

# An In-depth Evaluation of Interchange Series (3<sup>rd</sup> Edition)

R. SAHRAGARD, A. RAHIMI, I. ZAREMOAYEDDI  
*Shiraz University, Iran*

Received: 14 February 2008 / Accepted: 12 July 2008  
ISSN: 1697-7467

**ABSTRACT:** In today's classrooms, textbooks play a very crucial role in the realm of language teaching and learning. And after teachers, they are considered to be the next important factor in the second/foreign language classroom. Therefore, selecting a proper textbook for a class has been one of the most important tasks for teachers. Whether the teacher should have the freedom to select the materials for evaluation and adaptation or not still remains controversial. One thing is clear, however, and that is evaluation is usually done and no one denies its necessity. Along the lines of arguments presented so far, the main thrust of the present research is to carry out an evaluation on a series of ELT materials namely, Interchange 3rd edition. For this purpose Littlejohn's detailed framework (1998) is employed in this attempt. The scheme attempts to evaluate the selected textbook regardless of how it is used in the classroom, what he calls analyzing the material 'as it is'.

Interchange is not completely along with the objectives intended for it. It doesn't use learners or even the teachers as a source for its content. Supra sentential level as well is ignored for both the expected output and input of the learners. More importantly these are not the learners who initiate the tasks. Interchange series; on the other, hand focus mainly on pair works and meaning. They also encourage students to use the language and more importantly they more often require them to express themselves than to be a listener.

**Key Words:** Textbook evaluation, in-depth analysis.

## Una evaluación a fondo de series de intercambio (3<sup>a</sup> Edición)

**RESUMEN:** En las aulas de hoy, los manuales juegan un papel muy crucial en el "reino" de enseñanza de los idiomas. Después de los profesores, los libros de texto son el factor más importante en el aula de idioma extranjero. Por eso, la selección de manuales apropiados para la clase ha sido una de las tareas más importantes del profesorado. Hasta qué punto el profesor debería tener la libertad de seleccionar los materiales para la evaluación y la adaptación sigue siendo algo polémico. Una cosa parece clara, la evaluación por lo general es un hecho y nadie niega su necesidad. A lo largo de las líneas argumentales que presentamos aquí, realizamos una evaluación sobre una serie de materiales de ELT a saber, *Interchange* 3<sup>a</sup> edición. Para ello, hemos empleado el modelo de Littlejohn (1998). El estudio evalúa el manual seleccionado independientemente de cómo éste es usado en el aula, lo que él llama el análisis del material "tal y como es".

**Palabras clave:** evaluación de libros de texto, análisis en profundidad.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

McDonough and Shaw (2003) believe that there are some situations that we need to evaluate materials. In the first situation the teachers might be given the choice to adopt or develop their materials and in the second the teachers are just consumers of other peoples' products. In both of these situations some degree of evaluation is needed.

In EFL contexts it can be argued that the teacher and the textbook are the two most important and immediate cultural links between the student's native culture and the target foreign culture. If the influential roles of the teacher and the textbook are accepted, then the way the textbook portrays the role of various people in the target society and the way they use language to express their intentions directly affect EFL students' choices of language when communicating with native speakers. Therefore, the materials and textbooks of each period in the history of ELT reflect the principles and ideas of a teaching method which were fashionable in that time. But as Kumaravadivelu (2006) mentions, we are living in a 'post-method' condition where no single and unique method guarantees success in all language classrooms and for all learners.

Whether the teacher should have the freedom to select the materials for evaluation and adaptation or not still remains controversial. One thing is clear, however, and that is evaluation is usually done and no one denies its necessity. Along the lines of arguments presented so far, the main thrust of the present research is to carry out an evaluation on a series of ELT materials namely, *Interchange 3rd edition*.

*Interchange 3rd Edition*, the newest revision of *New Interchange*, is written by Richards, Hull and Proctor in 2006 and is claimed to be communicative and task-based. The authors also state that the textbooks include high-interest topics, focus on both fluency, and a multi-skills syllabus integrating themes, structures, functions, vocabulary, and pronunciation. They believe that the underlying philosophy of the course is best learned when used for meaningful communication. However, since the publication of the *Interchange (3rd edition)* in 2006, there has been no research to show to what degree such claims could be valid.

## 2. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The present study aims at exploring and evaluating the *Interchange* series, to show to what extent the real application of communicative and task-based approaches are applied in the materials of the text book mentioned.

The results of the evaluation is hoped to benefit English teachers in many of language institutes in that it might give them insight into the course book they use and how they can exploit it better.

As mentioned earlier since the publication of *interchange (3rd edition)* in 2006, there has been no research to show to what degree such claims could be valid. As Riazi (2001) states textbooks are the second effective factor in every classroom after the teacher. As such, the study seeks answers to the following questions with reference to *Interchange 3rd edition* series:

**RQ1:** What are the pedagogic values of the newest version of *Interchange* series?

**RQ2:** How are the newly developed and widely used the Interchange books (3rd edition) in line with the objectives set for them?

**RQ3:** What are the strengths and weaknesses of the Interchange series (3rd edition)?

### 3. METHOD

#### 3.1. Participants

The participants of the study were four raters who were asked to complete the evaluative checklists. The raters of the study were ELT experts who had taught the textbooks under analysis, Interchange (3<sup>rd</sup> edition), for at least one year each. Their teaching experience ranged from 4 to 10 years.

#### 3.2. Instrument

To conduct the evaluation, Littlejohn's (1998) checklist was used to be completed by the four raters. Appending the check list seems redundant as ample description about each part will ensue in the results part.

Each checklist consisted of two parts. The first part –Task Analysis Sheets (TAS) - examines the activities and tasks in one typical unit of each textbook. These Task Analysis Sheets include three sections. For each activity one Task Analysis Sheet was allocated. Here, the raters were asked to tick the items which were present in the task. In each subsection the raters may have ticked one or more items. For instance, in case of subsection ‘Mental Operation’, a task may involve the learner in both retrieving information from his/her long term memory *and* decoding semantic meaning. As we mentioned the tasks of just two units of each textbook were examined for two reasons. One was that all units include the same parts and tasks in a uniform sequence, i.e. all the units are in the same format. The other reason is about practical considerations. If the researcher wanted to provide a TAS(Task Analysis Sheets) for all activities in the four textbooks the checklists would be too long and exhausting to be rated by the participants. Littlejohn himself mentions that to do evaluation at this stage 10 to 15 percent of the textbook is sufficient to be analyzed.

In the second part of the checklists –‘Design’- a numerical scale of 0 to 4 points was provided. This part consists of nine sections of Design part in Littlejohn's framework, namely:

- I. Aims and objectives (including 7 evaluative questions)
- II. Principles of selection (including 7 evaluative questions)
- III. Principles of sequencing(including 7 evaluative questions)
- IV. Subject mater and focus of subject matter (including 7 evaluative questions)
- V. Types of teaching/learning activities (including 7 evaluative questions)
- VI. Participation: who does what with whom? (including 7 evaluative questions)
- VII. Classroom roles of teachers and learners (including 7 evaluative questions)
- VIII. Learner roles in learning (including 7 evaluative questions)
- IX. Role of materials as a whole (including 7 evaluative questions)

### 3.3. Data Analysis Procedure

Through performing a page-by-page analysis of evaluative checklists, already checked by the experts, frequency counts and percentage indexes were reported for individual features which were listed in the task analysis sheets. For the second part, design, as well first a general percentage indexes were reported for the seven subcategories introduced in the previous part and then the percentage index of each question was reported as well.

The following part of the analysis contains the result of the interviews. The results are presented both in the form of frequencies and percentage indices.

### 3.4. Results of the evaluations

Results of the evaluations are presented in tables and a graph below. In each of these tables and graphs the ultimate results for the Interchange series for both of the evaluations are given together to be easily compared. In each section of the evaluations the interpretation of the results are followed by some discussions. The main focus of these discussions is to evaluate the textbook according to the scores given by the raters. Although the resulted scores and percentages given can be evidently interpreted by the wise reader, the researchers will state their own interpretations of the results regarding the strengths and weaknesses of the textbook.

The results of the evaluations are presented in two parts, relative to the two main parts of the evaluation checklists, namely, the «Task Analysis» part and the «Design» part.

### 3.5. Results of Task Analysis

As mentioned earlier, in Littlejohn's materials evaluation framework the learning tasks presented in the materials are considered the building blocks of any set of materials. As such, the analysis of tasks from different aspects is very important in order to find out the overall value of the materials. The results of the analysis of tasks are presented in tables below.

As mentioned before, task analysis sheets were composed of three sections, each addressing a question about a major aspect of the tasks. In this section the results for each of these questions are presented together with their interpretations.

Before enumerating the results, it should be mentioned that in order to examine the reliability of the results for 'Task Analysis Sheet' part, the Cronbach's Alpha reliability was calculated using the SPSS software to determine both the inter and intra-rater reliability of the results (i.e. the degree of agreement between evaluators' ratings of the thirty seven subsections mentioned above with two weeks intervals). The Alpha reliability for evaluators' ratings, on Interchange was calculated and the results showed very high reliability indices. The resulted index was 0.96 for inter-rater reliability, and 0.947, 0.999, 0.987, 0.969 for intra-rater reliabilities for all the raters.

## 4. WHAT IS THE LEARNER EXPECTED TO DO?

This question analyzes the demands which the tasks have on the learners. In other words, how the learner is supposed to accomplish the task. This question examines three specific aspects of a task.

#### 4.1. Turn-Take

Turn-take refers to the kind of participation which the learner should have when accomplishing the learning task.

As Table 1 shows the Interchange in its tasks mostly expect the learners to «respond» (81.34%). «Initiation» receives the next greatest percentage in Interchange textbooks, with 13.99%. Also the percentage of tasks which do not require learners to initiate or respond is the least with 5.05%. These results show that the Interchange 3<sup>rd</sup> Edition tasks more often encourage students to use the language and more importantly they more often require them to express themselves than to be a listener. Research shows that when the students get more opportunities to express themselves in L2 they are more likely to learn it more successfully. Therefore, Interchange seems to be quiet successful in this regard. Also, the fact that the textbooks include less tasks ( if we let ourselves to call them tasks at all) which do not require the learners to initiate or respond (i.e. «Not required»), shows that the Interchange caters for more involvement of the learners in the classroom events. However, we should not ignore the fact that the majority of tasks in Interchange 3<sup>rd</sup> Edition require learners to «respond» and a much smaller proportion require students to «initiate» using the language. This is not satisfactory if we desire to have an active class.

**Table 1.** *Frequency and percentage → Turn Take (average scores).*

	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>percentage</b>
Initiate	220	13.99%
Respond	1312	81.34%
Not required	82	5.5%
Total	1614	100%

#### 4.2. Focus

This part of task analysis examines the tasks by asking «where the learner is to concentrate his/her attention» when participating in learning tasks presented by the textbook. The nature of the task may necessitate attention to the ‘language system’ (the rules or the form of the language), the ‘meaning’ (the message of the language being used), or the ‘meaning-system relationship’ (the relationship between language form and its meaning).

Results of the task analyses in this part, Table 2, shows that for the Interchange 3<sup>rd</sup> Edition the activities which draw on ‘meaning’ are about 65.47% of the total proportion. Activities which have language form as their focus, on the other hand, are about equal to the tasks which draw students’ attention to form-meaning relationship (17.40% and 17.07% respectively). These results show that the tasks in the Interchange third Edition focus on grammatical structures or other points related to form marginally more than the amount they focus on form-meaning relationships. Instead, the Interchange tries to draw on meaning as the basis for the learning. This could be a sign of success for the selected textbooks, since one

major objective of the book has been developing a communicative competence which is achieved via enhancing 'comprehension' of the language, and comprehending the language necessitates attention to meaning. It is worth mentioning that the activities with focus on both the form and meaning are not that frequent in the selected textbook, which is a draw back for Interchange Third Edition.

**Table 2.** *Frequency and percentage → Focus.*

	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>percentage</b>
Language system (rules or form)	258	17.40%
Meaning	971	65.47%
Meaning/system relationship	253	17.07%
Total	1482	100%

### 4.3. Mental Operation

When participating in a language learning task, the learner may be directed to go through different mental operations either to comprehend the language or to produce language. A wide range of mental operations are probable when a learner wants to comprehend or produce language. In this part of task analysis 10 items of mental operations as shown in Table 3 were included. As table 3 shows, Interchange contains all the ten mental operations in its tasks, although there are differences regarding the proportions of each mental operation.

**Table 3.** *Frequency and percentage → Mental Operation.*

	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>percentage</b>
Retrieve from long-term memory	77	3.17%
Build text	360	14.2%
Draw on prior knowledge	288	11.33%
Relate sounds to objects	165	6.48%
Compare	376	8.33%
Decode semantic meaning	359	14.17%
Select information	431	17.01%
Repeat with expansion	69	2.69%
Deduce language rule	192	7.59%
Apply language rule	377	14.87%
Total	2529	100%

The mental operation 'retrieve from long term memory' is so low for Interchange 3<sup>rd</sup> Edition (3.17%). This shows that the Interchange does not require students to recall linguistic or non-linguistic items from previous units. These items may be grammatical rules which the student has encountered in previous units, etc.

The tasks which require students to 'build text' (i.e. to produce a piece of language which is original and longer than a sentence response) are more frequent than the previously discussed mental operation (14.2%). This shows that Interchange Series encourage the learners more often to produce meaningful language of their own.

'Draw on their prior knowledge' (both linguistic and non-linguistic) has relatively less percentage (11.33%) than in the 'build text' (14.2%). This implies that the Interchange tries to relate the new teaching points to the previous ones in the unit and also to the points which they have been learned in prior units.

Tasks which require students to relate sounds to objects constitute only 6.48% of the activities in Interchange 3<sup>rd</sup> Edition. This implies that the activities which use auditory and visual channels for giving input to learners are not that frequent in the Interchange textbooks. This may be a disadvantage of the textbook since making use of all sensory channels in learning involves the students more actively in participating and also enhances the variety and consequently the motivation of the students.

The proportion of tasks requiring learners to 'compare' language samples based on their form or meaning is a bit more than the tasks which involved "relating sounds to objects" (8.33%). The objective of tasks which involve comparison is to enable students to notice differences between two sets of language samples including sounds, words, phrases, sentences, etc. in order to learn about their form (structure or pronunciation) and/or their function.

The percentage of the tasks that require learners to 'deduce semantic meaning' is relatively higher in the Interchange (14.17%) in comparison to other mental operations involved for the tasks. This mental operation involves students in understanding the 'surface' or 'propositional' meaning of a text or in simpler words what the text wants to say directly..

The mental operation 'select information' is a mental process which is drawn upon when the students are required to reply to reading comprehension questions whose answers are located in the passage. The proportion of this mental operation is the highest among all the mental operations within the task analysis sheets (17.01%). This may originate from the fact that each unit in the selected textbook is provided with an authentic reading passages which are followed by reading comprehension questions, but the percentage could go a step further by including exercises which asks students to express their ideas and general understanding.

The mental operation 'repeat with expansion' composes only 2.69% percent of the mental operations in Interchange Third Edition. This shows that tasks that give learners frames to produce language according to those frames are not so popular in this text book since the number is the least among the other mental operations.

Tasks which involve students in 'deducing language rule' compose 7.59 % of the mental operations in Interchange Third Edition. This result may well imply that the textbooks surprisingly do not apply an inductive approach toward teaching grammatical structures and other teaching points, or if it applies this is not that obvious within its tasks structure.

The percentage of learning tasks that require students to 'apply language rules' is 14.87% in Interchange Third Edition. Activities which involve this mental operation include mainly the grammar exercises, which are presented in two Grammar Focus parts in each unit. Although

this type of activities is not without pedagogical value, they don't seem to provide a meaningful context for the students, since they only let the learners do some grammatical transformations on single unrelated sentences.

#### 4.4. Who with?

This question examines another aspect of a task under analysis dealing with the kind of interaction which the learners and the teacher when participating in the learning task. Options in this regard are (a) 'learner to class' in which one specified student is supposed to give his/her or reports to the others in class, (b) 'learners individually simultaneously', in which each individual student performed the required task but not in collaboration with other learners, and (c) 'learners in pairs/groups', in which the learners are required to interact with each other in pairs or larger groups in order to do the task.

As Table 4 shows, only 1.64% of the activities in the Interchange require an individual student to answer or report to the class. The percentage of tasks requiring students to work individually without collaboration is high, dominating in the selected textbook (49.52 %). Tasks which involve students in pair or group work make up 48.82% of the tasks in Interchange 3<sup>rd</sup> Edition which is almost the same as the percentage we have for those tasks that involve learners individually. This shows that the authors of the selected textbook have given importance to pair/group work in their book. Although this percentage could be much more than that of 'learners individually simultaneously', since the importance of group working is known to all.

**Table 4.** *Frequency and percentage → who with?*

	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>percentage</b>
Language system (rules or form)	28	1.64%
Meaning	842	49.52%
Meaning/system relationship	830	48.82%
Total	1700	100%

#### 4.5. With what content?

This question relates to another important aspect of a task in a textbook, namely, the type of input given to the learners as the departure point for them to do the task, the kind of output which is expected from them by the task, the source of the input given to them and the nature of the contents which function as the building blocks of the task.

Results of the evaluations for this part are also presented in tables. It is worth mentioning that variety in these aspects of the tasks is a favorable factor, since it prevents monotony and lets the learners with different learning styles and preferences to be active in the class.

##### 4.5.1. *Input to the learners*

The input offered to the learners in the textbook tasks may be

- Graphic (pictures, illustrations, diagrams, etc.),



- Oral words/phrases/sentences,
- Oral extended discourse,
- Written words/phrases/sentences,
- Written extended discourse,
- Sounds/music.

As Table 5 shows, in general, the percentages of tasks' input in Interchange textbooks are not distributed so evenly. This shows that the selected textbook does not have variety in presenting different types of input to the learners. The 'written words/phrases/sentences' have the first and dominating rank in the distribution, other types of input have percentages which are not comparable to the written input.

The dominance of written input to the learners, especially words and sentences which are shorter than extended discourse (60.22%) implies that oral and visual inputs should receive more attention in our teaching materials. This could be achieved through developing audio or audiovisual materials which accompany the student's book. Also the relatively low percentage of graphic input (15.07%) shows that we need more illustrative pictures, diagrams, photos, etc. in our textbooks as sources for providing a visual context for the learners and also to make the textbook more attractive.

The results show that 'written words/phrases' and 'written extended discourse' are at both ends of the continuum with 60.22% and 2.52% respectively. This shows that written input, being the dominant source of input, focuses on sentential level and not the supra sentential level.

**Table 5.** *Frequency and percentage → Input to learners.*

	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>percentage</b>
Graphic	311	15.07%
Oral words/phrases	257	12.45%
Oral extended discourse	137	6.64%
Written words/phrases	1242	60.22%
Written extended discourse	52	2.52%
Sounds/music	62	3%
Total	2061	100%

#### 4.5.2. *Expected output from learners*

The output which is expected from learners in tasks can be either written or spoken. On the other hand it could be short in the form of words, phrases or sentences or it can be extended as when the student is supposed to write a paragraph or give a description orally.

Table 6 shows that the most frequent type of output expected from learners in the selected textbooks is oral words, phrases or sentences (59.97%). This striking difference

shows the emphasis of the book on communicative skills which urge students to produce oral words or sentences. The expected written words, phrases or sentences in the Interchange constitute 32.57% of expected output from the learners while this percentage is only 6.07% for written extended discourse and even less, namely, 1.32% for oral extended discourse. It is clear that the book expects the learners to focus more on written or spoken structures which are in the form of words, phrases or sentences rather than extended output as when the student is supposed to write a paragraph or give a description orally.

Results also imply that the Interchange Series encourage students more to speak. Although one major aim of the textbook has been mentioned as achieving communicative skills, yet this does not imply that we cannot achieve this goal via drawing on other skills. The percentage of tasks which require learners to produce oral extended discourse is 1.32%. This shows a total lack of activities which allow students to express their meaningful ideas in this textbook.

**Table 6.** *Frequency and percentage → Expected Output From Learners.*

	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>percentage</b>
Oral words/phrases	1087	59.97%
Oral extended discourse	24	1.32%
Written words/phrases	591	32.57%
Written extended discourse	110	6.07%
Total	1812	100%

#### 4.5.3. *Source*

The issue of the source of the content of the lessons and their activities is very important. This issue relates to such questions as who is to specify the topic and content of the written or spoken texts used in the class activities: the teacher, the learners or the materials themselves?

As table 7 shows, the textbook, demonstrates little share of tasks and activities which direct learners or the teachers to participate in providing the content and selecting the topic of content as source of input to classmates (6.17% and 4.42% respectively). In contrast, for the majority of activities, the textbook specifies its own texts as the source of content (82.39%). The percentages show that the textbook does not provide opportunities for the learners or even the teachers to decide on the content of the tasks while the low percentages of tasks which use the learners themselves as the source of content necessitate more attention to giving an active role to the students in this regard.

**Table 7.** *Frequency and percentage → Source.*

	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>percentage</b>
Materials	1342	89.39%
Teacher	67	4.42%
Learner(s)	93	6.17%
Total	1502	100%

#### 4.5.4. Nature

This aspect of tasks is related to the type of content which is the focus of the learning activity. The content which the learners and the teacher are required to work with may be an expository reading passage (i.e. ‘fact’), a comment about one grammatical rule (i.e. metalinguistic knowledge), a tale told by one of the students (i.e. ‘fiction’), etc.

Table 8 shows that the proportions of the nature types of the content of tasks are distributed evenly in the Interchange. This could be interpreted as a sign of more variety in the text. Tasks which have personal opinions and ideas of the learners as their focus have the first rank in the selected textbook (35.29%). Those which have factual texts as their pivot have 29.13% proportion. There is a shortage of tasks whose content can be categorized under ‘fiction’ (e.g. personal accounts, tales. etc.) in the textbook and are only 6.51% of the total proportion of the tasks. The attractiveness of fictions both in the form of stories or personal accounts and memoirs which the learners may bring into the classroom suggest that we should incorporate them in such popular materials.

The percentage of activities which involve ‘personal information’ of the learners, i.e. those which draw on learners’ prior world knowledge is higher in Interchange (10.46%), the corresponding figure for ‘metalinguistic knowledge’ is equal to 18.8%. This shows that the Interchange tries to motivate students by encouraging them to add information of their own to those presented in the textbook itself.

**Table 8.** *Frequency and percentage → Nature.*

	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>percentage</b>
Personal opinion	328	35.8%
Fact	262	28.6%
Fiction	59	6.45%
Personal information	92	10.06%
Metalinguistic knowledge	173	18.9%
Total	914	100%

## 5. RESULTS OF DESIGN

The ‘design’ of a textbook in Littlejohn’s materials evaluation framework refers to the «thinking underlying the material». In other words, when we evaluate the design of a course book, we want to know to what degree the materials developers succeeded in achieving instructional goals, selecting and sequencing the contents appropriately, selecting appropriate themes (i.e. subject matter), devising useful teaching/learning activities, providing for active class participation, and defining appropriate roles for the teacher, learners, and the materials themselves. In this part the results of the evaluations done by the raters/evaluators on ‘design’ matters are presented.

The results of design for the Interchange 3<sup>rd</sup> Edition are summarized in table Figure 1. The Figure presents the scores given by the raters to the questions about each subsection of the design. These subsections include: (I) Aims and objectives, (II) Principles of selection, (III) Principles of sequencing, (IV) subject matter and focus of subject matter, (V) Types of teaching/learning activities, (VI) Participation, (VII) Classroom roles of teachers and learners, (VIII) Learner roles in learning, and (IX) Role of the materials as a whole.

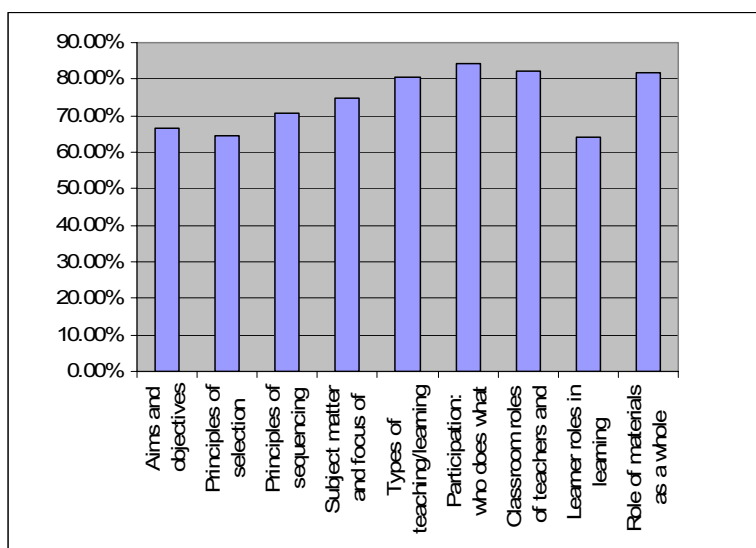


Figure 1. Design.

### 5.1. Aims and objectives

In this part the selected textbook obtained 66.51 percent of the optimum score (74.5 out of the total of 112). This shows that the evaluators believed that Interchange 3<sup>rd</sup> Edition is not that much successful in preparing the students to become communicatively competent.

## 5.2. Principles of selection

Interchange Third Edition scored 64.58 percent of the optimum score on this aspect. This suggests that the evaluators believed that the developers of the selected textbook need to select the textbook's content, its genre and lesson themes, more suitably if it is to be considered as a book which is along with the new principles of teaching and learning.

## 5.3. Principles of sequencing

The mean score regarding appropriate sequencing of units is 70.62 out of 100. This shows that the textbook needs further attention on this important aspect which relates to sequencing the content of the materials in a way that the teaching points are interrelated and arranged on the basis of difficulty.

## 5.4. Subject matter and the focus of subject matter

In this part the Interchange 3<sup>rd</sup> Edition achieves a relatively higher proportion than the previously discussed sections (75% of the optimum score). This is one of the highest scores for the textbook among all subsections and shows that the evaluators find the topics of the texts (i.e., the themes of the units) and the activities related to them fairly interesting, effectively motivating and intellectually engaging.

## 5.5. Types of teaching/learning activities

The fifth subsection of the design again shows the ascending movement in comparison to the previous part with the mean score of 80.42% of the optimum score. This evaluative aspect is closely related to the 'Task Analysis' part of the evaluation. The scores show that the Interchange series are considered to be somehow successful in offering appropriate tasks.

## 5.6. Participation

The selected textbook scored the highest among all the subsections, namely 84.37 percent of the optimum score based on evaluators judgments. This suggest that the Interchange series are considered successful in catering for all three modes of class participation, namely, 'learner to class and teacher', 'learner individually simultaneously', and 'learners in pairs/groups simultaneously'.

## 5.7. Classroom roles of teachers and learners

The seventh evaluative subsection questions whether the textbook appoints appropriate class roles to the teacher and the learners, and also whether the textbook activities are devised flexibly enough to allow for teachers' differences in teaching styles and preferences. In this section the selected textbook obtained relatively the same proportion as 'Types of teaching/learning activities, (82.02 % and 80.42% out of the optimum score respectively). This shows that the evaluators rate the Interchange series as relatively more successful in assigning active

roles to the learners in learning and participating in classroom events and a managing and supervising role to the teacher.

### 5.8. Learner roles in learning

The selected textbook scored relatively the same as the first subsection, namely, 'Aims and objectives' (64.06 percent of the optimum score based on evaluators judgments). This sudden fall among the 3 or 4 previously discussed subsections shows that the Interchange series are not that much successful in enabling the students to deduce language rules for themselves or in involving students in classroom decision-making which are both reflected in the most recent approaches to language teaching and learning.

### 5.9. Role of the materials as a whole

The Interchange 3<sup>rd</sup> Edition achieved 81.87% out of 100. This shows that the evaluators all agree that the Table of Content, at the beginning of the book, is a helpful means of access into the content of the book. It also shows that the plan of the book, the division of the book into sections, and its graphic illustrations are satisfactory enough. Moreover it shows that the selected textbook is supported with ample appendices.

## 6. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

**Question one:** What are the pedagogic values of the newest version of Interchange series?

The pedagogic values of the textbook understudy are as follow:

- The results of the study show that the Interchange 3<sup>rd</sup> Edition's tasks more often encourage the students to use the language. Moreover, these tasks require them to express themselves than to be a listener. Also, the fact that the textbook includes less tasks which do not require the learners to initiate or respond (i.e. «Not required»), shows that the Interchange caters for more involvement of the learners in the classroom events.
- The study also shows that the tasks in the Interchange third Edition focus on grammatical structures or other points related to form marginally more than the amount they focus on form-meaning relationships. Instead, the Interchange 3<sup>rd</sup> Edition tries to draw on meaning as the basis for the learning task. This could be one sign of success for the selected textbook, since one major objective of the book has been developing a communicative competence which is achieved via enhancing 'comprehension' of the language, and comprehending the language necessitates attention to meaning.
- This study shows that the Interchange does not require students to recall linguistic or non-linguistic items from previous units. These items may be grammatical rules which the student has encountered in previous units, etc. These kinds of tasks help students feel continuity in the textbook and also help them review the items which they have learned before. The series, however, is not benefiting so much from this type of mental operation and this may lead to students not having sense of continuity.

- Based on the results of the study it is revealed that the Series encourage the learners more often to produce meaningful language of their own. This kind of tasks enable students to express their ideas or feelings via the foreign language and in this regard these activities are both motivating in that they offer opportunities to express themselves and demanding, as the learner should draw on all his/her linguistic and world knowledge to produce a piece of meaningful discourse.
- It is also revealed that the Interchange tries to relate the new teaching points to the previous ones in the unit and also to the points which they have learned in prior units. This characteristic gives the textbook more consistency and continuity. Furthermore, it helps the students associate the new information to the old information in their minds.
- The study also shows that the activities which use auditory and visual channels for giving input to learners are not that frequent in the Interchange textbooks. This may be a disadvantage of the textbook since making use of all sensory channels in learning involves the students more actively in participating and also enhances the variety and consequently the motivation of the students.
- Regarding 'selecting information' the textbook has a high proportion. This may originate from the fact that each unit in the selected textbook is provided with an authentic reading passages which are followed by reading comprehension questions.
- This study may well imply that the textbook surprisingly does not apply an inductive approach toward teaching grammatical structures and other teaching points, or if it applies this is not that obvious within its task structure.
- Tasks which involve students in pair or group work have the same proportion for those tasks that involve learners individually. This shows that the authors of the selected textbook have given importance to pair/group work in their book.
- Based on the results of the study the 'written words/phrases/sentences' have the first and dominating rank in the distribution, other types of input have percentages which are not comparable to the written input. The dominance of written input to the learners implies that oral and visual inputs should receive more attention in our teaching materials.
- The results also show that the emphasis of the book is on communicative skills, especially at the level of words or sentences. The expected written words, phrases or sentences in the Interchange 3<sup>rd</sup> Edition is also higher than the other types of the output. It is clear that the book expects the learners to focus more on written or spoken structures which are in the form of words, phrases or sentences rather than extended output as when the student is supposed to write a paragraph or give a description orally.
- The resulted proportions also suggest that the textbook does not provide opportunities for the learners or even the teachers to decide on the content of the tasks. In contrast, for the majority of activities, the textbook specifies its own texts as the source of content.
- The raters believe that the tasks which have personal opinions and ideas of the learners as their focus have the first rank in the Interchange Series. Those which have factual texts as their pivot have less proportion. There is a shortage of the tasks whose content can be categorized under 'fiction' (e.g. personal accounts, tales. etc.) in the textbook.

- The results of the ‘Design’ also reveal that the topics of the texts (i.e., the themes of the units) and the related activities are fairly interesting, effectively motivating and intellectually engaging.
- The Interchange series are also considered to somehow successful in offering appropriate tasks which direct the learners through the process of learning, guide the teachers to manage a learning class, and ultimately to approach toward the instructional goals set for them.
- Finally the present study shows that the Table of Content, at the beginning of the book, is a helpful means of access into the content of the book. It also shows that the plan of the book, the division of the book into sections, and its graphic illustrations are satisfactory enough. Moreover it shows that the selected textbook is supported with ample appendices.

**Question two:** How are the newly developed and widely used the Interchange books (3<sup>rd</sup> edition) in line with the objectives set for them?

The main goal set for the textbook based on what the authors bring in the preface is to improve the learners’ speaking ability and help them be communicatively competent. As mentioned and as depicted in the charts and graphs, the books may not be that much successful in preparing the students for being communicatively competent.

**Question three:** What are the strengths and weaknesses of the Interchange series (3<sup>rd</sup> edition)?

The results show that the Interchange 3<sup>rd</sup> edition has the following weaknesses:

- The fact that the majority of tasks in require learners to «respond» and a much smaller proportion require students to «initiate» using the language. This is not satisfactory if we desire to have an active learner-centered class.
- Activities which focus on both the form and meaning are not that frequent in the selected textbook.
- Interchange does not require students to recall linguistic or non-linguistic items from previous units. Hence, it lacks the tasks which help students feel continuity in the textbook.
- Activities which use auditory and visual channels for giving input to learners are not proportional.
- Those tasks that give learners frames to produce language according to those frames are not so popular in this text book.
- The selected textbook surprisingly does not apply an inductive approach toward teaching grammatical structures and other teaching points, or if it applies this is not that obvious within its task structure. Thus, the discovery-learning activities of this type are ignored.
- The supra-sentential level for both the input and the output is ignored.
- Learners or the teacher do not participate in providing the content and selecting the topic of content as source of input to classmates.

The strengths of Interchange are as follow:

- Tasks more often encourage students to use the language and more importantly they require them to express themselves than to be a listener.



- The Interchange 3<sup>rd</sup> Edition tries to draw on meaning as the basis for the learning task. This could be one sign of success for the selected textbook, since one major objective of the book has been developing a communicative competence which is achieved via enhancing 'comprehension' of the language.
- The authors of the selected textbook have given importance to pair/group work in their book.

## 7. REFERENCES

- Kumaravadivelu, B. (2006). *Understanding Language Teaching: From Method to Post-method*. New York: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
- Littlejohn, A. (1998). The analysis of Language teaching materials: Inside the Trojan horse. In B.Tomlinson(Ed.) , *Materials development in Language teaching* (pp: 190-216) . Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- McDonough, J. and Shaw, C . (2003). *Materials and methods in ELT*. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Richards, J.C., Hull, J. & Proctor, S. (2006). *Interchange* (3<sup>rd</sup> edition). Cambridge: CUP.
- Riazi, A.M. (2001). What do Textbook Evaluation Schemes Tell Us? A Study of The Textbook Evaluation Schemes of Three Decades.

### A selected bibliography

- Allwright, R. (1981). What do we want teaching materials for? *ELT Journal*, 36(1), 5–18.
- Ansary, H. & Babaii, E. (2002). Universal characteristics of EFL/ESL textbooks: A step towards systematic textbook evaluation. *The Internet TESL Journal*, Vol.VIII, No.2.
- Bardovi-Harling, K. (2001). Evaluating the empirical evidence: Grounds for instruction in pragmatics? In K. R. Rose & G. Kasper (Eds.). *Pragmatics in Language Teaching*. pp. 13-32. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Byrd, P. (2001). Textbook: Evaluation for selection and analysis for implementation. In M. Celce-Murcia (Ed.), *Teaching English as a second or foreign language* (3<sup>rd</sup> ed.) (pp: 415-428). Boston, MA: Heinle and Heinle Publishers.
- Breen, M., & Candlin , C. (1987). Which materials? A consumer's and designer's guide. In L. Sheldon (Ed.) *ELT textbooks and materials: Problems in evaluation and development*. ELT documents 126. (PP: 13-28). London: Modern English Publications and the British Council.
- Cunningsworth ,A. (1984). *Evaluating and selecting ELT materials*. London: Heinemann.
- Cunningsworth, A. (1995). *Choosing your coursebook*. Oxford: Heinemann.
- Daud, A. & Celce-Murcia , M. (1979). Selecting and evaluating textbooks. In M. Celce- Murcia & L. McIntosh (Eds.), *Teaching English as a second or foreign Language*. New York, NY: Newbury House.
- Davison, W. (1975). Factors in evaluating and selecting texts for the Language classroom. *ELT Journal*, 30, 310-314.
- Hutchison, T. & Torres E. (1994). The textbook as agent of change. *ELT Journal*, 48(4), 315 – 328.
- Jolly, D. & Bolitho, R. (1998). A framework for materials writing. In B.Tomlinson (Ed.), *Materials development for Language teaching*. (pp: 90-115). Cambridge : Cambridge University Press.

- O'Neil, R. (1982). Why use textbooks? *ELT Journal*, 36, 104 -111.
- Otlowski, M. (2003). Ethnic diversity and Gender bias in EFL textbooks. *Asian EFL Journal*, 5(4).
- Riazi , A. (2002). What do textbook evaluation schemes tell us? A study of textbook evaluation schemes of three decades. In W. Renandya (Ed.), *Methodology and materials design in Language teaching*. (pp: 52 – 68). Singapore: SEAMEO.
- Sheldon, L. (Ed.). (1987). *ELT textbooks and materials: Problems in evaluation and development*. ELT Documents 126. London: Modern English Publications and The British Council.
- Sheldon, L. (1988). Evaluating ELT textbooks and materials. *ELT Journal*, 42(4), 237-246.
- Skierso, A. (1991) . Textbook selection and evaluation. In M. Celce-Murcia (Ed.), *Teaching English as a second or foreign Language*. (pp :) Boston : Heinle and Heinle Publishers.
- Tsui, A.B.(1995). English conversation. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Tucker, C. (1975). Evaluating beginning textbooks. *English Teaching Forum*, 13, 335-361.
- Ur, P. (1996). *A course in Language teaching: Practice and theory*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Williams, D. (1983). Developing criteria for textbook evaluation. *ELT Journal*, 37(3), 251-255.