However, it is advisable to include more topics related to Kurdish culture to foster a deeper connection with the learners and their context.

Methodology: The pedagogical method adopted by "Sunrise 12" aligns well with the learning and teaching context in Kurdistan, showcasing characteristics of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT). By prioritizing topics and meanings over mere form, the coursebook effectively promotes language communication.

Teacher's Guide: The teacher's guide of "Sunrise 12" is considered appropriate and outstanding, providing educators with the necessary information to prepare lessons effectively in advance.

Practical Considerations: Evaluators praised the coursebook for being marvelous, especially due to its free availability to learners, generously provided by the Ministry of Education. However, it was noted that the papers and cover may lack durability.

The tabulated data illustrates the degree of appropriateness and inappropriateness for each criterion based on the perspectives of the assessors. Overall, the coursebook is rated as approximately 72% appropriate and 28% inappropriate (see Table 1).

Table 1: Degree of Appropriateness and Inappropriateness

No	Criteria	Appropriate	Inappropriate
1	Aims and Approaches	78%	22%
2	Design and Organization	76.8%	23.2%
3	Language Content	69.6%	30.4%
4	Skills	67.2%	28.8%
5	Topics	74%	26%
6	Methodology	60.4%	39.6%
7	Teacher's Book	79.2%	20.8%
8	Practical Considerations	72%	28%
	Average (approximately)	72%	28%

Conclusion

In conclusion, this evaluation research attempted to assess the quality of "Sunrise 12" to discover its potential and limitations. It also sought to determine the extent to which this coursebook is appropriate and inappropriate for use in Kurdish schools. Additionally, it endeavored to find out what aspects of this textbook need to be developed to make it more effective and efficient. In this applied linguistic research, a mixed methodological approach was used to collect and analyze data. The evaluative scheme of Cunningsworth (1995) was adapted as it is an effective and comprehensive tool for textbook assessment, incorporating key criteria for evaluation. The findings were based on the perspectives of Kurdish teachers, making them relevant and valuable for the local context. Overall, the coursebook appears to be appropriate in terms of aims and approaches, design and organization, language content, topics, methodology, teacher's guide, and practical considerations. The coursebook's degree of appropriateness is approximately 72%, while the degree of inappropriateness is around 28%.

Further Recommendations

Based on the evaluation of the ELT coursebook "Sunrise 12," several recommendations are proposed to enhance its efficacy and better cater to the needs of Kurdish learners. These recommendations aim to address the identified strengths and weaknesses and further improve the coursebook's suitability for the Kurdistan region.

1. **Integration of Visual Materials:** To accommodate the preferences of 21st-century learners, "Sunrise 12" should consider incorporating more visual materials, such as videos, illustrations, and infographics. Visual resources can enhance engagement, facilitate understanding, and reinforce language learning, especially for novice educators who may benefit from supplementary visual aids (Allam and Elyas, 2016).
2. **Expansion of Topics on Kurdish Culture:** To foster a deeper connection with Kurdish learners and promote cultural awareness, the coursebook should include more topics related to Kurdish culture, traditions, and history. Integrating local content can enhance students' motivation and interest in the language learning process (Tomlinson, 2011).
3. **Emphasis on Phonetics and Pronunciation:** To improve learners' articulation and acoustic proficiency, "Sunrise 12" should incorporate more phonetic tasks addressing individual sounds, word stress, and intonation. A strong foundation in phonetics can positively impact learners' overall pronunciation and speaking skills.

4. **Increased Application-Oriented Exercises:** The coursebook can further enhance its effectiveness by including more application-oriented exercises that encourage learners to use English in practical contexts. Providing opportunities for learners to apply language skills in real-life scenarios can boost their communicative competence (Richards, 2001).
5. **Expansion of Unit Revisions:** To reinforce language learning, "Sunrise 12" should consider adding more unit revisions throughout the coursebook. These revisions can serve as opportunities for learners to consolidate their knowledge and reinforce language concepts (McDonough and Shaw, 1993).
6. **Durable Materials:** It is recommended that the coursebook's publishers and relevant authorities consider improving the durability of the materials used in "Sunrise 12," including the paper and cover. Durable materials can ensure the coursebook remains functional throughout the academic year.
7. **Incorporation of Authentic Listening Materials:** To further develop listening skills, "Sunrise 12" can include authentic listening materials, such as audio recordings of native speakers, radio broadcasts, or podcasts. Exposure to authentic language use can enhance learners' listening comprehension and familiarize them with natural language patterns (Allam and Elyas, 2016).
8. **Continuous Professional Development for Educators:** To maximize the potential benefits of "Sunrise 12," it is essential to provide continuous professional development opportunities for educators. Workshops, seminars, and training sessions on effective coursebook utilization can empower educators to leverage the coursebook's strengths and address its weaknesses (Dudly-Evans and St. John, 1998).
9. **Incorporation of Project-Based Learning:** To promote learner autonomy and critical thinking skills, "Sunrise 12" can incorporate project-based learning tasks throughout the coursebook. Engaging learners in projects that require research, collaboration, and presentation can enhance their language skills and foster a deeper understanding of the topics covered (Richards, 2001).
10. **Alignment with Curriculum Changes:** To ensure ongoing relevance, "Sunrise 12" should be periodically reviewed and updated to align with any changes in the national or regional curriculum. Regular updates can keep the coursebook in sync with evolving language learning goals and educational standards.

Implementing these recommendations can contribute to the continuous improvement and development of "Sunrise 12" as an effective ELT coursebook for 12th-grade students in Kurdistan. By addressing the identified areas for improvement, educators, material developers, and curriculum designers can work collaboratively to enhance the language learning experience and meet the diverse needs of Kurdish learners.

References

- Alemi, M., Jahangard, A., & Hesami, Z. (2013). A comparison of two global ELT coursebooks in terms of their task types. *International Association for Research on Textbooks and Educated Media*, 5(2), 42-63.
- Allam, L., & Elyas, T. (2016). The effectiveness of using video materials to develop listening comprehension skills among Saudi English majors. *English Language Teaching*, 9(4), 67-77.
- Allam, M., & Elyas, T. (2016). "The Role of Audio-Visual Materials in Enhancing EFL Teaching and Learning." *International Journal of Language and Linguistics*, 3(1), 26-36.
- Brown, J. (1995). *The Elements of Language Curriculum*. Boston: Heinle and Heinle Publishers.
- Cunningsworth, A. (1995). *Choosing Your Coursebook*. Oxford: Heinemann.

- Dudly-Evans, T., & St. John, M. (1998). *Developments in ESP: A multidisciplinary approach*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Ellis, R. (1997). The Empirical Evaluation of Language Teaching Materials. *ELT Journal*, 51(1), 36-42.
- Garinger, D. (2001). Textbook Evaluation. Retrieved from <http://www.teflweb-j.org/v1n1/garinger.html>. [accessed 26 July 2023].
- Harmer, J. (1996). *The Practice of English Language Teaching*. Harlow: Longman.
- Hutchinson, T., & Torres, E. (1994). The textbook as an agent of change. *ELT Journal*, 48(4), 315-328.
- Litz, D. (2005). Textbook Evaluation and Management: A South Korean Case Study. *Asian ELT Journal*, 48(1), 1-53.
- McDonough, J., & Shaw, C. (1993). *"Materials and Methods in ELT: A Teacher's Guide."* Blackwell Publishing.
- McGrath, I. (2013). *Teaching materials and the roles of EFL/ESL teachers: Practice and theory*. London: Bloomsbury.
- McClever, N., Prowse, P., & Sprenger, J. (2012). *Sunrise 12*. London: Ministry of Education of Kurdistan.
- Richard, J. (2001). *Curriculum development in language teaching*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Sheldon, L. (1988). Evaluating ELT textbooks and materials. *ELT Journal*, 42(4), 237-246.
- Tomlinson, B. (2003). *Developing materials for language teaching*. Continuum
- Williams, D. (1983). Developing Criteria for Textbook Evaluation. *ELT Journal*, 37(3), 251-255.