

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

A brief introduction of the object of this study, four selected textbooks, and the criteria for choosing them form the first section of this chapter. Then samples of analysis and evaluation in the study and the criteria for choosing them are discussed. In the following section of the chapter, three basic methods in analysis and evaluation are introduced with criteria for evaluation and comparison at the end of the chapter.

A brief Introduction of Four Selected Textbooks

Four college level BE textbooks widely used by Chinese BE Learners have been selected for analysis in this study. Publishers described the users of these four BE textbooks as pre-intermediate to intermediate level learners.

Two Chinese local BE textbooks are:

- 1). *Practical Skill Improvement in Business English* (Book 1), (Lu & Sun, 2003), (PSIBE1 is used for this book as the abbreviation in the present study). This book is designed for both businessmen and students. It is the first book of two in a BE coursebook series from pre-intermediate/intermediate to advanced level.

2). *Into Business with English* (Book 1), (2nd Edition), (University of International Business and Economics Materials Development and Writing Project Team, 2001), (IBE1 is used to refer to it in this study). This book is designed for the first year English major and non-English major university students. It is the first book of four in a Business English coursebook series for first two years study in college from pre-intermediate level to advanced level.

In 2000, international publishers – Oxford Designers & Illustrators and Pearson Education Limited – designed and illustrated another two BE textbooks. The Chinese editions were authorized for sale only within China (excluding the Special Administrative Regions of Hong Kong and Macao) in recent years. They are:

1). *Skills for Business English* (Book 2), (Chinese Edition), (Mascull, 2002), (SBE2 is the abbreviation of this book used in the present study). This book is designed and illustrated by Oxford designers and illustrators, and the international edition was published in 2000. It is designed for intermediate level learners who want to improve their English communication skills in real business situations. It is the second book of three in a BE series from elementary to advanced level.

2). *First Insights into Business* (Book 1) (China Edition), (Robbins, 2003), (FIB1 is the title of this book used in the present study). Pearson Education Limited, with Longman tag, published the international edition of FIB1 in 2000. This book is designed for pre-intermediate to intermediate level business major university students and businessmen. This book is student's book. It is the first book of two in a BE series from element/intermediate level to intermediate/advanced level.

Criteria for Selecting These Four Textbooks

These textbooks have been chosen with the following criteria based on “what is there” (McGrath, 2002, p.23):

1. Publisher: PSIBE1 was published by International BE School of Northeast Finance and Economics University, which ran the first BE program in China with abundant experience in BE teaching. IBE1 was published by University of International Business and Economics, the best and the most authoritative Business university in China. Graduates from this university are outstanding in business world in China, including for instance, two ministers of Chinese Ministry of Foreign Trade and Economic Cooperation. Teachers in this university have high standard teaching. They also hold the standard of the national examination for international business occupation certification. They represent Chinese BE education. Two international textbooks are from Oxford Designers and Illustrators and Pearson Education Limited. The Chinese editions were published by two good publishers: a) Foreign Language Teaching and Research Press, publisher of FIB1 is one of the most authoritative publishers in China; b) Fudan University Press, publisher of SBE2 is a famous university press in China with a long history in English education.

2. Date of publishing. PSIBE1 was published in 2003. It is the latest BE coursebook in Chinese official coursebook bookstores. The first edition of IBE1 was published in 1996. This 2nd edition was printed in 2001. SBE2's Chinese edition was published recently in 2002. FIB1's Chinese edition was published recently in 2003.

3. Author: The authors of the two international textbooks are from UK, using British English. In addition, Chinese learners learn British English at school.

Whereas those of two local textbooks have good reputation in BE teaching in China.

4. Distribution: Four BE textbooks are currently used by many BE students and sold in Chinese official coursebook bookstores.

The Samples of Study and Criteria for Choosing Them

When the object of evaluation is clear, analysis can be done as a preliminary stage of evaluation. One question that occurs in analysis is how many samples (exercises, lessons or units) are appropriate for analysis and evaluation study. To this question, Cunningsworth (cited in McGrath, 2002, p.54) suggests “detailed analysis of one or two units and close analysis of the treatment of specific features” in material evaluation. Therefore, following this suggestion, two units from each coursebook have been analyzed in this study.

Of the four textbooks for this study, two have twelve units, one has eleven units and another one has fifteen units. All units in the same book share the same structure. The content and activities in each book are in the same types with the same features, and typically progressing from easy to difficult. Therefore, for this study, Unit Four and Unit Seven from middle of each coursebook are chosen for analysis, which represent the whole book. Unit Four is between easy and middle level. Unit Seven is between middle and difficult level.

For analysis, the content of Unit Four and Unit Seven in each coursebook is subdivided into constituent tasks, where tasks are defined as "...any proposal contained within the material for action to be undertaken by the learners, which has the direct aim of bring about the learning of the foreign language" (Littlejohn, 1998, p.198), and numbered sequentially (see appendices A-D). For example, a direction such as "Match each situation with a suitable recommendation or solution"(Robbins, 2003), is considered as a task. All tasks from sample units were analyzed in turn.

Three Basic Methods in Analysis and Evaluation

Tomlinson (1999, cited in McGrath, 2002) defines the specific criteria for evaluation as: age-specific criteria, media-specific criteria, content-specific criteria and local criteria. Content-specific criteria relates to the nature of the material, such as topics, language, skills or texts in the material. This is the focus in the present study because the purposes of this study are to analyze and evaluate the amount and types of opportunities for output, and to compare the opportunities for output offered by the selected four BE textbooks.

McGrath (2002) states three basic methods in analysis and evaluation: the impressionistic method, the checklist method and the in-depth method. These can be considered as different levels or stages in evaluation. In this section, the impressionistic method is introduced first. Then the development of an analytical checklist is discussed, followed by the construction, content, definitions and

explanation of content in the checklist, also with examples tasks analyzed by the checklist. Finally, the in-depth method is introduced as a way of interpreting and putting a value on the results of the checklist.

The Impressionistic Method

The impressionistic method helps readers to obtain a wide-ranging but relatively superficial impression of the material. It includes the publisher's brief description of the book, syllabus-type and coverage, organization of the book, topics, layout, visuals and the design of units or lessons (McGrath, 2002). It is used to describe the selected four textbooks in the first section of Chapter Four.

The Checklist Method

The checklist method makes use of a list of items that is referred to for comparison, identification or verification. McGrath listed at least four advantages of checklists (McGrath, 2002, p.26-27):

1. Checklists are systematic, and can elucidate all elements that are thought to be important.
2. Checklists are cost effective. It takes a relatively short period of time to record a great deal of information.
3. Checklists record information in a convenient format, so it is easy to

compare between competing sets of material.

4. Checklists offer a common framework for decision-making, and are explicit.

Byrd (2001) also considers checklists to be a useful general method for textbook evaluation. Many other studies have used checklists to analyze materials, such as Ritchie (2001) who used a checklist to analyze tasks in English for medical purposes coursebook as a basis for designing replacement tasks according to his learners' needs. In this present study the checklist method is chosen to do a close analysis of output.

Littlejohn (1998) gives readers a good example of a checklist designed for analysis of textbooks, and illustrates the use of it by analyzing the tasks in two units of a secondary school coursebook. His checklist examines every task in two units by considering three key aspects of tasks: a) the process through which learners are to go; b) participant which is concerned with whom learners are to work; c) the content that learners are to focus on. This checklist has been adapted to analyze the process, content and participation in tasks in four selected textbooks in the present study.

The Content and Construction of the Checklist

The checklist used in this study (See Figure1) is based on Littlejohn's "Task Analysis Sheet" (1998, p.200-201) with modification to focus on expected output which is the purpose of the present study.

Title:		Publisher:										
Unit Number:		Task Number										
1. CONTENT	A. Form: Expected Output	No output										
		Graphic (picture, illustration, photograph or diagram)										
		Oral words/phrases/sentences										
		Oral extended discourse										
		Written words/ phrases/ sentences										
	B. Source	Materials										
		Learners										
	C. Nature of Content	Personal information/opinion										
		Fiction										
		Non--fiction										
Linguistic items												
2. PARTICIPANT	A. Level of Discourse Control	Metalinguistic comment										
		Learners individually simultaneously										
		Learners in pairs / One-to-one spoken interaction										
		Learners in groups / Multi-person spoken interaction										
	B. Focus	Learners to class / Spoken monologue										
		Initiate										
	3. PROCESS	B. Focus	Respond									
			Language system (rules, patterns, items or forms)									
			Meaning									
		C. Mental Operation	Meaning/system relationship (both meaning and form)									
Repeat identically / repeat selectively												
Repeat with substitution												
Review own foreign language output												
Formulate/hypothesize language rule												
Repeat with transformation												
Repeat with expansion												
Apply stated language rule												
Formulate items into large unit												
Hypothesize explanation/description/meaning of something												
C. Mental Operation	Decode semantic/propositional meaning											
	Select information											
	Categorize selected information											
	Translate from L1 to L2											
	Translate from L2 to L1											
	Negotiate to accomplish communicative task											

Figure 1. Analytical Checklist for Opportunities for Output

Explanations of the Content of the Checklist

The checklist contains three sections that reflect different aspects of the tasks:

1) content that the learners are to focus on; 2) participation in the tasks; and 3) process through which the learners are to go. Each task from Unit 4 and Unit 7 in four Business English textbooks is closely analyzed, focusing on what is required from learners in the three aspects mentioned above. Below are the explanations of sub-sections of checklist and the reasons for choosing these items.

Content. This section reflects content of the tasks from three sub-sections: form, source and nature. Analyzing the content is helping to know subject matter and focus of the material.

Since the purpose of this study centers on opportunities of output, the only form of task analyzed is expected output. "No output" is used to reflect the situation where learners are not expected to produce any language content, for instance, learners are asked to put some items in certain order by writing down numbers. Additionally, "graphic" refers to tasks where learners produce only graphic output without language content, such as drawing pictures, making diagrams or illustrations. Speaking and writing tasks, which either asking for individual words or sentences or extended discourse, are opportunities of output in which learners need to produce language content.

Source means where the content comes from: teacher, learners or materials.

The present study is an analysis and evaluation of opportunities for output offered by

the textbooks. So only contents from the materials and from the learners are discussed. Sources from teachers in the classroom are neither considered nor listed in the checklist.

The nature of content clarifies the types of content required for the task. For example, a task may implement personal information, opinions, linguistic items, metalinguistic comments, factual texts, or fictional texts, and so on. In the operation, the learners manipulate language or meaning; they comment with metalinguistic reflection or not; they work on some facts or fictional texts. These items can help to analyze the quality of output.

Participation. This part is checking participation - who does what with whom in tasks. The Learners work alone without communication with others in some tasks. In other tasks they work in pairs or in groups with two-way information change. In some spoken monologue tasks the learner is involved in non-reciprocal tasks that have only one-way information flow from him/her to listeners. Analysis of the participation offers data concerning information flow and communication requirement of the tasks, aiding understanding of the types of output and the quality of output.

Process. This section is concerning process of the task by focusing on what precisely learners are expected to do. Three sub-sections are included in this section.

Level of discourse control refers to the learner's discourse role and discourse control. "Initiate" means the learners have freedom to express what they wish to say without any kind of script. "Respond" means the learners are expected to express

themselves through language that has been narrowly defined. This part helps to distinguish the types of output and the quality of output.

“Focus” refers to where the learners are to concentrate their attention, whether they are asked to focus on the meaning of the language or the form of the language or both form and meaning. This is a clearer analysis about form or meaning, offering further information about the types of output.

Operation observes the mental process involved. For example, some tasks ask the learners to repeat the form exactly as what is presented. In other tasks, learners are to apply a rule - conscious or unconscious - to given language and to transform it accordingly. Still other tasks require more discussion, the learners need to discuss and decide with others in order to accomplish something. Analysis of the mental process required in the tasks, focus of the tasks, discourse roles involved in the tasks can help distinguish the types of output and the quality of output.

In sum, the content in this checklist was designed by considering the purpose of this study and the results from the checklist analysis were used for evaluation.

The definitions with examples of the categories in this checklist are listed below (See Figure 2) for gaining a unified picture.

FEATURE	DEFINITION	EXAMPLE
1. WHAT CONTENT IS THE LEARNER EXPECTED TO DEAL WITH? (CONTENT)		
A. Form: Expected Output		
A. Form of content to be produced by learner		
1. No output	Learner is not expected to produce any language	Match/order inform.
2. Graphic	Pictures, illustrations, photographs, or diagrams etc.	A plan of a house
3. Oral words/phrases/sentences	Individual spoken words/phrases/sentences	Short answer
4. Oral extended discourse	Texts of more than 50 words which cohere, containing supra-sentential features	An oral account of an event
5. Written words/phrases/sentences	Individual written words/phrases/ sentences	Write sentences using a specified word
6. Written extended discourse	Texts of more than 50 written words which cohere, containing supra-sentential features	Writing a story
B. Source		
B. Where the content comes from		
7. Materials	Content (or narrowly specified topic) supplied by the materials	Dialogue/text in the coursebook
8. Learner(s)	Content (or narrowly specified topic) supplied by the learner(s)	Learner recounts own experiences
C. Nature of Content		
C. Type of content as required in the operation		
9. Personal information/opinion	Learners own personal information or opinion	Learners' detail interests
10. Fiction	Fictional texts, texts are fictional texts	Dialogue between imaginary characters
11. Non-fiction	Factual Texts ('other facts'), texts are non-fictional texts	A text about a foreign culture
12. Linguistic items	Words/phrases/sentences carrying no specific message	A vocabulary list
13. Metalinguistic comment	Comments on language use, structure, form or meaning	A grammatical rule
2. WITH WHOM OR IN WHAT FORM? (PARTICIPATION)		
14. Learners individually simultaneously	Learners are to perform an operation in the company of others but without immediate regard to the manner/pace with which others perform the same operation	Learners individually do a written exercise
15. Learners in pairs/ One-to-one spoken interaction	Learners in pairs are to interact with each other	Answer questions in pairs
16. Learners in groups/ Multi-person spoken interaction	Learners in small groups interact with each other	A group discussion
17. Learners to class/ Spoken monologue	Learners are to perform an operation with whole class observing	Presentation before class
3. WHAT IS THE LEARNER EXPECTED TO DO? (PROCESS)		
A. Level of Discourse Control		
The learner's discourse role and discourse control		
18. Initiate	The learner is expected to express what he/she wishes to say without a script of any kind	Free discussion
19. Respond	The learner is expected to express him/herself through language which has been narrowly defined	Guided writing

Figure 2. The Definitions and Examples of Items in the Checklist in the Present Study

3. WHAT IS THE LEARNER EXPECTED TO DO?		
B. Focus	Where the learner is to concentrate his/her attention	
20. Language system	A focus on rules/patterns/items or forms	Substitution tables
21. Meaning	Focus on the message of the language being used	Comprehension question
22. Meaning/system relationship	A focus on the relationship between form and meaning	Answer questions with different forms
C. Mental Operation	What mental process is involved	
23. Repeat identically /repeat selectively	The learner is to reproduce exactly what is presented/ choose before repeating given language	Oral repetition/ dialogue frames
24. Repeat with substitution	The learner is to repeat the basic pattern of given language but replace certain items with other given items	Substitution drills
25. Review own foreign language output	The learner is to check his/her own foreign language production for its intended form or meaning	Check own written work
26. Formulate/hypothesize language rule	Learner is to hypothesize a language rule	Devise grammar rule
27. Repeat with transformation	The learner is to consciously / unconsciously apply a rule to given language and to transform it accordingly	Change statements into questions
28. Repeat with expansion	The learner is to given an outline and use it as a frame with which to produce further language	Composition outlines
29. Apply stated language rule	The learner is to use a given language rule in order to transform or produce language	Change direct to reported speech
30. Formulate items into large unit	The learner is to combine recalled items into e.g. complete sentences, necessitating the application of consciously/unconsciously held language rule	Discussion
31. Hypothesize explanation/description /meaning of something.	The learner is to hypothesis a description explanation or meaning of something	Deduce meanings from context
32. Decode semantic /propositional meaning	The learner is to decode the "surface" meaning of given language	Read a text for its meaning
33. Select information	The learner is to extract information from a given text	Answer questions by reading a text
34. Categorize selected information	The learner is to analyze and classify the selected information	Sort information into groups
35. Translate from L1 to L2	The learner is to translate something from the first language to the second language	Translate sentences from L1 to L2
36. Translate from L2 to L1	The learner is to translate something from the second language to the first language	Translate sentences From L2 to L1
37. Negotiate to accomplish communicative task	The learner is to discuss something to complete some communicative task	In groups, write a set of instructions

Figure 2. The Definitions and Examples of Items in the Checklist in the Present Study

Use of the Checklist Method

For the analysis in the present study, the textbooks were considered as potential plans for teaching action rather than putting them in any particular teaching situation. All the tasks from two units of four textbooks were analyzed one by one by using the checklist. The four examples of task analysis given below are provided to show how the checklist was used to analyze the textbook tasks:

- 1) “When you have finished look at the picture of your desktop, blow. Person A will tell you where to put all the things. Remember: do not look at Person A’s information.”

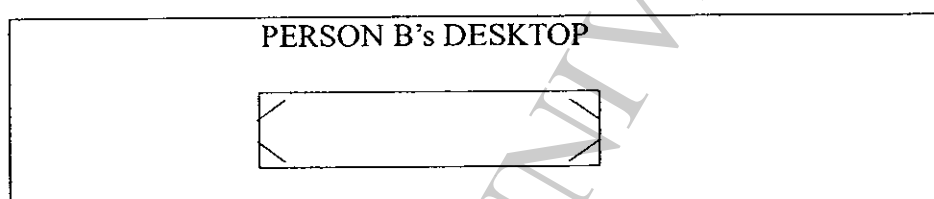


Figure 3. Task 24 in Unit 4 of IBE1 (A Communicative Task) (UIBE, 1996)

In this task, learner A chooses items from ten common items on the desk in the office, which is shown in the textbook, and asks learner B to put them in any place that he likes on the desk. Learner B follows learner A’s direction and draws the items without looking at learner A’s plans or pictures. The checklist records graphic and oral extended discourse for “expected output form” because it is an information gap activity that asks for communication. Learner A and learner B have an opportunity to discuss items on desktop. Learner B can ask learner A questions to make sure he/she understands learner A’s direction; Learner A can give more clear and detailed explanation to make sure learner B understands what learner A wants him/her to do.

The “source” is from both materials and learners because learner A’s can select from items given by the textbook, but he can decide where to put it. The “nature” of content” is fiction because learners make a desktop from their imagination. No personal information, linguistic items or metalinguistic comment is involved in this task. Learners work in pairs to have a one-to-one spoken interaction. Learners initiate in “level of discourse control” because they can decide what to say and how to say it without any limitation. No language rule is given for them to follow, they just focus on meaning by trying their best to use language to make their partner understand them. In “mental operation”, they use language to negotiate to achieve a communicative purpose.

2) A Writing Task

Using the information in brackets, write an e-mail to Rebecca Harris at Smart Kitchens saying that you would like to become one of their franchisees. Say:

- where you want to open the franchise (Darwin)
- how much business experience you have (three years as an independent installer with two employees)
- how much kitchen-building experience you have (ten years as an installer working for someone else before you started you own business three years ago)
- how much capital you have (A\$50,000). You want to know if this is enough.

Ask her to phone you to discuss the possibilities – your number is Darwin (08) 3452 8934. Close appropriately.

Figure 4. Task 4 in Unit 7 in SBE2 (Mascull, 2002)

This is a writing task. Therefore the checklist records written extended discourse in expected output form. The source of content is from both coursebook and learner because learners need to write down items that the coursebook asks them to express in the letter; at the same time they can choose how to write, such as order of items they express and what the language they use. The “nature of content” for

this task is fiction because material and learners are imagining a business event.

Learners do the task “individually simultaneously” because they work by themselves.

What they should write in this letter is already formed by the direction of the coursebook, so they are responding. There are given language rules for them to follow, but they need to produce further language within the outline using the coursebook as a frame. Therefore, they “repeat with expansion”. They focus on both meaning and language because they are asked to consider how to close their email appropriately. It is not a communicative task.

3) A Listening Task

B. Listen to the passage and decide the questions true or false (T/F)

听短文判断正误

- 1) This is a piece of radio advertisement about camera.
- 2) If you want to get an information brochure, you can call 1-800-778-0868, ext. 203.

Figure 5. Task 4 in Unit 7 of PSIBE1 (Lu & Sun, 2003)

This task asks only for the recognition of True/False from learners based on audio input, without asking them to explain why their answer is “T” or “F”.

Therefore, in the checklist, it shows “no output”. As the area of interest in this study is comparing opportunities for output, such a task is not considered further beyond recording that this task does not require output.

4) Final Checklist Task.

What verbs can you use to make recommendations?

Figure 6. Task 37 in Unit 4 of FIB1 (Robbins, 2002)

This is one of the final tasks in the unit. Learners need to either speak or

write down their answers, but the coursebook does not give clear directions about this, so for “expected output form” either “oral words/phrases/sentences” or “written words/phrases/sentences” is marked with question marks in the checklist. The answer is from learners, so the “source” is learners. Learners work “individually simultaneously” without discussion with others. Learners focus on “language system (rules, patterns, items or forms)” by finding out which verbs they can use to make recommendations. Their answers are limited to verbs used for making recommendations, so “respond” is recorded for “level of discourse control”.

Process of Using the Checklist Method

Before the writing of this paper, checklist was used to analyze the two units in four books for three times without looking at the result from the former ones, with about 15 days to 20 days between each time. A comparison of the results from the second time to the first time was done with a reconsideration of difference, also the results from the third time to the first two times. The careful reconsideration helped to gain a clearer understanding of content with explanation of the checklist. During the writing process, another two times of analysis were done with the comparison with former results and gained a more clear understanding of applying content of checklist into analysis of tasks. After five times analysis, Dr. Graeme, main advisor, checked all results of the checklist analysis. Some reviews were done according to his confirmation or disconfirmation about the results with many discussion and reconsideration.

Interpreting the Results of the Checklist Analysis

The results in the checklist give a detailed description concerning the amount of output, and types of output. In this study, data are both quantitative and qualitative, as described below.

1) In the textbooks for this study, some tasks do not offer learners output opportunities at all. And different textbooks have different amounts of tasks meaning that numbers cannot be compared directly. Littlejohn (1998) states that to assist in gaining an overall picture of the materials, percentages for each feature can be calculated. Therefore, to gain an overall picture for the amount of the opportunity for output, percentages of output provided in all tasks in four textbooks have been calculated.

2) The types of output are distinguished by considering whether tasks focus on form, meaning, or both form and meaning; whether tasks ask for one-way information flow or two-ways information flow; whether tasks ask the learners to practice language rules which help them to build their language skills or push them to give output which help them to build communicative ability.

Evaluation by the In-depth Method

The in-depth method goes “beneath the publisher’s and author’s claims to look at, for instance, the kind of language description, underlying assumptions about

learning or values on which the materials are based or, in a broader sense, whether the materials seem likely to live up to the claims that are being made for them” (McGrath, 2002, p.27- 28). This method also considers what is implied by “selection and sequencing of content (syllabus) and tasks; distribution of information across teacher and student components; reconsideration of information” (McGrath, 2002, p.23) collected from the impressionistic method and the checklist method.

After using the checklist to analyze the tasks in Unit 4 and Unit 7 in four selected textbooks, the in-depth method is used to put a value on the results of the checklist as evaluation process to find out the answers to the purposes of this study: the amount and the types of opportunities for output. Then a comparison of output opportunities among four textbooks is made according to the result of the evaluation.

According to Swain (1985, 1983) and Ellis (1985), the output is necessary and important to learners. Therefore, the first criterion for evaluation is the amount of output in the present study. A larger number of opportunities for output are considered better than a smaller number of opportunities for output as learners in China certainly lack opportunities for output.

Besides the quantity, the quality is even more important. Therefore the second criterion for evaluation is the types of output. The variety of output is considered here. For example, a textbook with opportunities for writing and speaking is better than another one only with writing output; a textbook with opportunities for language system, meaning and both language and meaning is considered as a better one than another one with tasks only focus on meaning.

Cummins and Swain (cited in Mitsutomi 2005, p.3) state “interaction in the language is needed in order for the learner to communicate personal meaning in the target language”. “Language practice that takes place in relevant context will then result in the acquisition of the language. In other words, the learner will not only learn about the language but he will learn to use the language. Knowing about the language and knowing the language are not always synonymous” (Mitsutomi, 2005, p.3). Their statements show clearly that using language is very important. Therefore the extent to which the textbook offers opportunities for pushing learners to use language to achieve communicative purposes are also considered when comparing four textbooks, because in different communicative tasks, learners produce language with different quality. For example, a task which provides language material in a real situation demands higher quality language output than a task which is in fictional context; If a textbook offers various tasks with communicative purpose - problem solving, decision making, opinion exchanging, picture dictation, role-play, information gap activities, jigsaw tasks and surveys - it would be considered better than another textbook which only asks learners to do role-plays. Additionally, if a textbook has more tasks that push learners harder to produce language which is higher than their current language ability, it is considered better than another textbook which pushes minimally, producing simple and easy language; Textbooks that asks learners to express real, personal information are considered to push harder than others asking learners to produce only fictional texts.