

# Evaluating ELT Materials

## 3.1 Introduction

The ability to evaluate teaching materials effectively is a very important professional activity for all English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teachers, and in this chapter we shall examine the reasons why teachers need to evaluate materials in the first instance. We shall then move on to discuss the criteria that can be used to evaluate materials by suggesting a working model which we hope will be an effective one to use for teachers working in a variety of contexts. The model that we suggest is based on the view that it is useful for us as teachers to perform an external evaluation of materials first of all in order to gain an overview of the organizational principles involved. After this we move on to a detailed internal evaluation of the materials to see how far the materials in question match up to what the author claims as well as to the aims and objectives of a given teaching programme.

## 3.2 The Context of Evaluation

Let us look at why we need to evaluate materials in the first place. For the term evaluation, we take Tomlinson's (2003c) definition: 'Materials evaluation is a procedure that involves measuring the value (or potential value) of a set of learning materials'. It is probably reasonable to assume that there are very few teachers who do not use published course materials at some stage

Reading assignment:

This reading suggests there are three stages in evaluating a language teaching textbook:

- A. External Evaluation
- B. Internal Evaluation
- C. Overall Evaluation

Choose a language teaching textbook and analyze the textbook according to these three stages.

OR

Write a summary of each stage (A, B, C).



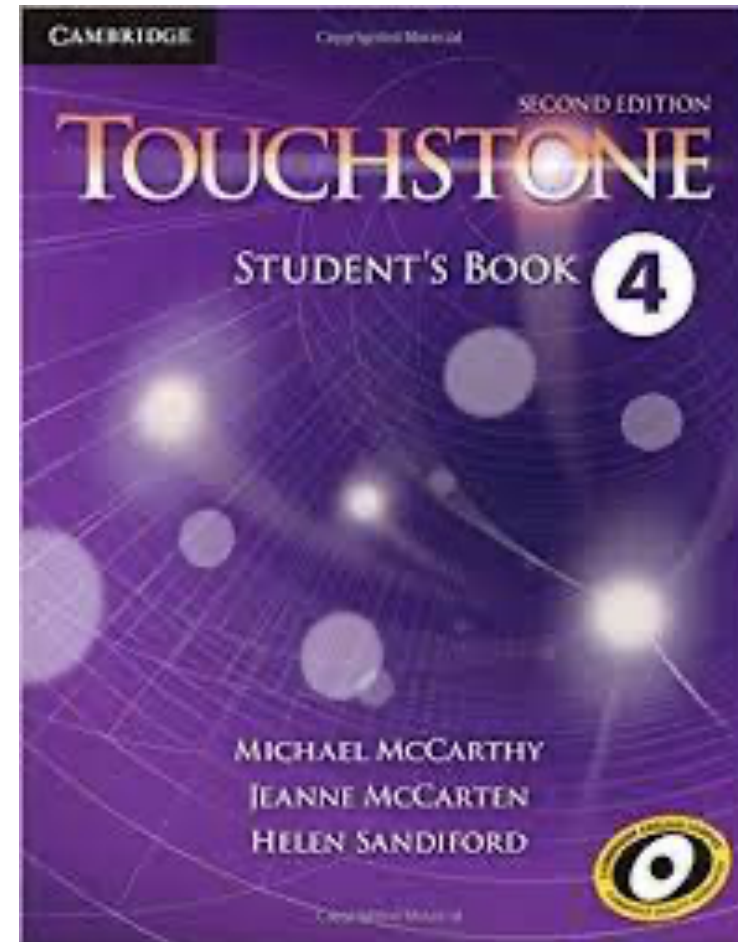
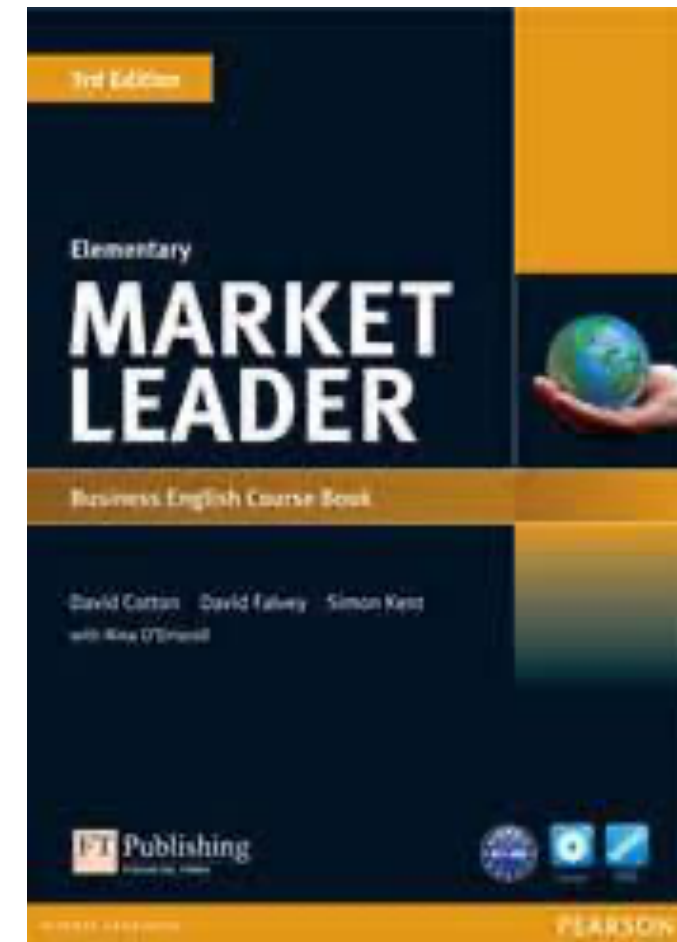
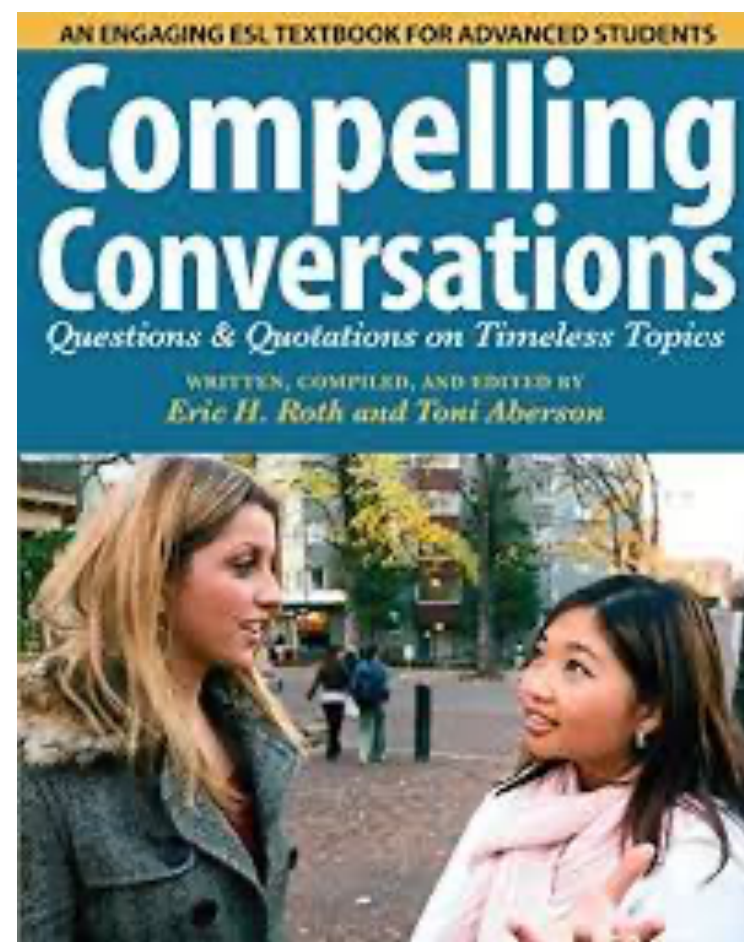
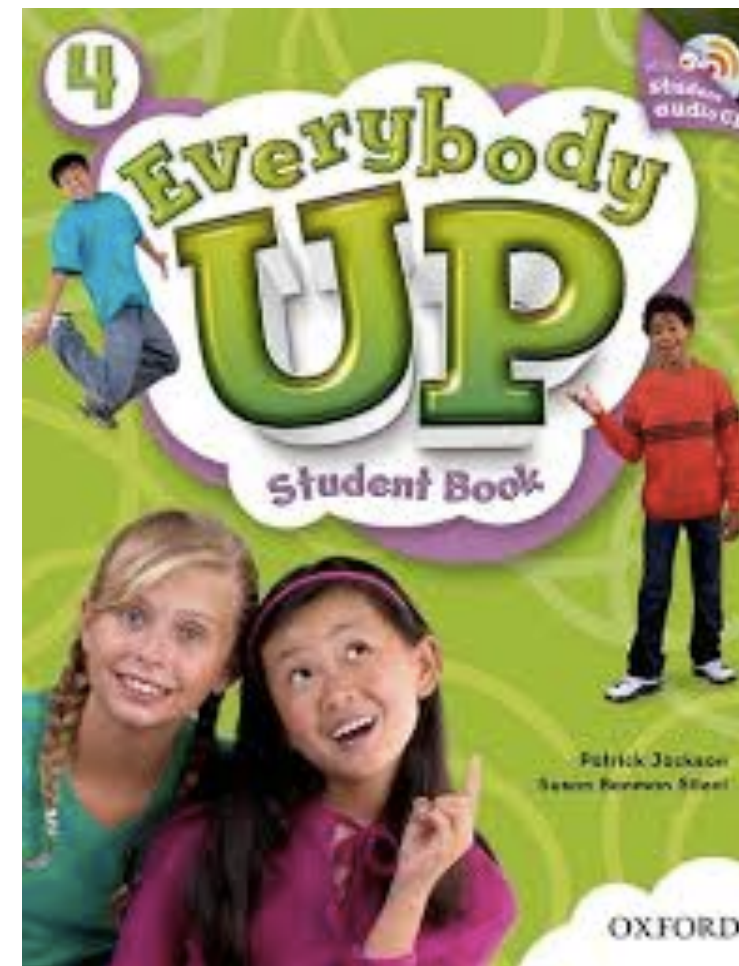
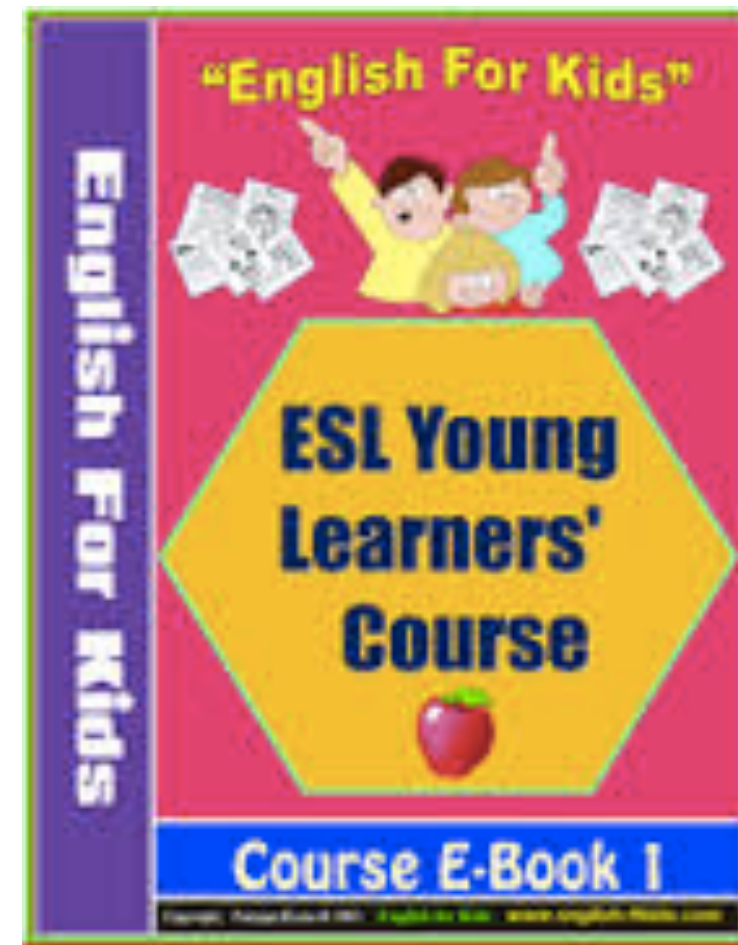
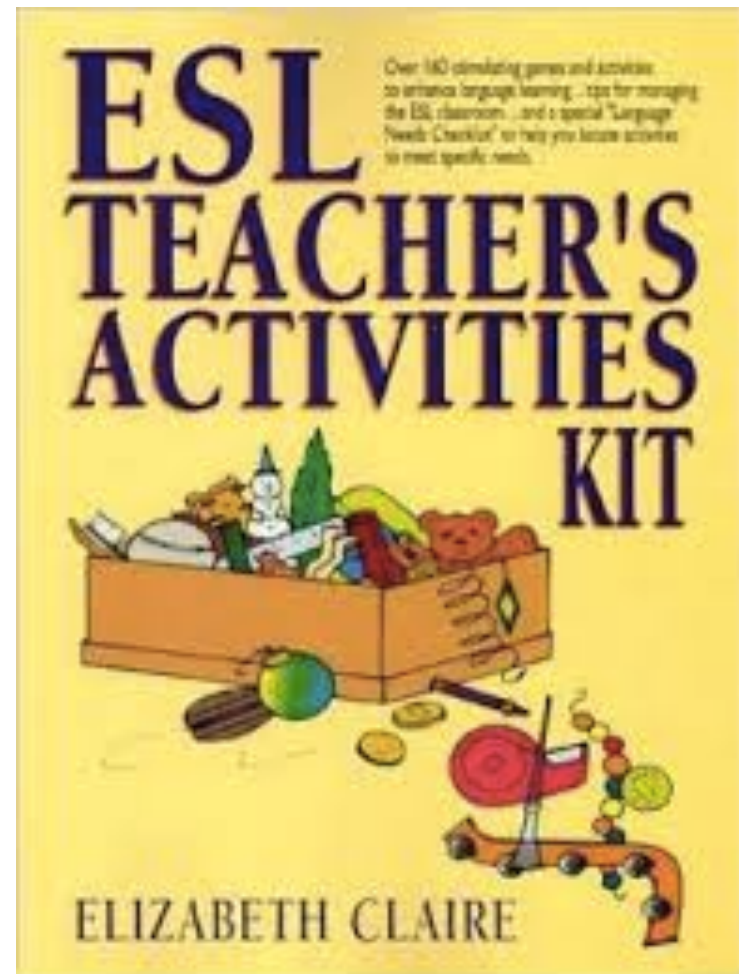
## ADAPTING A TEXTBOOK

Just as a piano does not play music, a textbook does not teach language. The textbook is a stimulus or instrument for teaching and learning.

What are textbooks?

Textbooks (or course books) are prepackaged, published books used by the students and teacher, often as a primary basis for the language course.

Textbook packages may include audio CDs, videos, CD-ROMs, workbooks, test materials and online resources.



Textbooks can be a basis for...

- language input
- balance of skills
- kinds of language practice
- a syllabus

Textbooks can be a supplement.

8 advantages of textbooks

**1. They provide a planned and systematic structure and a syllabus.**

8 advantages of textbooks

**2. They help to standardize instruction.**



8 advantages of textbooks

**3. They maintain quality.**

8 advantages of textbooks

**4. They provide a variety of resources (audio, video, multimedia, tests, etc.).**

8 advantages of textbooks

**5. They save time.**

8 advantages of textbooks

**6. They provide language models and input.**

8 advantages of textbooks

**7. They can train teachers.**

8 advantages of textbooks

**8. They are visually appealing.**

5 **disadvantages** of textbooks

**1. They may contain inauthentic language.**

5 **disadvantages** of textbooks

**2. They may simplify and distort the content.**



5 **disadvantages** of textbooks

**3. They may not reflect students' needs.**

5 **disadvantages** of textbooks

**4. They can deskill teachers.**

5 **disadvantages** of textbooks

**5. They are expensive.**

Initial questions for choosing a textbook

### **1. The role of the textbook**

Course objective?

Core or supplement?

Time, speed and content?

### **2. The teachers in the program**

Experience levels?

Level of control?

### **3. The learners in the program**

Expectations?

Cost?



## Course Book Evaluation

1. External Evaluation
2. Internal Evaluation
3. Overall Evaluation

# 1. External Evaluation

- The 'blurb' (What are the aims & claims of the book?)
- Introduction and Table of Contents
- Intended audience
- Proficiency level
- Context of use
- Language presentation and organization
- Number of units / teaching hours
- Main core or supplementary?
- Support and extra (CD, tests...) materials for teachers
- Index included?
- Attractiveness

## 2. Internal Evaluation

- Presentation and balance of skills
- Grading and sequencing of difficulty
- ‘Authentic’ or longer reading texts
- ‘Authentic’ listening texts
- ‘Authentic’ interaction tasks
- Balance of tests, exercises and tasks
- Learning styles
- Independent learning
- Adaptability

### 3. Overall Evaluation

- Usability factor: Core or supplementary?  
Alignment with course objectives?
- Generalizability factor: Suitability for a range of learners.
- Adaptability factor: Possibilities for modification, adding, subtracting?
- Flexibility factor: Usage, sequencing and grading.

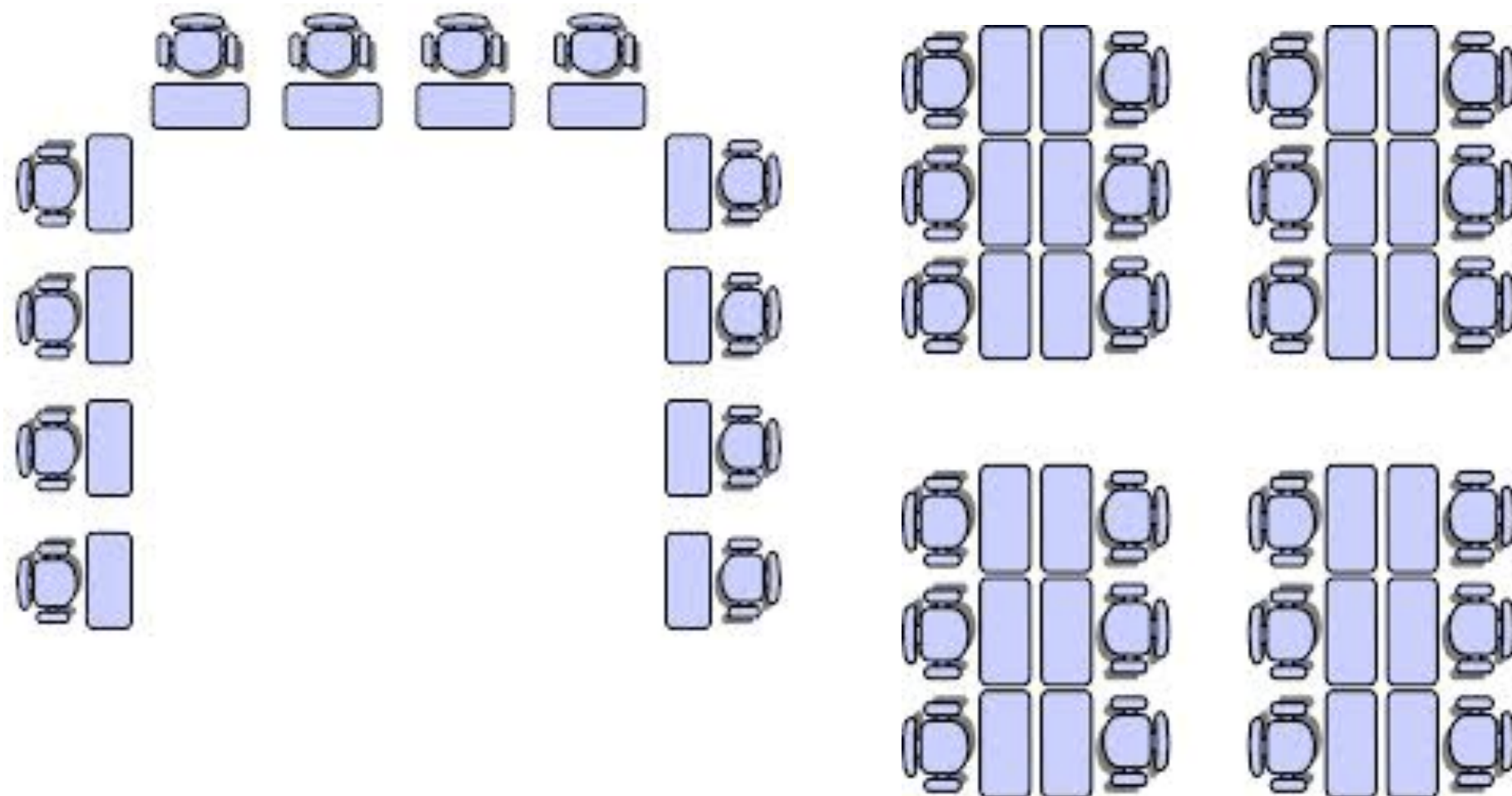


### A Final Version of the Evaluative Checklist

Items of Evaluation	Good	Satisfactory	Poor
<b>I. Physical and utilitarian attributes</b>			
<b>A- General Appearance</b>			
<b>1 The outside cover is informative and attractive.</b>			
<b>2 The font size and type used in the book are appropriate.</b>			
<b>3. The paper used for the textbooks is of good quality</b>			
<b>4. Binding is strong enough.</b>			
<b>5. Printing used is good.</b>			
<b>6. There is enough white space to achieve clarity.</b>			
<b>7. The titles and sub-heading titles are written clearly and appropriately</b>			
<b>8. Its size is appropriate</b>			
<b>9. The textbook has sufficient number of pictures to make the situation more life-like.</b>			
<b>B- Layout and design</b>			
<b>1 There is a variety of design to achieve impact.</b>			
<b>2. There is consistency in the use of headings, icons, labels, italics, etc.</b>			
<b>3. The textbook includes a detailed overview of the functions and structures that will be taught in each unit.</b>			
<b>4. The textbook includes a detailed overview of vocabulary that will be taught in each unit.</b>			
<b>5. The textbook has a complete and detailed table of contents.</b>			
<b>6. Every unit and lesson is given an appropriate title.</b>			
<b>7. The textbook has a complete bibliography.</b>			
<b>8. The textbook is organized logically and effectively.</b>			

# Principles for using a textbook

**Format shift the language skill or grouping**



# Principles for using a textbook

## Visual instructions



# Principles for using a textbook

## Use props, visuals, realia



## Conclusion

A good textbook can be a rich source of content, texts and activities.

Textbooks should be seen as one of the resources that teachers can pull from.

Teachers need training and experience in adapting textbooks (SARS), as well as using authentic materials and creating materials.