



An Evaluation of the First Year Middle School Syllabus after Adopting English in the Algerian Primary Schools

Boutobba Rababe

National Education Directorate – Khenchela

ilhenn199409@gmail.com

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Abstract:

Textbooks and syllabi are official documents that construct a paramount bridge between the educational authorities and teacher. These documents cover a list of objectives that all serve the learner's requirements and real life. Therefore, these documents are in necessity of permanent analysis and evaluation to cope with the world life changes. The current research is a content analysis based on a qualitative research that attempts to evaluate the Algerian 1st year middle school textbook .

Earlier works on this subject provide an evaluation of the aforementioned textbook as a unique document with no reference to any other document and with no consideration of the pupil's background. However, the current research debates the fruitfulness of the 1st year middle school textbook after the adoption of English in the primary schools. In other terms, the research tries to respond to the question : Does the current 1st year middle school textbook provide new insights to the middle school learner who has already received a prior information on the English language in his primary school. Note ably, if the current textbook necessitates some possible adaptations, this research tries to suggest probable topics and objectives that suit a 1st year middle school pupil. Meanwhile, a questionnaire is conducted with a group of middle school teachers to tap into their points of view concerning the topic. The results assume that 90% of them emphasised the necessity of a radical adaptation to the current 1st year middle school syllabus.

Keywords: textbook; analysis; evaluation; proficiency status; necessities.



Introduction:

Textbooks and syllabi represent mandatory components in any educational arrangement. They also have a salient role in studying and teaching. Thus, syllabus design and evaluation have captured a wide extension of importance. Earlier researches tried to evaluate the 1st middle school syllabus with no reference to any other related syllabus. However, The current research paper analyses and evaluates the 1st year middle school textbook in terms of objectives and concerns to see whether it is still influential after the recent adoption of English in the primary schools. The current research paper offers the following three hypotheses:

1. The 1st year middle school textbook is relevant to the pupils' demands and proficiency status.
2. The 1st year middle school textbook is partly relevant to the pupils' necessities and proficiency status, so it shall be adapted.
3. The 1st year middle school textbook is partly irrelevant to the pupils' requisites and proficiency status, so it is under the obligation of being completely changed.

1. An examination of the Innovative methodologies and the approaches Adapted in the New Primary School Syllabi:

The new primary school syllabi advocate the tenets of the task based approach which relies on the task as its main focus. The learning objective of each lesson is introduced indirectly through assigning the task. In other words, the language items are taught implicitly through the tasks given.

Moreover, the new syllabi introduce all language aspects in a cyclic methodology. That is to say in each sequence, there is a pre-requisite which is a reminder of a language item that has been dealt with.

The new primary school syllabi also follow the basics of the competency approach through the integration of the communicative competences. Each unit in the syllabus includes a set of given communicative competences. For example, 3rd year primary school



pupils are supposed to develop the competency of deciphering other people manners.

The new syllabi introduce the projects to foster pupils' autonomy and learner centered approach. For example, 4th year primary school pupils are supposed to design a mini dictionary in unit one. The course book did not precise whether the mini-dictionary is bilingual or monolingual. However, it is up to the teacher to manipulate and change the project theme according to the pupils' necessities.

Comparing the new primary school syllabi and the current 1st year middle school one, we can assume that the projects and language games are integrated in both. However, the project of designing a mini- dictionary is something new. Maybe, the new syllabi focus more on building a strong lexical background in the primary school pupil's mind.

2. The Teaching Strategies and Techniques Introduced in the New Primary School Syllabi:

An overview on the new primary school syllabi shows that they give much importance to the language games. Another strategy that the new syllabi concentrate on is the repetitive drills. Most of the sequences include tasks entitled: "I play roles" in addition to the section of "singing and having pleasure".

These tasks are included also in the current 1st year middle school syllabus, and teachers are supposed to use data-shows and speakers to help them do such lessons.

3. Textbooks and Syllabi in Education :

The syllabus is a chart of certain items that constitute a set of educational purposes. This chart represents a vital tool and an essential guide for both the teacher and the pupil. Moreover, it is a reference to unify all teachers in the same district to work in the same path.

The textbook, as well, is another fundamental browse that constructs a consistant bridge between the educational authority and



its employees. It contains more pieces of information about the purposes and the suggested items.

4. Properties of Syllabi :

Since syllabi are constructed by an official authority, they are considered as academic by nature. This nature gives them the domination and the edge of being mandatory in every educational establishment.

Syllabi must be covering. They surround a long set of goals that must be accomplished at the end of a specific period. Thus, the results of these goals cannot be seen at the very short period, and so they have long lasting effects. Syllabi, also, are mirrored by covering a roll of theoretical assumptions about given educational thoughts.

5. The Role of the Textbook Evaluator:

Evaluation as a term that means to analyse and judge the legitimacy or the validity of the theme being evaluated. This operation needs to be accomplished through a certain set of criteria to be followed. Meanwhile, textbook evaluation is a human deed . Thus, it can differ from one person to another. This means that syllabus evaluation is evidently a confidential procedure because it relies on private judgements. In addition, these individualised judgements can never lead to absolute deductions or definite absolute results.

The role of the textbook evaluator is to determine according to his eyesight what useful points and what shortcomings exist in the textbook being evaluated. Educationalists assume that textbook evaluation is not a random action. It takes a set of steps and grades. Also, it is important to clarify that textbook evaluation covers all aspects including themes, language items, length, accuracy and so on. This assumption argues that the procedures of evaluation do not by necessity oblige the evaluator to state the negative points only. Textbook evaluation covers both: negative and reasonable judgements.



6. The Evaluation of the 1st year Middle school Syllabus and the Primary School Ones :

6. 1. Analysis and Evaluation of the Global Competences:

To determine whether the global competences in the current 1st year middle school syllabus are relevant to the pupil's status of proficiency, there must be a necessity to make a clear comparison between the competences introduced in both the primary school cycle and in the middle school one. This comparison allows to find any repeated items or non-parallel ones. The following lines show the global competency devoted to each syllabus:

The 3rd year primary school syllabus : In this year, pupils collaborate and engage in easy conversations in addition to reading and understanding straightforward statements.

The 4th year primary School syllabus : In this year, pupils understand, cooperate with people around. In addition, they construct a set of pieces of information to complete a task or any other situation.

The 1st year middle School syllabus : In this year, the pupil can understand, then convert what he hears in order to build an accurate significant state of collaboration with people around him.

The lines above represent the global competences that were introduced in the mentioned syllabi. A brief analysis to these lines shows that there is a hierarchical graded set of competences starting from primary school to the middle school level 01. Each of these competences determines the learner's status of proficiency. While the learner is just engaged vocally in both the 3rd and 4th primary school, he becomes able to mingle both vocally and using writing in the 1st year middle school. Moreover, while the learner, in the primary school, is only able to engage and grasp the meaning of standpoints, he becomes able to mingle and construct given copied notes. In this sense, the 1st year middle school learner's status of proficiency is coordinated with his primary school background. Therefore, we can assume that there is a logical shift in the order and insertion of competences. Meanwhile, the current 1st year syllabus is relevant to



the learner's proficiency status and the competences he acquired in the primary school.

6. 2. Topics in the 1st year Middle School Syllabus and the Primary School Ones

The following tables represent the different topics introduced by the educational authorities in each of the mentioned syllabi. The goal of this representation is to compare between these topics and to find any repeated or an illogical order of topics. That is to say, the tables bellow may offer latter a clear idea about how topics are integrated in the current Algerian primary school syllabi and in the 1st year middle school one.

Table 01 : Topics in the 3rd Year Primary School Syllabus

		Topics
3rd year primary school	Sequence01	Introducing family- introducing friends- greeting
	Sequence 02	School objects- school subjects- colors
	Sequence 03	Home
	Sequence 04	Play time
	Sequence 05	Pets
	Sequence 06	Birthday

**Source: The table is designed by the researcher. The topics are from : The
didactics guide of English-2023- p18**

Table 2 : Topics in the 4th Year Primary School Syllabus :

		Topics
	Sequence 01	Family relations- Friend's nationality and age ...



4th year primary school	Sequence 02	School facilities- School mapping
	Sequence 03	Fun time- Games
	Sequence 04	Food-health
	Sequence 05	Animals

Source : The table is designed by the researcher. The topics are from : Syllabus of English for Primary School Year 4 -2022- p7

Table 3 : Topics in the 1st Year Middle School Syllabus :

		Topics
1st Year Middle School	Sequence 01	Introducing friends- greeting
	Sequence 02	Introducing family- jobs
	Sequence 03	Daily activities
	Sequence 04	Countries

Source : The table is designed by the researcher

The above tables show that there are shared topics between the primary school syllabi and the current 1st year middle school syllabus. These topics are : friends- family- jobs. These topics are included in sequence 01 and 02 in the 1st year middle school syllabus. This means that the middle school pupil will not acquire new vocabularies during these two sequences since he has seen the same topics in the primary school.

The remaining sequences in the 1st year middle school include new objectives and topics. That is to say, The remaining sequences in the 1st year middle school are different from the items and sequences in the primary school syllabi. As a conclusion to this short analysis, the 1st year middle school syllabus shares some items with the primary school syllabus. At the same time, it provides new ones.



6. 3. Objectives in the Primary school Syllabi and in the 1st Year middle School Syllabus:

As the name suggests, the communicative approach implies the concentration on the collaborative and intergangeable aspect of the language. It stresses the importance of engaging the learner in dialogues and exchanges with people around.

The following lines present the list of the objectives introduced in each syllabus to lend a helping hand later in having a clear comparison between them :

3rd year Primary School Syllabus :

According to the didactics guide of English (2023. p14),The pupil may:

1. Show his counteraction towards articulated and inarticulated assertions.
2. Choose the suitable items to interconnect audibly.
3. Be cooperative with mates.
4. Achieve a good scanning during reading.

4th year Primary School Syllabus :

According to the didactics guide(2023.p48),The pupil may:

1. Show his reaction towards what he receives.
2. Find the suitable items and other language features to be engaged with the planrt.
3. Read correctly after achieving a clear handwriting.

1st year Middle School Syllabus :

According to the1st year Middle School Syllabus (2022-2023), the pupil may:

1. Perform plays and uncomplicated conversations.



2. Master the use of the technological devices such as the writing of the articles and the e-mails.
3. Understand the usage of the numeric figures.

The lines above introduce the competences devoted to each of the mentioned syllabi. This list aids to juxtapose these competences and detect any disordered or repeated items. The competences in the primary school syllabi mostly revolve around reacting that is meant for understanding. This means that the primary school syllabi try to develop the pupils' reactions towards any learning situation without specifying the kind of reaction. What is important in these syllabi is that the pupil's reaction is a strong argument for his understanding.

In the 1st year middle school syllabus, on the other side, the competence is more specific when it introduced the acts and conversations as a stamp of the learner's reaction towards the learning situations. Moreover, the 1st year middle school syllabus introduces the technological tools like e-mails to involve the learner in the social life. These technologies were not included in the primary school syllabi because the latter focused on the pupil's reaction regardless of its kind.

This brief comparison between the primary school syllabi and the first year middle school one could detect a logical smoothness from easy to more sophisticated items in the integration of the competences in the mentioned syllabi

7. Teachers' Questionnaires :

To enrich the study, two questionnaires are conducted. The first one is an open-ended questionnaire conducted with 45 middle school teachers in the three eastern wilayas : Oum Bouaki, Batna and Khenchela. The second questionnaire is conducted with 30 primary school teachers from the same wilayas.

7.1. Middle School Teachers' Questionnaire :

The first questionnaire contains five questions. This questionnaire was conducted with middle school teachers because they are the first



users of the 1st year middle school syllabus. The questionnaire tries to trace their opinions concerning its efficacy. The researcher was obliged to provide middle school teachers with the official primary school syllabi to guide them to reply to some questions related to given shared items between the primary and middle school syllabi.

The questionnaire contains six questions as follows :

1. Have you been exposed to the new primary school syllabi ?
2. After you were exposed to the primary school syllabi, say whether there are shared topics between the 1st middle school syllabus and the primary school ones ? If yes, name them.
3. After you were exposed to the primary school syllabi, say whether there are shared objectives between 1st middle school syllabus and primary school ones ? If yes, name them.
4. Do you think that the 1st year middle school pupil who studied English at the primary school will acquire new competences at his 1st year middle school ?
5. Do you think that the current 1st year middle school syllabus can be relevant to the pupils' volume of proficiency after the adoption of English at the primary school ?
6. Do you think that the current 1st year middle school syllabus must be changed, adapted or kept after adopting English at the primary school ? Justify your answer.

7. 2. Analysis of the Results

These are teachers' answers :

Question 01

Have you been exposed to the new primary school syllabi ?

**Teachers Answers :**

10 teachers said that they were exposed to the primary school syllabi through the posts on social media while five teachers were not. Therefore, the researcher gave a printed copy to each of the teachers to read it carefully and answer the coming questions.

Question 02

After you were exposed to the primary school syllabi, say whether there are shared topics between the 1st middle school syllabus and the primary school ones ? If yes, name them.

Teachers' Answers :

All the members said that there are shared topics between the primary school syllabi and the 1st middle school syllabus. The topics they mentioned are : family, friends, jobs. All teachers mentioned these topics.

Question 03

After you were exposed to the primary school syllabi, say whether there are shared objectives between 1st middle school syllabus and primary school ones ? If yes, name them.

Teachers' Answers :

13 out of 15 teachers said that there are shared objectives between the primary school syllabi and the 1st year middle school syllabus. Two teachers said they cannot detect whether there are shared objectives or not.

Question 04

Do you think that the 1st year middle school pupil who studied English at the primary school will acquire new competences at his 1st year middle school ?



Teachers' Answers :

13 out of 15 teachers argued that the 1st year middle school pupil who studied English at the primary school will acquire new competences at his 1st year middle school. Two teachers said they will not. The new competences that the teachers mentioned are : transforming thoughts into copied productions in addition to more sophisticated intellectual competences.

Question 05

Do you think that the current 1st year middle school syllabus can be relevant to the pupils' proficiency status after the adoption of English at the primary school ?

Teachers' Answers :

14 teachers out of 15 said that the current 1st year middle school syllabus is not relevant to the pupils' level after the adoption of English at the primary school. Only one teacher said he cannot predict this fact. They said that is very difficult for them to find the correct answer.

Question 06

Do you think that the current 1st year middle school syllabus must be changed, adapted or kept after adopting English at the primary school ? Justify your answer.

Teachers' Answers :

12 teachers (80 %) said that the current 1st year middle school syllabus has to be adapted.

2 teachers (13 %) said that the current 1st year middle school syllabus should be changed.

One teacher (7 %) said that the current 1st year middle school syllabus can be kept.



7. 3. Conclusion of the Results

The previously mentioned analysis assume that the majority of middle school teachers agree on the fact that there is a set of shared items between the primary school syllabi and the current 1st year middle school syllabus. Moreover, the majority of teachers (80 %) argued that the current 1st year middle school syllabus must be adapted.

7. 4. Primary School Teachers' Questionnaire :

The second questionnaire contains four questions. This questionnaire was conducted with 30 primary school teachers from the three wilayas : Oum Bouaki, Khenchela and Batna.

The questions are :

Question One

After you experienced teaching English in the primary school, say whether or not the application of the new primary school syllabi necessitates the use of the technological tools in the classroom ?

Teachers' Answers

All teachers said that the application of the new primary school syllabi necessitates the use of the technological tools in the classroom. The speakers and the data-show are very important according to them.

Question Two

Name the teaching strategies that you use to help you to make your learners grasp the items you teach ?

Teachers' Answers

28 teachers said that the teaching strategies they try to establish are : using gesters and finding suitable contexts to explain the meaning of words and so one. Two teachers out of 30 said that they



are still novice teachers and could not yet establish realistic teaching strategies.

Question Three

If you experienced teaching in the middle school, do you think that the pupil who studied English in the primary school will acquire new competences in the 1st year middle school ?

Teachers' Answers

20 teachers said that middle school pupils who studied English at the primary school will acquire very few new competences, such as turning thoughts into copied productions.

10 teachers said middle school pupils who studied English at the primary school will not acquire any new competences through the current middle school syllabus.

Question Four

If you experienced teaching in the middle school, say whether there are shared topics and language items between the primary school and the middle school ones ?

Teachers' Answers

29 teachers said that there are shared topics and language items between the primary school and the middle school ones. These teachers gave examples of the teaching of punctuation marks, prepositions and many other language forms.

Only one teacher out of 30 ones said that he does not have an idea about whether there are shared topics or not. He said he cannot detect that.



7. 5. Conclusion of the results :

The majority of primary school teachers assume the fact that the new primary syllabi necessitate the use of the technological tools in classroom in addition to varying the teaching and learning strategies.

General Conclusion

The current examination started with a theoretical background on the importance of syllabus use, and the necessity to syllabus evaluation as a part of the design itself. It stretched also the properties of the syllabus and the textbook and how each of them builds a salient construction by its own.

The field investigation implied a deep analysis and evaluation of the textbook's composites. This evaluation could promote the analysis and the evaluation of the syllabus instances. The analysis was devoted to topics, and goals. The field investigation ended with an open-ended questionnaire conducted with middle school teachers to know about their views concerning the cogency of the 1st year middle school syllabus after adopting English in the primary schools. The questionnaire's results show that teachers argue on the necessity of adapting the current 1st year syllabus to cope and serve the coming middle school pupils' degrees of proficiency. Teachers who defend this view relied on the fact that there are shared and repeated topics and items between the current 1st year middle school and the new primary school syllabi. The aforementioned syllabus adaptation works towards keeping the relevant items and introducing suitable ones to replace the irrelevant items. This adaptation may aid the Algerian learner to move smoothly from the unknown to the known in his learning and achieve successful results.

Recommendations

The purpose of every academic examination is to is not just to present a set of drawbacks. Instead, the researcher, according to his points of view, can offer certain recommendations to enrich the work and to express new and different thoughts about the topic dealt with.



In an attempt to redress the weaknesses that the 1st year middle school syllabus encloses, the following recommendations are suggested:

The current 1st year middle school syllabus necessitates a radical adaptation according to the learner's level.

The adaptation of the 1st year middle school syllabus must take into consideration the learner's background and competences acquired during the primary school education.

Some topics like how to talk in a hotel, an airport and in a guest visit are some suggested topics to be introduced in the 1st year middle school syllabus.

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