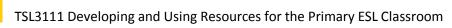# TSL3111 Developing and Using Resources for the Primary ESL Classroom

Topic 3: Evaluation and Exploitation of Coursebooks and Multimedia Materials

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Student's Notes

Contents

Topic 3: Evaluation and exploitation of course books and multimedia materials

In the modern era of high technology, sometimes the humble textbook can be overlooked in the teacher's eagerness to get into technology. However, as we saw in the 'Technology Pyramid' in topic 1, a lot of older style materials can be equally valuable. It is unlikely that we will get away from the course textbook for quite a few years yet – in fact in Malaysia we are seeing new KSSR textbooks rolling out year by year. So we need to look at how to make good use of it and other books and materials that are available.

Read the following chapter and answer the questions below:

The Coursebook as a Resource

(Harmer, 2007, pp. 181-3)

Coursebook or no coursebook?

The benefits and restrictions of coursebook use can be easily summarised:

- **Benefits**: good coursebooks are carefully prepared to offer a coherent syllabus, satisfactory language control, motivating texts, audio cassettes/CDs and other accessories such as video/DVD material, CD-ROMs and extra resource material. They are often attractively presented. They provide teachers under pressure with the reassurance that, even when they are forced to plan at the last moment, they will be using material which they can have confidence in. They come with detailed teacher's guides, which not only provide procedures for the lesson in the student's book, but also offer suggestions and alternatives, extra activities and resources. The adoption of a new coursebook provides a powerful stimulus for methodological development (see Hutchinson and Torres 1994).

Students like coursebooks, too, since they foster the perception of progress as units and then books are completed. Coursebooks also provide material which students can look back at for revision and, at their best, their visual and topic appeal can have a powerfully engaging effect.

- **Restrictions**: coursebooks, used inappropriately, impose learning styles and content on classes and teachers alike, appearing to be '"fait accompli" over which they can have little control' (Littlejohn 1998: 205). Many of them rely on Presentation, Practice and Production as their main methodological procedure (see Chapter 4, A2), despite recent enthusiasm for other teaching sequences. Units and lessons often follow an unrelenting format so that students and teachers eventually become demotivated by the sameness of it all. And in their choice of topics, coursebooks can sometimes be bland or culturally inappropriate.

One solution to the perceived disadvantages of coursebooks is to do without them altogether, to use a 'do-it-yourself' approach (Block 1991, Maley 1998, Thornbury and Meddings 2001). Such an approach is extremely attractive. It can offer students a dynamic and varied programme. If they can see its relevance to their own needs, it will greatly enhance their motivation and their trust in what they are being asked to do. It allows teachers to respond on a lesson-by-lesson basis to what is happening in the class. Finally, for the teacher, it means an exciting and creative involvement with texts and tasks.

In order for the DIY approach to be successful, teachers need access to (and knowledge of) a wide range of materials, from coursebooks and videos to magazines, novels, encyclopaedias, publicity brochures and the Internet. They will have to make (and make use of) a variety of home-grown materials (see below,). They will also need the confidence to know when and what to choose, becoming, in effect, syllabus designers in their own right. This not only makes preparing lessons a very time-consuming business, but also runs the risk that students will end up with incoherent collections of bits and pieces of material. However, where there is time for the proper planning and organisation of DIY teaching, students may well get exceptional programmes of study, which are responsive to their needs and varied in a way that does not abandon coherence. Such an approach also ties in with a dialogic,'Dogme'-style of teaching (see page 75).

Using coursebooks

Around the world, however, the vast majority of teachers reject a coursebook-free approach and instead use them to help their learners and, what's more, to give structure and direction to their own teaching.

The most important aspect of coursebook use is for teachers to try to engage students with the content they are going to be dealing with. This means arousing the students' interest in a topic, and making sure that they know exactly what we want them to do before we get them to open their books and disappear, heads-down in the pages, while we are still trying talk to them.

Many teachers want to use their coursebooks as a kind of springboard for their lessons, rather than as a manual to be slavishly followed. In other words, while they base much of their teaching on the contents of the coursebook, they reserve the right to decide when and how to use its constituent parts. There are two main ways they can do this:

- **Omit and replace**: the first decision we have to make is whether to use a particular coursebook lesson or not. If the answer is 'no', there are two possible courses of action. The first is just to omit the lesson altogether. In this case, we suppose that the students will not miss it because it does not teach anything fundamentally necessary and it is not especially interesting. When, however, we think the language or topic area in question is important, we will have to replace the coursebook lesson with our own preferred alternative.

Although there is nothing wrong with omitting or replacing coursebook material, it becomes irksome for many students if it happens too often, especially when they have had to buy the book themselves. It may also deny them the chance to revise (a major advantage of coursebooks), and their course may lose overall coherence.

- **To change or not to change?** When we decide to use a coursebook lesson, we can, of course, do so without making any substantial changes to the way it is presented. However, we might decide to use the lesson but to change it to make it more appropriate for our students. If the material is not very substantial, we might add something to it - a role-play after a reading text, perhaps, or extra situations for language practice. We might re-write an exercise we do not especially like or replace one activity or text with something else, such as a download from the Internet or any other home-grown items. We could re-order the activities within a lesson, or even re-order lessons (within reason). Finally, we may wish to reduce a lesson by cutting out an exercise or an activity. In all our decisions, however, it is

important to remember that students need to be able to see a coherent pattern to what we are doing and understand our reasons for changes.

Using coursebooks appropriately is an art which becomes clearer with experience. If the teacher approaches lesson planning in the right frame of mind (see Chapter 21), it happens almost as a matter of course. The options we have discussed for coursebook use are summarised in Figure 4.

FIGURE 4: Options for coursebook use.

Questions for 'The Coursebook as a Resource':

1. List some benefits of a good coursebook:

- ....
- ....
- ....
- ....
- ....
- ....
- ....
- ....
- ....
- ....

2. What are some restrictions of the coursebook (especially if used inappropriately)?

- ....
- ....

- ....

- ....

- ....

3. What are the advantages of the 'do-it-yourself' approach without a coursebook?

- ....

- ....

- ....

- ....

4. What is needed for the DIY approach to be successful?

- ....

- ....

- ....

5. What are some possible disadvantages of this style of teaching? ....
....

7. What is the most important aspect of coursebook use? ....
....

Discuss your answers with your group members. Write notes on anything useful they have to add:

....

....

....

Evaluating Coursebooks / Textbooks

Teachers should have an idea what they are looking for in good teaching and learning materials. This is especially true with textbooks and coursebooks as there are so many of them on the market.

In the Malaysian Primary School context there is one only English course textbook for each year. Is it good? Should it be used totally and exclusively? Or should it be supplemented and adapted? Why (not) and how?

1. **Consider the criteria** for evaluating the KSSR textbook – or any other English course textbook.

What do you think is important? Possibly things to consider: physical attributes (external / internal), attractiveness (to students / teachers), pictures and illustrations, cultural appropriateness, language suitability ... etc.

NOTE: This is a <u>Pre-Use checklist</u>, looking at a resource before you purchase / use it. What things would you look for when you pick up the book in a book-shop and thumb through it?

Brainstorm a list:

....

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Discuss with your group and share ideas.

2. **Create an evaluation instrument**. There is an example of a checklist on the pages following this, and other examples can be seen on the Internet. You can look for ideas, but do not try to copy what you find because it is unlikely that anything would be really suitable.

3. **Test your instrument** by applying it to the KSSR text as well as at least one other book which is designed for teaching English to children. (Books can be found in the IPG library!)

4. **Swap** (copies of) your instrument with those created by other students / pairs / groups and apply the new instrument(s) to the same materials.

5. **Write a short discourse** on your findings: -

- On what basis did you choose your criteria for the instrument?
- How useful was your instrument?
- How useful were your friends' instrument(s)?
- How good is the KSSR text book?
- How good is the other book?

6. **Make a short PowerPoint presentation** to share with the rest of the class.

NOTE: <u>In-use checklist</u>: What things might you notice while you are using a textbook that you didn't notice before/

For example – the children's response to it ....

....

....

....

....

<u>Post-Use checklist</u>: What things could you only look for after using a textbook for a while?

For example – the children do/don't seem to be learning (because ...?) ...

....

....

....
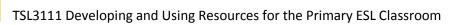
Example of Instrument to Evaluate General English Coursebook

This questionnaire was designed to give to teachers in a language school to examine several different books and then make their recommendations. Not all of the points in this table would necessarily be relevant in the Malaysian setting, and some relevant points may be missing.

Name of Book: ....

Publisher: Level :

Other levels available:

Target group(s)

Level: Age: Size of group:

Teacher Evaluating Book

Name :   Job position:

Use of Book: _ Main Core   _ Supplementary   _ Other ....

Evaluation Scale		Extremely useful 10 9 8 7 6		Useful with adaptation 5 4 3 2 1		Not useful 0
Physical Attributes	Looks good, feels good, durable	10 9 8 7 6		5 4 3 2 1		0
	Lies flat when open	10 9 8 7 6		5 4 3 2 1		0
	Good size for carrying	10 9 8 7 6		5 4 3 2 1		0
	Presentation clear, not cluttered	10 9 8 7 6		5 4 3 2 1		0
Availability of Copies	Locally available	10 9 8 7 6		5 4 3 2 1		0
	Reasonably priced	10 9 8 7 6		5 4 3 2 1		0
Support Materials	Available but not essential	10 9 8 7 6		5 4 3 2 1		0
	Teachers Book	10 9 8 7 6		5 4 3 2 1		0
	Audio materials on CD	10 9 8 7 6		5 4 3 2 1		0
	Student Workbook (Consumable)	10 9 8 7 6		5 4 3 2 1		0
	Vocabulary Book/Student Dictionary	10 9 8 7 6		5 4 3 2 1		0
	Interactive Materials / CD Rom	10 9 8 7 6		5 4 3 2 1		0
	Test book / CD	10 9 8 7 6		5 4 3 2 1		0
	Other...	10 9 8 7 6		5 4 3 2 1		0
Teacher's Book	Could be used by inexperienced teachers	10 9 8 7 6		5 4 3 2 1		0
	Audio files clearly indexed to book	10 9 8 7 6		5 4 3 2 1		0
	Teachers Book contains useful	Teaching strategies	10 9 8 7 6	5 4 3 2 1	0
		Additional activities	10 9 8 7 6	5 4 3 2 1	0
		B/L masters	10 9 8 7 6	5 4 3 2 1	0
		Tests	10 9 8 7 6	5 4 3 2 1	0

Student's Book	Clear instructions	10	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	0
	Space to write	10	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	0
	Self-assessment possible	10	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	0
	Clear reference pages for grammar	10	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	0
	Easy to find reference pages and vocab lists	10	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	0
Content	Clear scope and sequence page	10	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	0
	Cross-referenced to common frameworks	10	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	0
	In line with appropriate syllabus	10	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	0
	Suitable for this culture	10	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	0
	Suitable for different learning styles	10	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	0
	Spiralling progression	10	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	0
Activities	Practical	10	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	0
	Communicative	10	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	0
	Versatile for group size	10	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	0
	Versatile for ability levels	10	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	0
	Opportunities to practice	10	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	0
	Opportunities for personalization	10	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	0
Texts for Reading	Interesting, engaging	10	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	0
	Authentic	10	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	0
	Informative	10	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	0
	Appropriately illustrated	10	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	0
	Good quality audio available	10	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	0

RECOMMENDATION

Overall the book is	10	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	0

I recommend:

Other comments:

Read the chapter below about exploiting a coursebook which is not 100% suitable by adapting it in various ways.

Answer the questions below.

Reasons for Adapting Materials

(McDonough, Shaw, & Masuhara, 2013, pp. 67-8)

We have just asked you to consider your reasons for needing to make modifications to your own materials, and some of the changes you would wish to make. These reasons will depend, of course, on the whole range of variables operating in your own teaching situation, and one teacher's priorities may well differ considerably from those of another. It is certainly possible that there are some general trends common to a large number of teaching contexts: most obviously there has been a widespread perception that materials should aim to be in some sense 'communicative' and 'authentic'. Nevertheless, it is worth bearing in mind that priorities are relative, and there is no absolute notion of right or wrong, or even just one way of interpreting such terms as 'communicative' and 'authentic'. It is also the case that priorities change over time even within the same context. For instance, decontextualized grammar study is not intrinsically 'wrong' in a communicatively oriented class, just as role play is not automatically 'right'. Nor does a need to adapt necessarily imply that a coursebook is defective.

It will be useful to compare your own reasons with those in the following list. The list is not intended to be comprehensive, but simple, to show some of the possible areas of mismatch ('non congruence') that teachers identify and that can be dealt with by adaptation:

- Not enough grammar coverage in general.
- Not enough practice of grammar points of particular difficulty to these learners.
- The communicative focus means that grammar is presented unsystematically.
- Reading passages contain too much unknown vocabulary.
- Comprehension questions are too easy because the answers can be lifted directly from the text with no real understanding.
- Listening passages are inauthentic, because they sound too much like written material being read out.
- Not enough guidance on pronunciation.
- Subject matter inappropriate for learners of this age and intellectual level.
- Photographs and other illustrative material not culturally acceptable.
- Amount of material too much or too little to cover in the time allocated to lessons.
- No guidance for teachers on handling group work and role-play activities with a large class.
- Dialogues too formal and not representative of everyday speech.
- Audio material difficult to use because of problems to do with room size and technical equipment.
- Too much or too little variety in the activities.
- Vocabulary list and a key to the exercises would be helpful.
- Accompanying tests needed.

Undoubtedly much more could be added to this list, but it serves as an illustration of some of the possibilities. All aspects of the language classroom can be covered: the few examples above include (1) aspects of language use, (2) skills, (3) classroom organization and (4) supplementary material. Cunningsworth (1995) seems to generally agree with the list above but adds learner perspectives to his list such as expectations and motivation. Tomlinson and Masuhara (2004:12) summarize what factors may trigger feelings of incongruence among teachers. They categorize the sources as

- teaching contexts (e.g. national, regional, institutional, cultural situations)
- course requirements (e.g. objectives, syllabus, methodology, assessment)
- learners (e.g. age, language level, prior learning experience, learning style)
- teachers (e.g. teaching style, belief about learning and teaching)
- materials (e.g. texts, tasks, activities, learning and teaching philosophy, methodology).

Islam and Mares (2003) discuss principles and procedures of adaptation and provide three scenarios (i.e. materials for public junior high schools in Japan, materials for an adult language school in Spain, materials for university English as a second language in the United States) and their more learner-centred adapted version for each case. Some practical and useful examples of adaptation using task-based learning can be found in Willis and Willis (2007), who also offer some articles on Task-Based Teaching and lesson plans on their web site (http:/lwww.willis-elt.co.uk). Saraceni (2003) advocates learner-centred adaptation and explores this promising new area. She reports that there is very little, if any, literature showing how exactly students could be involved in the adaptation process. She argues that learners as well as teachers should develop awareness of principles of learning and materials design through adapting and evaluating courses. She then proposes a model of adapting courses and provides an example of materials in which activities are designed to be adapted by the learners.

Questions about 'Reasons for Adapting Materials':

1. According to 'widespread perception', what two attributes should materials have? ....

....

2. What do you understand by 'decontextualized grammar'? ....

....

3. What is said about 'decontextualized grammar' in a communicative classroom? ....

....

4. Look at the list of possible reasons for adapting materials. Choose 5 that you can relate to or that you feel might be relevant in the Malaysian Primary school text-book / coursebook situation.

1..

2..

3..

4...

5..

5. Anything that you could add to the list? ....………

....

6. Have you ever had 'feelings of incongruence'? ....…......

This term is used to 'describe feelings of depression and unhappiness caused by not living the life we really want to.'

The source of these feelings are categorised as: *teaching contexts, course requirements, learners, teachers,* and *materials.*

Choose two of these which you think will be most likely to cause 'feelings of incongruence' in a Malaysian Primary School teacher. Explain.

....

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Multimedia materials

There is an ever-increasing amount of Multimedia materials available for teachers and students, especially in the form of videos and audio materials from the Internet. Obviously, it is a great place to find <u>authentic</u> listening materials.

It has been said: 'Teachers should never expose children to multimedia items which they have not watched and listened to themselves.'

Do you think this is true? Why is it said?

....

....

Discuss with your group.

Brainstorm with your group the relevant factors in choosing multimedia materials such as:

- Videos, movies, movie clips – fiction and non-fiction
- Cartoon movies and clips
- Video-clips of songs
- Cartoons of songs
- Podcasts of stories or information
- Websites for information
- Online learning games
- PowerPoint shows
- Sound files (songs)
- More?

Are any of the criteria the same as for coursebook materials?

Create an instrument for evaluating multi-media materials.

Your textbook/coursebook evaluation instrument should be a good place to start.

Also look at the following material from Elissavet and Economides. (Elissavet & Economides, 2003) Skim through the article be to get some ideas for creating your instrument. <mark>Use a highlighter pen</mark> to mark the parts that may be useful to you. (Don't worry if you don't understand all of it.)

Evaluation Instrument for Hypermedia Courseware

The criteria selected from the literature for every sector of the evaluation framework were used as the basis for the design of the initial version of the evaluation instrument. This initial version was disseminated for comments to academics, postgraduate students and researchers in the field of educational technology at the University of Macedonia, Greece. This effort was under a project run for two years (2000-2001) by the University of Macedonia called EPENDISI that aimed to train secondary schoolteachers in the use of ICTs in the classroom and also to build a database that contains information and resources on several evaluated educational software on almost all secondary school subjects. Taking into consideration the comments provided the instrument was revised and its final form is presented here.

The instrument has the form of a suitability scale questionnaire with five points; where figure (1) is assigned to strongly agree and figure (5) to strongly disagree. The scale also includes the figure (0) for those items in the questionnaire that cannot be evaluated, as they do not apply during the evaluation of particular hypermedia courseware. One hundred and twenty four items are included in the instrument and they cover both cases of stand-alone and web-based hypermedia courseware. The one hundred items refer to both stand-alone and web-based ones and the extra 24 items refer only to web-based ones, as these applications have some distinct characteristics regarding screen design and technical support and update processes. However, the instrument does not include items regarding the Social Acceptability because the criteria for such an evaluation cannot have universal application, as different educational systems have different beliefs on what is socially acceptable or unacceptable; therefore these criteria should be determined every time from the evaluators of each educational system.

The different sections of the instrument and the items included are presented next. It has to be noted at this point that the numeration of the items continues from each previous section in order to be more helpful to potential evaluators.

A. Evaluation of the content

1. The content is reliable	0 1 2 3 4 5
2. The origin of information is known	0 1 2 3 4 5
3. The authors and the publishers are reputable	0 1 2 3 4 5
4. Balanced presentation of information	0 1 2 3 4 5
5. Bias-free viewpoints and images	0 1 2 3 4 5
6. Balanced representation of cultural, ethnic and racial groups	0 1 2 3 4 5
7. Correct use of grammar	0 1 2 3 4 5
8. Current and error-free information	0 1 2 3 4 5
9. Concepts and vocabulary relevant to learners' abilities	0 1 2 3 4 5
10. Information relevant to age group curriculum	0 1 2 3 4 5
11. Information of sufficient scope and depth	0 1 2 3 4 5
12. Logical progression of topics	0 1 2 3 4 5
13. Variety of activities, with options for increasing complexity.	0 1 2 3 4 5

B. Organization and Presentation of the Content

B.1 Pedagogical Parameters

B.1.1. Instructional Theories – Curriculum

14. The design of the hypermedia courseware is based on reliable learning and instructional theories and is directly related with the content of the curriculum.	0 1 2 3 4 5
15. The application of the hypermedia courseware is possible in various topics of the curriculum	0 1 2 3 4 5
16. The application of the hypermedia courseware is possible on issues related with the curriculum	0 1 2 3 4 5
17. The hypermedia courseware can be used by learners alone, without the need of other instructional objects (i.e. book)	0 1 2 3 4 5

B.2.1.2. Navigation: The Hypermedia Courseware includes:

45. Help key to get procedural information	0 1 2 3 4 5
46. Answer key for answering a question	0 1 2 3 4 5
47. Glossary key for seeing the definition of any term	0 1 2 3 4 5
48. Objective key for reviewing the course's objectives	0 1 2 3 4 5
49. Content map key for seeing a list of options available	0 1 2 3 4 5
50. Summary and review key for reviewing whole or parts of the lesson	0 1 2 3 4 5
51. Menu key for returning to the main page	0 1 2 3 4 5
52. Exit key, for exiting the program	0 1 2 3 4 5
53. Comment key for recording a learner's comment	0 1 2 3 4 5
54. Example key for seeing examples of an idea	0 1 2 3 4 5
55. Key for moving forward or backward in a lesson	0 1 2 3 4 5
56. Key for accessing the next lesson in a sequence	0 1 2 3 4 5

B.2.1.3. Feedback

57. The H.C. provides feedback immediately after a response	0 1 2 3 4 5
58. The placement of feedback is varied according to the level of objectives. (Provide feedback after each response for lower level objectives, and at the end of the session for the higher level ones)	0 1 2 3 4 5
59. The H.C. provides feedback to verify the correctness of a response	0 1 2 3 4 5
60. For incorrect responses, information is given to the student about how to correct their answers, or hints to try again	0 1 2 3 4 5
61. The H.C. allows students to print out their feedback	0 1 2 3 4 5
62. The H.C. allows students to check their performance	0 1 2 3 4 5
63. The H.C. allows students to measure the time they consume in a certain on-line assignment	0 1 2 3 4 5

B.2.2 Screen Design

64. Screens are designed in a clear and understandable manner	0 1 2 3 4 5
65. The presentation of information can captivate the attention of students	0 1 2 3 4 5
66. The presentation of information can stimulate recall	0 1 2 3 4 5
67. The design does not overload student's memory	0 1 2 3 4 5
68. The use of space is according to the principles of screen design	0 1 2 3 4 5
69. The design uses proper fonts in terms of style and size	0 1 2 3 4 5
70. The use of text follows the principles of readability	0 1 2 3 4 5
71. The colour of the text follows the principles of readability	0 1 2 3 4 5
72. The number of colours in each screen is no more than six	0 1 2 3 4 5
73. There is consistency in the functional use of colours	0 1 2 3 4 5
74. The quality of the text, images, graphics and video is good	0 1 2 3 4 5
75. Presented pictures are relevant to the information included in the text	0 1 2 3 4 5
76. The use of graphics support meaningfully the text provided	0 1 2 3 4 5
77. A high contrast between graphics and background is retained.	0 1 2 3 4 5
78. There is only one moving image (animation and/or video) each time on the same screen	0 1 2 3 4 5
79. Video enhance the presentation of information	0 1 2 3 4 5
80. Sound is of good quality and enhances the presentation of information	0 1 2 3 4 5
81. Sound is an alternative means of presenting information and not a necessity (except for music and language courses)	0 1 2 3 4 5
82. The integration of presentation means is well coordinated	0 1 2 3 4 5

C. Technical Support and Update Process

83. The content has durability over time	0 1 2 3 4 5
84. The content can be updated and/or modified with new knowledge that will appear soon after the purchase of the courseware	0 1 2 3 4 5
85. Technical coverage is offered from the production company	0 1 2 3 4 5
86. The courseware can be used in different platforms	0 1 2 3 4 5
87. Documentation exist regarding technical requirements for software and hardware needed	0 1 2 3 4 5
88. There are instructions for the installation and use of the courseware	0 1 2 3 4 5
89. There is a review of the courseware's contents for use by the instructor	0 1 2 3 4 5
90. Documentation exists regarding the use of the courseware in the classroom with teaching plans and related activities	0 1 2 3 4 5
91. The updating, modifying and adding procedures are relatively easy for the average user	0 1 2 3 4 5
92. The H.C. provides printing capabilities	0 1 2 3 4 5
93. The H.C. allows to keep (save) every step of the activities	0 1 2 3 4 5

D. Evaluation of learning

D.1 The process of learning

94. The H.C. is easy to learn; the user can quickly get some work done with it	0 1 2 3 4 5
95. The H.C. is efficient to use; once the user has learnt it, a high level of productivity is possible	0 1 2 3 4 5
96. The H.C. is easy to remember; the casual user is able to return to using it after some period without having to learn everything all over	0 1 2 3 4 5
97. The structure of the H.C. is comprehensive and the average performance learners can easily follow it	0 1 2 3 4 5
98. Users do not make many errors during the use of the H.C. or if they do so they can easily recover them	0 1 2 3 4 5
99. Users are subjectively satisfied by using the H.C	0 1 2 3 4 5
100. Users find the H.C. interesting	0 1 2 3 4 5

In cases when the **hypermedia courseware is web-based** then additionally the following items are examined as well for the Screen Design section.

1. The speed of the program (download) is satisfactory	0 1 2 3 4 5
2. Horizontal scrolling bars are not used	0 1 2 3 4 5
3. The hypermedia courseware includes local links in order to facilitate navigation	0 1 2 3 4 5
4. The H.C. is flexible and allows students to access all its contents	0 1 2 3 4 5
5. The first page is understandable	0 1 2 3 4 5
6. The H.C. in general has a distinct and easily recognized character	0 1 2 3 4 5
7. The information is organized into small and functional units	0 1 2 3 4 5
8. The H.C. includes alternative ways of presentation (e.g. with or without graphics)	0 1 2 3 4 5
9. The H.C. includes content map	0 1 2 3 4 5
10. The H.C. includes search engine	0 1 2 3 4 5
11. The main navigation tools are always on display to increase speed of use and save from backtracking	0 1 2 3 4 5
12. The way that the navigation tools work is easily understandable from the students	0 1 2 3 4 5
13. Each learning unit is presented under the same design principles (consistency)	0 1 2 3 4 5
14. External links are loaded in a separate window	0 1 2 3 4 5
15. The H.C. includes synchronous communication channels	0 1 2 3 4 5
16. The H.C. includes asynchronous communication channels	0 1 2 3 4 5

Moreover, for **web-based hypermedia courseware** the following items need examination for Technical Support and Update Process section.

17. The H.C. includes information regarding how often is updated	0 1 2 3 4 5
18. The H.C. includes information regarding its latest update	0 1 2 3 4 5
19. The links are stable	0 1 2 3 4 5
20. The frequency of malfunction is rare	0 1 2 3 4 5
21. The courseware includes mirror sites	0 1 2 3 4 5
22. The content is updated regularly	0 1 2 3 4 5
23. The management and the maintenance of the site is satisfactory	0 1 2 3 4 5
24. The H.C. includes archives from previous editions	0 1 2 3 4 5

Evaluation Process and Analysis of the Results

As shown from the items included in the instrument, during the evaluation of a hypermedia courseware application a number of people should be involved, i.e. content experts, instructional technologists, educators and interface designers. However, the items are quite straightforward and as a result the instrument can be used from educators with no particular knowledge on instructional technology, as a structured way of assisting them during the initial evaluation of a new piece of courseware that want to use in their teaching. After this initial stage, an evaluation with the students is required in order for educators to have a better understanding of the courseware's value and potential.

In order to analyse the results the evaluators have to consider that not all the factors have the same weight; and content is the most important of all. If the content does not meet the educator's criteria then there is no need to further evaluate the organization and the presentation of the educational material. However, to have an overall idea regarding the value of the courseware at the end of the evaluation process for a particular courseware the sum of the score in all items - except those resulted from the evaluation of the content - and its comparison with the total sum, that is the maximum of the marks in all items is required. Therefore, by excluding the 13 items for the evaluation of content the total sum for stand-alone applications is 435 (87*5) and 555 (111*5) for web-based ones (Table 1). These two figures need alteration in the case that not all the items were used during the evaluation, as some of them could not find application in certain pieces of hypermedia courseware. For example, if only 80 items are used then the total sum is 400 (80*5).

Stand-alone		Web-based	
Total sum	*Score*	*Total sum*	*Score*
435		555	

Table 1. Assessment table for all the items of the evaluation instrument

When evaluating two or more courseware on the same subject, then the above figures can be a useful starting point in determining the most appropriate one. Yet, the most important part of the evaluation is the examination of the scores resulted from the evaluation of the four different sectors separately: a) content, b) presentation and organization of the content, c) technical support and update processes and finally, d) the evaluation of learning. The examination of these scores is important in order to secure the case that an application is technically sound but does not have a pedagogical value and vice versa. Table 2 can be used to compare the results.

	Assessment of the Different Sectors			
	Stand-alone		Web-based	
	Total sum	*Score*	*Total sum*	*Score*
A. Content	65		65	
B. Organisation and Presentation of the content	340		420	
B1. Pedagogical Parameters	120		120	
B2. Design factors	225		305	
C. Technical Support and Update Process	55		95	
D. Evaluation of learning	35		35	

Table 2. Assessment table for the different sectors of the evaluation instrument

It has to be mentioned that in order to ensure high quality of hypermedia courseware the evaluators' team (or the teacher) potentially could agree on some standards and set a threshold to the comparison of the results. For example, if the score resulted from the evaluation of an application is not equal with the two thirds of the total sum in all sectors then the application cannot be used for teaching and learning.

Summary

This paper presented an evaluation instrument for hypermedia courseware that is designed according to an evaluation framework developed from the integration of a number of important issues emerged from research on instructional design and system evaluation the past fifteen years and is concerned with both social and practical acceptability of hypermedia courseware. One hundred and twenty four items are included in the instrument that has the form of a suitability scale questionnaire that are concerned with the evaluation of four main sectors: a) content, b) presentation and organization of the content, c) technical support and update processes and finally, d) the evaluation of learning.

Postgraduate students and secondary schoolteachers in the University of Macedonia, Greece, used the instrument during 2001, in order to evaluate hypermedia courseware on almost all secondary school subjects of the Greek curriculum. This effort was under a project run for two years (2000-2001) by the University of Macedonia, Greece called EPENDISI that aimed to train secondary schoolteachers in the use of ICTs in the classroom and also to build a database that contains information and resources on several evaluated educational software on secondary school subjects. During the evaluation period users of the instrument express their opinion on the instrument itself during debriefing sessions. In general, they agreed that it was easy to use as most of the items included are clear-cut and also the analysis of the results was a simple process that gives relatively quickly an overall idea of a particular courseware's value. Moreover, secondary schoolteachers stated that the first time they used the instrument they felt a bit frustrated as they had little knowledge on instructional design and they usually were consumers of the product rather than evaluators. However, after using the instrument for more than three times they had a better understanding of instructional design and system's evaluation and as a result they felt comfortable with the evaluation process. However, most of the instrument users stated that in order to determine the real value of a particular courseware evaluation with the end-users (i.e. students) is essential.

As research progresses in the field of hypermedia courseware evaluation new items can be added to the presented instrument. Therefore, it is a flexible tool that could be easily adapted in an educational environment and its improvement could be an ongoing process.

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