

CHAPTER

3

EVALUATION OF THE FULL BLAST PLUS 4 TEXTBOOK

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3.1 INTRODUCTION

Textbooks play an important role in aiding teachers to align teaching and learning activities with the syllabus requirements, offering structured content delivery. Textbooks provide the syllabus and guide authors in deciding what, in what order, and how subjects are taught (McComas, 2024). With the introduction of the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR) in 2013 as part of the Malaysian Education Blueprint and the English Language Education Reforms. The CEFR was integrated into all levels of education, from pre-school to tertiary, to align Malaysian education with international standards. The roadmap for the CEFR implementation was a long-term plan, with the first phase (2013-2015) focusing on improving the English proficiency of teachers. The implementation of CEFR-aligned curricula and syllabi commenced in primary and secondary schools in 2017. This included the introduction of CEFR-aligned textbooks to all Malaysian Primary and Secondary Schools. In 2019, the Full Blast Plus 4 textbooks for Form 4 and Form 5 students were introduced.

Textbooks are important materials used by teachers in the classroom to guide them in the teaching and learning process. According to Huang et al. (2022), textbooks can either promote or hinder students

learning. The needs of diverse learners may not be fulfilled by a single textbook, as every textbook is written by authors with differing methods and perspectives about teaching and learning. Thus, due to diverse styles of writing, publishing, ethical beliefs, and even religious understanding, the theme and sequence of each textbook and related material could be different (Santos, 2020). Textbook evaluators can be teachers, educators, authors, or even learners who, based on the specified requirements, may rate the quality of the material provided (Alshumaimeri & Alharbi, 2024). However, textbook evaluation conducted by experts, especially by teachers who use textbooks as a reliable source without modifying any information, has obvious merits (Mo & Bi, 2024). In particular, the process of evaluating textbooks provides teachers with an opportunity to share their views and assessment of a specific textbook based on their actual teaching experience. More importantly, such expert evaluations are instrumental in improving the textbook content or application to better fit the learners needs.

Textbooks are valued as reliable resources in achieving syllabus objectives and in facilitating students' language acquisition and development. As such, according to Mukundan & Kalajahi (2013), a thorough evaluation of new materials, such as a new textbook, is necessary to assess their suitability and relevance. In the case of foreign textbooks, study (Zhang et al., 2024) has often shown the lack of cultural appropriateness, mismatch with the latest teaching methodologies, and failing to meet the diverse needs of students. This chapter discusses the English as a Second Language (ESL) experts views on the strengths and weaknesses of the foreign textbook adapted in Malaysian schools. The textbook evaluation was conducted by Malaysian teachers on the CEFR-aligned foreign textbook entitled Full Blast Plus 4 textbooks used in Government Secondary Schools.

3.2 TEXTBOOK ADAPTATION AND EVALUATION

Textbook evaluation is crucial for crafting quality educational materials that cater to students' needs. The evaluation typically

involves systematically compiling data to inform decision-making (Petschauer, 2010). The selection process is usually conducted in stages and focuses on external and internal factors (Papadaki & Karagianni (2023). Beginning with the analysis of the book layout, content, and diversity of materials. Then, the close inspection of the content, and this is finally followed by an evaluation by the experts to ensure its suitability for students.

Over the past two decades, textbook evaluation has evolved significantly, becoming pivotal in school curricula. Evaluating textbooks is vital as their selection profoundly impacts teaching and learning. It aids in determining the most suitable materials to meet students needs and enhance their comprehension of subjects. Feedback, both positive and negative, enables teachers to identify strengths and weaknesses, facilitating necessary modifications. This ensures the utilisation of appropriate materials, fostering effective teaching in classrooms.

3.3 TEXTBOOK EVALUATION IN MALAYSIA

In the Malaysian context, textbooks play a pivotal role in the education system. Textbooks used in Malaysian schools were previously and continue to be used to align with the national exams such as the Form Three Assessment (PT3) and Malaysian Education Certificate Examination (SPM) for Form 3 and Form 5 students, respectively. The relevance of these textbooks to the national exams underscored their significance, as incorrect materials can hinder language learners' success (Nimehchisalem & Mukundan, 2015). Several studies have evaluated English language textbooks in Malaysia. Another study by Khoo and Knight (2015) focused on evaluating the efficiency of the Form 4 and Form 5 English Textbooks in enhancing language skills and in aligning with curriculum standards.

Johar and Aziz (2019) assessed the Pulse 2 textbook for Form 1 and Form 2 students, exploring teachers perspectives and found varied responses, particularly regarding cultural content and student engagement. In the following year, Rahim and Daghigh (2020) compared local and foreign textbooks, highlighting the prevalence of