

Клос Н. Criteria for Choosing a Coursebook // Актуальні проблеми лінгвістики та методики викладання іноземних мов у вищому навчальному закладі та школі: тези доповідей та повідомлень наукової конференції викладачів та студентів інституту іноземних мов. – 20 квітня 2016 р. – с. 84-86.

CRITERIA FOR CHOOSING A COURSEBOOK

A common element in the teaching of English as a second or foreign language is the coursebook. It has been argued that the coursebook is an almost universal element of ELT teaching. However, at a time when the ELT market is full of most up-to-date coursebooks teaching modern-day English, English teachers often have a difficult time selecting an appropriate coursebook that will suit the needs of their students and is in accordance with the curriculum.

It is widely accepted that the coursebook lies at the heart of any English language teaching situation. They offer advantages for teachers and language students alike, and they constitute a useful resource for both teachers and learners. Reasons to justify the widespread use of coursebooks in the teaching of English as a foreign or second language throughout the world are the following: 1) coursebooks are essential in ELT contexts because it is difficult for teachers themselves to create their own teaching material; 2) coursebooks lessen preparation time by providing ready-made teaching texts and learning tasks; 3) coursebooks can serve both as a syllabus and as a framework of classroom progress, a measure by which teaching can be evaluated by external persons.

When teachers open a page in their coursebook, they have to decide whether or not they should use the lesson on that page with their class. Is the language at the right level? Is the topic/content suitable for the students? Are there the right kinds of activities in the book? Is the sequencing of the lesson logical? With a good coursebook, there is a strong possibility that the language, content and sequencing in the book will be appropriate, and that the topics and treatment of the different language skills will be attractive. As a result the teacher will want to go ahead and use what is in the book. If, however, teachers have the time or inclination to amend

parts of a coursebook (because the texts or activities don't seem appropriate for a particular group of students or a particular lesson, or because they want to tailor the material to match their own particular style), they have to decide what to do next.

The first thing the teachers need to do is analyse the books under consideration to see how they compare with each other. Probably the best way of doing this is to select areas that are of interest to them (e.g. layout and design, methodology, topics, etc.), write short descriptions of how their ideal coursebook would deal with such areas, and then use these descriptions to see whether the books they are looking at match up to them. Alternatively, teachers can turn their descriptions into questions, as in the checklist below. The questions will always depend on the specific priorities of those who are asking them. This checklist is, therefore, just an example of some possible questions.

Once the competing merits of different materials have been analysed, and the one or ones that most interest a teacher have been chosen, it will be important to pilot it - or parts of it - with a class so that he/she can assess its strengths and weaknesses.

Before making the final choice, a teacher will want to consult colleagues, and indeed anyone who has an opinion about the book(s) in question, it is always worth listening to what other people have to say.

Possible areas for consideration	Possible questions for coursebook analysis
Price and availability	How much does the coursebook cost? Will students have to buy any extra material (workbook, etc.)? Are all the components (coursebook, workbook, teacher's guide, audio, etc.) available? What about other levels? Is this good value for money? How much does the whole package (with all the components) cost?
Add-ons and extras	Apart from a workbook, what other extras are offered with the course? Are there Internet sites with extra material (exercises, texts, etc.), or with 'meeting places' for users? What else does the publisher offer to support the course? What value should we place on the extras that are available?
Layout and design	Is the book attractive? Is its design appropriate for (a) the students, and (b) the teacher? Does the design of the book make it easy to follow?
Instructions	Are the instructions clear and unambiguous? Are they

	written in language that the students will understand? Can the coursebook be used by students working on their own, or is a teacher necessary to show them how to use it?
Methodology	What kind of teaching and learning does the coursebook promote? Is there a good balance between study and activation? How do the authors appear to think that people learn languages and do we agree with them?
Syllabus	Is the syllabus appropriate for our students? Does it cover the language areas (grammar, vocabulary, functions, pronunciation, etc.) that we would expect? Do we and our students like the sequencing of language and topics, etc.? Does the coursebook build in a feeling of progress?
Language skills	Does the coursebook have the appropriate balance of skills? Is the skills work really designed to promote the skills (e.g. writing-for-writing, not writing-for-learning)? Are there possibilities for both study and activation in the skills areas? Are the skills activities likely to engage students?
Topics	Does the book contain a variety of topics? On balance, are the topics appropriate for the kind of students who will be using the coursebook? Are the topics likely to engage the students?
Cultural appropriacy	Is the material appropriate for the cultural situation that the students are in? Do the texts contain culturally insensitive material? Are the activities appropriate for the learning culture? Is the coursebook unprejudiced in the way it deals with different customs, ethnicities, races and sexes?
Teacher's guide	Does the coursebook have an accompanying teacher's guide? Is it easy to use? Does it explain things clearly? Does it offer alternatives to the coursebook activities? Does it have all the answers that teachers and students need? Does it provide differentiated activities for fast and slow learners?