

A Checklist-Based Evaluative and Comparative Study of ESP Books: The Case of Mechanical Engineering

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Abstract

Textbook evaluation serves as a useful tool at teachers' disposal to cope with uncertainty in opting for the proper material prior to embarking on their teaching career. This study aims at comparing two different ESP textbooks, one of them English for students of Mechanical Engineering, design of solids (SAMT publication), and the other one English in Mechanical Engineering (Oxford University Press). For the purpose of comparison and contrast, Textbook Evaluation Checklist (Miekley, 2005) was used against which the components of these two books were weighed to show what they have in common and where the point of departure from any commonality is. Although based on evaluative questions some inherent inefficiencies of these textbooks were revealed, it was generally concluded that both of them have tenable justification to be taught as an ESP course book.

Key words: ESP, mechanical engineering, textbook evaluation

Introduction

In the educational settings where there are not enough trained and experienced teachers textbooks can play an important role. This fact does not mean the teachers' blind faith in or unconditional reliance on textbook. As stated by Williams (1983, p. 251) "it is ironical that those teachers who rely most heavily on the textbook are the ones least

qualified to interpret its intentions or evaluate its content and method". Since it cannot be applied to the requirements of every classroom setting any textbook should be evaluated in advance with regard to the unique characteristics and specific needs of students and the classroom. An example is the case of an ESP course for which a language teacher rather than content teacher has been selected. Is this language teacher qualified enough to decide about content area and the kind of target tasks to be incorporated in the textbook? The same concern is at work in the case of a content teacher. Is s/he in a position to choose the kind of language or grammatical structures suitable for the learners' prospective needs? All of these considerations warrant due attention in the material development phase but once the content is decided upon and published the final decision relies on local teachers. They can either comply with the common sense and follow pre-packaged formula or sound a bit nonconformist and develop their own criteria of material selection. It is in this moment that material evaluation comes to the scene.

At the present time situated language teaching and learning is very much in vogue and hence a common practice of many teachers all over the world. As a result, the recommendation for the teachers is to adhere to characteristic features of their local context and consequently choose those materials that can best cater for the specific needs of their learners. It can be stated that material evaluation and selection can act as the first and maybe the most important building block in the process of language teaching and learning. Needless to say, the teachers need some measures and criteria to put this building block in its right place and establish their career on firm grounds. But who has the authority to decide on these measures and criteria? Educational theorists, policy makers, textbook publishers, authors, administrators, and teachers are all and all involved in this process, and of course, may have conflicting views about what a good/standard textbook is. In an attempt to bring all these conflicting ideas under some patterns of convergence, some of the scholars have tried to develop some agreed-upon evaluative checklists for textbook evaluation. Although not an easy task, it paid off since it brought about some common ground for deciding on suitability of particular textbooks for particular groups of learners. This common ground created a balanced perspective toward textbook evaluation and selection which stands in a middle-way between two extreme perspectives.

On one extreme, teachers who are confronted with different and diversified textbooks and confused consequently may at first close their

eyes on the genuine quality of book and opt for the most readily at hand and commercially sold and successful one. On the other extreme, another group of teachers may be of tenacious temper and long for never-existing materials devoid of any demerits. The evaluative checklists and frameworks try to mediate between these two extremes and strike a balance between detailed evaluation and required efficiency. The same trend of thought is followed in this study, i.e., it is attempted to come up with some common ground for textbook evaluation. Due to dearth of research in the Iranian context in this camp, a need is felt to do more and more comparative studies on ESP materials developed in or out of the local situation to see which one is better able to address the particular needs of students learning English for specific purposes. Hence, it is best tried to make a convenient, though comprehensive, comparison of two different ESP textbooks of the same subject area with the hope of providing enlightening insights for material developers and language practitioners.

Literature Review

Since 1970, and with the emergence of humanistic approaches to language learning and teaching, learner-centered instruction has become the cry of educational entrepreneurs and textbooks have become the most important means to this end. They are the most readily available resources at teachers' disposal and if care has been taken in their selection and evaluation the success of any educational program will be to the most extent guaranteed. Yet, textbooks should not determine the objectives or become the aims, but they should be at the service of teachers or learners (Brown, 1995). ESP textbooks are not an exception to this general rule. While their quality has improved dramatically in recent years, their selection based on tried and testified criteria has posed a problem for most teachers and administrators. According to Cunnigworth (1984), there is a need to ensure careful selection of textbook so that it reflects the needs of the learners and the aims, methods, and values of the teaching program. Developing a wide variety of relevant and contextually appropriate criteria for the textbook evaluation must be of utmost importance to the ESP practitioners. Sheldon (1988) suggested that the selection of ESP textbooks is an important administrative and educational decision. It assists the educators in identifying the particular merits and demerits of textbooks and helps them in finding the solution to never ending problem of choosing among abundant alternatives.

It should be borne in mind that textbook evaluation is a subjective activity and there is no one-size-fits-all list of criteria that can be applied to all educational contexts without much modification. Checklist-based textbook evaluation must be informed by a set of sound standards. Brown (1995) stated that evaluation checklists should have some criteria related to physical characteristics of textbooks such as layout, organizational and logistical characteristics. Other additional criteria are concerned with its aims, approaches, methodology, and its compatibility with curriculum. Furthermore, criteria should analyze the formal, functional, and cultural contents of the textbooks. Dudley-Evans and St. John (1998) divided evaluation into formative and summative types. The former refers to an ongoing process of evaluation while the latter refers to an end of the course evaluation. Their preference and recommendation is for a formative evaluation. Richards (2001) suggested another kind of evaluation, namely illuminative. He described this kind of evaluation as the process that seeks to find out how different aspects of the program work or are being implemented.

McDonough and Shaw (2003) suggested a three-tiered model of textbook evaluation; first, external evaluation which examines the organization of materials stated by the author or the publisher; second, internal evaluation which investigates factors like the presentation of the skills, the grading, sequence, authenticity, and appropriateness of the materials; third, overall evaluation in which usability, generalizability, adaptability, and flexibility factors are examined.

Apart from past and present developments in the area of material development and textbook evaluation in ESP domain, a few words worth mentioning about its current status in Iran. Deeply-felt need of having specific materials tailored to the specific academic majors has pushed SAMT publication to the forefront of ESP material development in Iran. In recent years a couple of ESP textbooks have been developed and distributed nationwide by this organization. Satisfaction or dissatisfaction with these materials has triggered many teachers or researchers to do a content evaluation of these books based on some criteria to decide upon their applicability or acceptability in Iranian academic context.

Tajeddin (2005) made an evaluation of some of the ESP textbooks in terms of three aspects, namely linguistic input, linguistic output and their relationship to each other. His conclusion was that ESP textbooks published by SAMT organization lack one integrated approach and

lesson plan. Moreover, they do not follow any specific purpose with regard to the selected reading passages, or activities designed for improving the learners' translation or comprehension ability.

Rahimy (2008) evaluated the content and skill coverage of an ESP textbook for medical students, i.e., *Medical Terminology* (Cohen, 2008), and its compatibility with Iranian curriculum for medical sciences. The results indicated that the content and curriculum for medical sciences had nearly complete compatibility concerning reading and close compatibility concerning writing while incompatibility concerning listening and speaking.

Zangani (2009) evaluated ESP textbooks in Humanities. His aim was to see whether new goals in language learning and teaching are incorporated in these books and language and learning needs of students are catered for or not. Regarding the first variable, his findings indicated that the textbooks had not incorporated new goals to enhance linguistic and communicative competence. Concerning the second variable, it was found that the objectives and materials of the textbooks did not take students' language and professional needs into account.

Razmjoo and Raissi (2010) evaluated "ESP Textbooks for the Students of Medical Sciences" published by SAMT organization. They aimed at examining following features from students' and instructors' viewpoints: the theoretical considerations, the organizational features and practical considerations, the content, the language skills, the vocabulary and the grammatical structure. Their results revealed participants' dissatisfaction with most of the abovementioned criteria. Furthermore, no significant differences between the students' and instructors' opinions were found.

Fakher Ajabshir (2011) tried to evaluate "English for the Students of Management" written by Moshfeghi. She placed the focus of her study on the attitudes of the students and the teachers towards this book. Results showed that from the participants' point of view the major deficiencies were in relation to the author's approach to language and methodology, lack of balance between language skills and insufficient inclusion of communicative activities.

Baleghzadeh and Rahimi (2011) made an attempt to determine the overall pedagogical value and suitability of the textbook “English for the Students of Sociology: Social Science Texts”, taught at the University of Tehran. They took factors like practical concerns, skills and strategies, variety of tasks and activities, and the layout of materials into account. The findings indicated that the book, despite having merits, was not very suitable for the course in terms of abovementioned criteria.

Maleki and Kazemi (2012) tried to compare Medical Terminology (MT) (Cohen, 2008) and English for the Students of Medicine (ESM) (II) (Tahririan & Mehrabi, 1994). They tried to investigate teachers’ and students’ attitudes towards these textbooks. The results of analysis indicated that from the both groups’ point of view, MT was significantly better than ESM with respect to the categories of layout and design, activities, language type, subject and content.

As was reviewed above a number of healthy criticisms and constructive comments have been raised about the potential strengths and weaknesses of ESP materials developed in Iran. The same trend is followed in the present study with the hope of promoting the overall status of ESP in general and adding to its stock of material evaluation in particular.

Methodology

Instruments

ESL Textbook Evaluation Checklist devised and prepared by Joshua Miekley (2005) was used for the purpose of evaluation. As stated by its author each question in this checklist is based on either recent research or previously developed checklists. For example, research findings in the area of effective language learning and critical awareness of strategies employed in language learning (Auerbach & Paxton, 1997, Salataci & Akyel, 2002) form the basis for the construction of this checklist. Moreover, it was also constructed using elements of Byrd’s (2001) and Skierso’s (1991) checklists. In addition to this checklist there is a proposal available which has been prepared by SAMT organization. This proposal presents the outline of a sample lesson which should be followed in all books compiled by this organization. What follows are the elements incorporated in this proposal: Warm up, Reading, Comprehension check, Discussion, Grammar focus, Vocabulary in context, Dictionary work, Word forms, Sentence formation, Paragraph

formation, Paraphrasing, Writing, Translation, Vocabulary list and Review section exercises.

Data Analysis

In the following tables content analysis of these two textbooks has been presented. As it can be seen each table is composed of five major themes, namely content, vocabulary and grammar, exercises and activities, attractiveness of the text and physical make-up, and context. They consist of 2, 3, 4, 2, and 3 questions respectively. Depending on the presence and the quality of each of the five abovementioned themes the answers to each question have to be chosen among the following options: excellent, good, adequate, poor, and totally lacking. In this section just a brief reference has been made to these major themes and their constituent questions and the detailed discussion of findings is left for the next section.

Table 1

Content analysis of SAMT textbook

Textbook Evaluation Checklist		Excellent	Good	Adequate	Poor	Totally Lacking
1	Content					
1.1	Is the subject matter presented either topically or functionally in a logical, organized manner?	√				
1.2	Are the reading selections authentic pieces of language?		√			
2	Vocabulary and Grammar					
2.1	Are the grammar rules presented in a logical manner and in increasing order of difficulty?					√
2.2	Are the new vocabulary words presented in a variety of ways (e.g. glosses, multi glosses, and appositives)?					√

Textbook Evaluation Checklist		Excellent	Good	Adequate	Poor	Totally Lacking
2.3	Are the new vocabulary words repeated in subsequent lessons to reinforce their meaning and use?					√
3	Exercises and Activities					
3.1	Are there interactive and task-based activities that require students to use new vocabulary to communicate?				√	
3.2	Do instructions in the textbook tell students to read for comprehension?	√				
3.3	Do the activities facilitate students' use of grammar rules by creating situations in which these rules are needed?				√	
3.4	Do the exercises promote critical thinking of the text?			√		
4	Attractiveness of the Text and Physical Make-up					
4.1	Is the cover of the book appealing?		√			
4.2	Is the visual imagery of high aesthetic quality?				√	
5	Context					
5.1	Does the text coincide with the course goals?	√				
5.2	Is the textbook appropriate for the students who will be using it?		√			
5.3	Is the textbook appropriate for the teacher who will be teaching it?		√			

Table 2

Content analysis of OXFORD textbook

Textbook Evaluation Checklist		Excellent	Good	Adequate	Poor	Totally Lacking
1	Content					
1.1	Is the subject matter presented either topically or functionally in a logical, organized manner?	√				
1.2	Are the reading selections authentic pieces of language?				√	
2	Vocabulary and Grammar					
2.1	Are the grammar rules presented in a logical manner and in increasing order of difficulty?			√		
2.2	Are the new vocabulary words presented in a variety of ways (e.g. glosses, multi glosses, and appositives)?				√	
2.3	Are the new vocabulary words repeated in subsequent lessons to reinforce their meaning and use?		√			
3	Exercises and Activities					
3.1	Are there interactive and task-based activities that require students to use new vocabulary to communicate?	√				

Textbook Evaluation Checklist		Excellent	Good	Adequate	Poor	Totally Lacking
3.2	Do instructions in the textbook tell students to read for comprehension?		√			
3.3	Do the activities facilitate students' use of grammar rules by creating situations in which these rules are needed?			√		
3.4	Do the exercises promote critical thinking of the text?	√				
4	Attractiveness of the Text and Physical Make-up					
4.1	Is the cover of the book appealing?	√				
4.2	Is the visual imagery of high aesthetic quality?		√			
5	Context					
5.1	Does the text coincide with the course goals?		√			
5.2	Is the textbook appropriate for the students who will be using it?	√				
5.3	Is the textbook appropriate for the teacher who will be teaching it?		√			

Results and Discussion

Evaluation of SAMT Textbook

The first point is that among the factors included in SAMT proposal just the following features were available in this book: Reading, Comprehension check, Vocabulary in context, Word forms, Paragraph formation, and Translation.

General description of the book

The book contains 15 units, each one with a similar format. In each lesson three different reading passages can be found, all of which about topics related to Mechanical Engineering. The first passage (reading comprehension) is followed by these items: true/false questions, multiple choice questions (some of the choices are in sentence format and the others in single word format), oral answers to the questions, fill-in-the-blank (either the appropriate form of the given words or just the given words), paragraph formation in which students are provided with a group of disordered sentences and are required to unscramble them. The question types which follow the second reading passage (further reading) are very similar to the previous ones with a bit difference: true/false questions, multiple choice questions (this time choices are just in sentence format), written answers to the questions. At the end, the third reading passage (translation passage) is accompanied with an exercise which contains a list of technical words for which students are supposed to find suitable Persian equivalents. The same procedure is reiterated in all the other chapters with only different contents in their reading passage. The cover of the book has a purple column with a background colored in very light purple. Both of the front and back cover pages possess the same content, one in Persian and the other in English.

Evaluative questions

A. Content

1. Is the subject matter presented either topically or functionally in a logical, organized manner?

In this book units are organized topically and logically. The book starts with describing mechanical design, continues with covering the topic of mechanics of solids, and finally discusses the mechanics of fluids.

2. Are the reading selections authentic pieces of language?

The texts and selections seem real-like and authentic. They represent the type of target situation tasks that would-be mechanical engineers are about to experience in their future careers. In terms of content relevance these kinds of texts score over artificial and inauthentic texts and have a quite positive and productive impact on learners. After all, they enjoy a very high index of face validity.

B. Vocabulary and grammar

1. *Are the grammar rules presented in a logical manner and in increasing order of difficulty?*

In this book there is no reference to grammatical rules and consequently no trace of manner or order of presentation. Inspired by the movement away from grammatical accuracy and towards meaningfulness and being communicative, the author might have preferred not to devote any subsection to the grammatical rules.

2. *Are the new vocabulary words presented in a variety of ways (e.g. glosses, multi glosses, and appositives)?*

There is no clear reference to new vocabulary words. It seems that the aim of the book is just improving reading comprehension while the way and the method to achieve this goal are not specified. Students will surely come across with new words during reading the selections but those words are neither highlighted in the main text nor referred to in a separate section.

3. *Are the new vocabulary words repeated in subsequent lessons to reinforce their meaning and use?*

As it was mentioned above new words are not emphasized separately in this book. This is contrary to common tendency of ESP material developer to include a box of technical words. Needless to say learners require a good command of relevant technical vocabularies to cope with the likely occupational duties.

C. Exercises and activities

1. *Are there interactive and task-based activities that require students to use new vocabulary to communicate?*

Activities and exercises in the book do not enjoy enough variety which requires students to use new words and to enhance communication. The exercises are multiple-choice, true-false, and fill-in-the-blanks. They do not seem interactive or communicative in the current and common sense.

2. *Do instructions in the textbook tell students to read for comprehension?*

Yes, the main focus of the book is reading for comprehension, and questions in all exercises require full comprehension of the text. There is a wide range of activities for which comprehension plays a prerequisite role.

3. *Do the activities facilitate students' use of grammar rules by creating situations in which these rules are needed?*

There are no activities concerned with the application of grammar rules. As was mentioned in previous question the main aim of most of the activities is to evaluate or enhance learners' comprehension not grammatical or lexical knowledge.

4. *Do the exercises promote critical thinking of the text?*

Some of the comprehension questions require students to think critically about the topic but compared to other exercises they are far and few between. Most of exercises need just short answers.

D. Attractiveness of the text and physical make-up

1. *Is the cover of the book appealing?*

Like other SAMT publications, the appearance of the present book follows the same principle of simplicity and intelligibility. It does not have a colorful character. A brief and simple mention of the field with no pictorial reference can be seen on the cover page.

2. *Is the visual imagery of high aesthetic quality?*

The imagery used in the book is very infrequent. They are not added to facilitate learning but they are used when they are focus of a comprehension question. The pictures which are used are in black and white.

E. Context

1. *Does the text coincide with the course goals?*

Since all books published by SAMT organization have the same format and appearance and all of them are some collections of reading texts, it is inferred that the goal is just improving reading comprehension. If it is so, the books coincide with the course goals.

2. *Is the textbook appropriate for the students who will be using it?*

Such books, which are composed of a couple of reading excerpts directly related to the learners' field of study and work, are highly relevant and intrinsically interesting to the learners. Moreover, in reading such books there will be many new words and novel structures appearing in periphery to which learners' awareness can be raised by an alert and competent teacher.

3. Is the textbook appropriate for the teacher who will be teaching it?

This book has a teacher-friendly format and as a result is easy to be taught by the ESP teacher. The nature of the book is such that just translating the text suffices for teaching purposes. It does not need a high extent of energy for and expertise in engaging learners in various task types.

Evaluation of the OXFORD Textbook

Among the items included in the SAMT proposal this book possesses the following sections: Reading, Comprehension check, Grammar focus, Vocabulary in context, Dictionary work, Sentence formation, Paragraph formation, Paraphrasing, Writing, Review section exercises.

General description of the book

In this textbook these parts can be observed: 8 units, each one including 5 parts: Reading and Comprehension, Use of Language, Information Transfer, Guided Writing, and Free Reading. Contrary to the SAMT version, you can find a variety of activities in each of these parts. In *Reading Comprehension* section there are rephrasing, contextual references, and relationship between sentences. The second part, i.e., *Use of Language*, has the most varied types of exercises: classification of Engineering material, making definition/generalization (both lower-level and higher level) /observation /induction /description /preposition/ prediction,..., instructions and results, noun modification, diagram completion and interpretation, language of measurement (basic, derived, and compound metric units), defining/ non-defining/ and short-form relative clauses, sentence combination, cause and effect, problem and solutions, etc., In the third part, which is *Information Transfer*, the following activities are seen: describing dimensions, sentence building, stating laws, designing specifications, transforming diagrams into description, making recommendation based on a graph or a table, making a comparison based on a diagram, inducting based on diagrams or tables, describing the shape of objects, etc., The next part, i.e., *Guided Writing*, is composed of these activities; sentence and paragraph building, using diagrams to illustrate the passage, writing, illustrating and completing the report of an experiment. The *free reading* phase which is the last part of each unit does not possess any activity part following it. Instead, the last two pages of the book are devoted to some open-ended questions on each of free-reading parts of all 8 units.

Evaluative questions

A. Content

1. *Is the subject matter presented either topically or functionally in a logical, organized manner?*

Yes, the book starts with more basic and important concepts in mechanics, i.e., introducing engineering materials and their properties in the first chapter, and in the next chapters it goes on with talking about mechanical concepts such as vectors, force, friction, levers and so on.

2. *Are the reading selections authentic pieces of language?*

The language doesn't seem authentic, i.e., the reading passages do not sound real-like samples of performance naturally occurring in normal setting. They are provided pedagogically just to be taught in the classroom and bear no resemblance to target-like language samples.

B. Vocabulary and grammar

1. *Are the grammar rules presented in a logical manner and in increasing order of difficulty?*

The grammatical rules have not been devoted any separate section in this book. They are presented in the *Free Writing* section and students are required to write a paragraph using those structures. These structures are arranged based on the level of difficulty.

2. *Are the new vocabulary words presented in a variety of ways (e.g. glosses, multi glosses, and appositives)?*

Like grammar rules the new words are not presented under a distinct exercise addressing vocabulary. They are implicitly introduced in activities with different purposes and there is no way to understand or guess the meaning of new words.

3. *Are the new vocabulary words repeated in subsequent lessons to reinforce their meaning and use?*

Although no single section has been devoted to vocabularies, a recurrent pattern of vocabulary occurrence can be detected in this textbook. Since all the chapters revolve around similar engineering themes it is no wonder that each new occurrence of the vocabulary items increase their final uptake by learners.

C. Exercises and activities

1. *Are there interactive and task-based activities that require students to use new vocabulary to communicate?*

There are various kinds of tasks and exercises in this book which need students' interaction and cooperation. It can be conceived as one of the strongest points of this book since it is more in line with the recent development in the area of task-based language teaching. It has been tried to integrate tasks in novel and numerous ways to further enhance learning.

2. Do instructions in the textbook tell students to read for comprehension?

In the reading section there are some questions the answer to which requires a high degree of comprehension on the learners' part. But compared to SAMT book they are not exclusively comprehension oriented, i.e., other abilities have been dealt with as well.

3. Do the activities facilitate students' use of grammar rules by creating situations in which these rules are needed?

As was mentioned before the grammatical rules are only presented in the *Free Writing* section in which students are required to write a paragraph using those structures. Since free writing has an open-ended nature it does not allow author to explicitly create situations in which learners' freedom to use certain grammatical structures are delimited. Here learners are acting within the boundaries of their own imagination not author's prescription.

4. Do the exercises promote critical thinking of the text?

Yes, this is one of the main outstanding features of the exercises of this book. Most of comprehension questions aim at raising and promoting critical thinking. The intention behind these questions is to create contexts in which cooperative and critical learning is fostered simultaneously.

D. Attractiveness of the text and physical make-up

1. Is the cover of the book appealing?

There is an eye-catching picture of a mechanical instrument in its front page and a short explanation about the content of the book in its back cover page. At the very first glance this fact establishes a direct relevance between the cover page and what is inside the book. The paper used in the cover pages is of a very high quality indeed.

2. Is the visual imagery of high aesthetic quality?

All images used in the book are in black and white except those of the cover pages. Compared to SAMT version it has incorporated more

pictures for getting the ideas across. The presence of different activities has permitted much freedom and flexibility in picture selection and presentation.

E. Context

1. Does the text coincide with the course goals?

The compatibility of text content and course goals seems satisfactory since this book is full of relevant materials to brush up learners' reading comprehension and writing abilities. In each chapter they learn about rephrasing, contextual references, relationship between sentences, reorganizing and a couple of other similar skills.

2. Is the textbook appropriate for the students who will be using it?

Existence of different tasks and exercise acts as a bonus for the students. They not only make learning a convivial and enjoyable experience but also enhance a high sense of competence and capability on learners' part to deal with a variety of mechanical texts. In fact, by using this book students will be able to read and comprehend different mechanics-based texts. They can also write short texts about mechanics.

3. Is the textbook appropriate for the teacher who will be teaching it?

There are various texts with different kinds of comprehension questions which make this book a comprehensive source for teachers to enhance reading and writing about subjects on mechanics. Teachers can take advantage of varied tasks and activities to engage learners in meaningful learning and make them more in charge of effective learning.

Conclusion

In the preceding parts the characteristics of two ESP textbooks, one published by SAMT Organization, the other published by OXFORD University Press were taken into account. Based on evaluative questions, it was revealed that both of them have tenable justification to be taught as an ESP course book. This general conclusion has been drawn from detailed evaluation and comparison of the two mentioned books. Except for the content section for which both books had similar format, i.e. some reading passages followed by a couple of comprehension questions, it was observed that regarding physical appearance oxford version of ESP course book has a better status than the SAMT book. It also possessed a wide range of activities and exercises compared to its SAMT counterpart. With regard to the contextual value of the book, SAMT had a better quality because of the application of authentic materials which

on the one hand makes the learning process more similar to the future target situation and hence more learner-friendly, and on the other hand makes the teaching process more tangible and enjoyable. Other criteria like vocabulary and grammar are pushed to periphery in both books and these elements for being picked up require a high sense of sensitivity on the teacher's part and consciousness on the learner's part. This piece of research can have implication for material development in general, and ESP material developers in particular. The kind of content analysis carried out in this study revealed a couple of strengths and weaknesses of these two academic textbooks. Equipped with the findings from this study the ESP material developers will be able to avoid the kind of pitfalls that previous publishers fell into. They can also follow the successful procedures which have yielded satisfactory results and withstood the test of time. ESP practitioners, on the other hand, can take these findings as preventive measures and screening toll prior to textbook selection. The comparative nature of the present study can enable Iranian ESP teachers to go through available options and see which one is more practical and profitable, either a locally published material or the one produced overseas. As a suggestion for further research other researchers can either use a different textbook evaluation checklist or do the same study with the books written for other fields of study.

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