

# Journal of Education and Practice (JEP)

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## A Content Analysis of the English Reading Text's Appropriateness in the Pupil's Book of Action Pack Six in Jordan

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*Accepted: 15<sup>th</sup> May 2023 Received in Revised Form: 26<sup>th</sup> May 2023 Published: 7<sup>th</sup> June 2023*



### Abstract

**Purpose:** This study aimed at analyzing the reading texts of Action Pack Six in order to determine the extent that those reading texts are appropriate to the learners' level and environment.

**Methodology:** A content analysis research tool was used to analyze all the reading texts in the textbook under study.

**Results:** The content analysis showed that the reading texts in Action Pack Six are appropriate to the students' level and environment.

**Unique Contribution to Theory, Policy and Practice:** It is recommended that more analysis should be conducted to other textbooks from the same series.

**Keywords:** *Reading Texts, Content Analysis, Appropriateness, Action Pack Six*

### Introduction

English textbooks have essential roles in teaching and learning English as a Foreign Language (EFL). Both teachers and learners benefit from the textbooks as they provide them with the necessary skills inside or outside the classrooms (Manasrah, Al-Sobh and Al-Jabali, 2013). "[A] textbook is a complete package of English skills and components that help teachers and learners as their source materials and exercises in EFL learning (Rynata and Ruslan, 2013)". In Jordan, textbooks are very significant in the classroom since all the teachers depend on them as a main source of information. Different reading texts are offered in these textbooks to improve the students' reading skill. Hence, it is essential to choose the school textbook that suits the students' needs and interests (Frehat, 2012).

Reading is one of the basic skills that students should learn either in their first language or the additional ones. It usually begins as the learners learn simple reading texts. Mckay (2006) believes that readers in the early stages focus on code breaking then they develop their reading skill as long as they move from one level to another. In other words, reading is one of the most important skills that students need to acquire since it distinguishes between literate and illiterate people (Frehat, 2012).

Omaggio (2001) confirms that "reading is still essential in the teaching of literate, which remains an important goal in many programs". She also states that instruction should be responsive to the affective and the cognitive needs of the students, to their personalities and their cognitive needs, to their personalities, preferences and learning styles. As a consequence, instruction and textbooks should be appropriate to the students' level and environment.

Brown (2001) offers three criteria to choose reading texts for students. The first one is the suitability of content which means that the material should be appropriate to the students' goals in learning English, the second one is the exploitability which means that a text may facilitate the achievement of certain language and content goals, and the last one is readability which means that the difficulty of the texts should challenge the students without overwhelming them. It seems that Brown asserts that the material should suit the levels and contexts of the students using such material; i.e., it should be authentic.

Reading as other skills should be taught by using authentic and meaningful language (Brown, 2001 and Omaggio, 2001). Brown (2001) asserts that meaningful language can be best achieved by familiar situations, characters and real life topics. Moreover, "Reading is both a process and a product. The process of reading involves the interaction between the reader and the text (Mckay, 2006)". So, Mckay (2006) suggests that to have a successful reading the reading texts should be interesting enough to motivate the learners. Consequently, texts should be selected in regard to the learners' characteristics such as their interests, age, cognitive maturity, language proficiency and reading ability level. Brown (2001) and Omaggio (2001) confirm the importance of the age level and the proficiency level too. They design different activities that suit those different variations either in regard of being either young, teens or adults or novice, intermediate or advanced.

In order to provide a learner appropriate context, teachers need to consider carefully the clarity of the language used in the classrooms and to make the context for the language appropriate to the texts they are reading (The National Strategy, 2009). Henceforth, if textbooks offer appropriate reading texts to the learners, the reading skill will be enhanced more effectively.

Consequently, the best way to evaluate the reading texts' appropriateness is by conducting a content analysis. Content analysis has several definitions. "Content analysis is a research technique for marking replicable and valid inferences from data to their context (Krippendorff, 1980)". Holsti (1969) defines it as "the application of scientific methods to

documentary evidence". He has concluded from other various definitions presented in the field that content analysis has three major requirements: objectivity, systemacity and generality. By objectivity, he means that the steps of content analysis as a research process should be used with clear procedures. Systemacity means that the inclusion and exclusion of content or categories should be according to the used rules. Eventually, generality demands that the findings of content analysis should be relevant to the context under analysis and to the similar contexts.

Many studies have been conducted using content analysis of textbooks. In a study that analyzes appropriateness of culture in English Language Learning (ELL) resources for adolescent immigrants, LaBelle (2011) has gathered 64 textbooks in eight middle schools to analyze their content for the range of diversity of ethnicity depicted in illustrations and written texts. The first two questions among the four are: to what extent do the ELL texts used in Milwaukee middle schools reflect appropriate ethnic diversity in illustrated depiction? And to what extent do the ELL texts used in Milwaukee middle schools reflect appropriate ethnic diversity in written depiction? The researchers used content analysis to answer the questions of the study. The results show that there is ethnic diversity in the illustrations especially with the illustrations of Asian, Black, Hispanic and White. Moreover, the study concludes that the textbooks which generally demonstrate high levels of diversity in the illustrations have the same levels in their written depictions.

In their descriptive qualitative study, Rynata and Ruslan (2013) have analyzed the English textbook which is entitled English in Mind Starter and used in some schools for the seventh grade in Indonesia. Their analysis includes eight factors: the availability of materials based on the standards of Content 2006, methodology, language skills, topics, design and layout, organization, language appropriacy and cultural aspects. The factors have been developed based on the adaptation of good EFL textbook criteria proposed by Sheldon (1988) and Harmer (2007). The method of the study is content analysis. The collection of the data has been done through an evaluating rating scale. The fulfillment of the textbook is categorized as good. The textbook gains %97.5 in terms of language appropriacy. And so it is described as excellent in term of language used in the textbook is on the right level of maturity of the book users who are teenagers. The difficulty level of language is appropriate with intermediate learners. They also state that all the materials in the textbook are designed communicatively and realistically because they are functional and aim for interaction and communication which makes the language appropriate for the level of students.

The aim of a study by Manasreh, Al-Sobh and Al-Jabali (2013) is the analysis of the vocabulary items of Action Pack 12 for the twelfth grade in order to investigate whether these vocabulary items agree with the vocabulary analysis criteria proposed by Celce-Murica (1991). Their study answer the following two questions: To what extent do the vocabulary items agree with the vocabulary analysis criteria proposed by Celce-Murina? And what are the highly and least available criteria in all textbook module? The results of the study show that the vocabulary items

are used in appropriate contexts, they are inclusive per syllabus and their accessibility is good and they are suitable in number and reasonable to the students level. But, their balanced distribution concerning parts of speech is low. The highest rates are gained by the first criterion which is the appropriateness of context, the second criterion is the inclusiveness per syllabus and the fourth criterion is the load suitability. Whereas, the fifth criterion which is the balanced distribution gains the lowest rate. As a result, they recommend that the vocabulary items should have better distribution in term of parts of speech.

Frehat (2012) has conducted a study that aims at examining the appropriateness and difficulty level of the reading content in Action Pack eleven (AP11), Action Pack twelve (AP12) and New Headway Plus Pre-intermediate (NHWP). The participants were eight EFL instructors, ten EFL teachers and school and university students. Frehat has analyzed the types of reading passages in the three books and has developed a questionnaire to survey the students' perceptions on the appropriateness of the reading materials in the same textbooks. The results show that the school textbooks AP11 and AP12 are on average about three grade levels higher in reading difficulty than the textbook of the university level NHWP. Moreover, the results show that the students view the appropriateness of the reading content in AP11 and AP12 as suitable. The EFL teachers and instructors indicate that the reading content in the three books is generally easy. The study recommends taking the teachers' opinions, the textbook readability levels and the students' reading levels into consideration while adopting a textbook.

To sum up, appropriateness is a very important criterion in evaluating textbooks. As it has been noticed from the studies above, appropriateness is a wide term. It can be related to several aspects of the language used in the textbooks. For instance, the appropriateness of vocabulary, grammar or even the culture to the learners. It is significant that the textbooks should be appropriate to the learners in the different language skills and aspects in order to achieve the learning outcomes effectively.

### **Book Under Analysis**

The researchers chose Action Pack Six- the Pupil's Book, because it is the last level of teaching English to young learners. The sixth grade students have learned English for six years. McKay (2006) identifies young learners as learners whose ages range from five to twelve years old. He believes that children in their first years begin like novices then as they learn they become more expert either in reading or in other skills. Action Pack textbooks from the first to the sixth grade are designed in a different way from the rest of the series. For instance, grammatical structures are presented implicitly through varied activities, vocabulary items are not introduced in a list in each unit and even the textbooks are divided into units not modules unlike Action Pack 7 to 12. Hence, the researchers wanted to make sure that the content of the reading texts are suitable and appropriate to the students' level and their environment.

### **Purpose and Question of the Study:**



This paper aimed at analyzing the reading texts of the pupil's book of Action Pack Six to determine the appropriateness of these texts to the learners' level and environment. This would be illustrated by answering the following question:

To what extent are the reading texts in Action Pack Six appropriate to the learners' level and environment?

### **Definition of Terms:**

**Appropriateness:** It means judging whether the reading texts of the textbook under- analysis are suitable to the level of the learners and they are close to their environment.

**Action Pack:** It is a series of twelve books prescribed by the Jordanian Ministry of Education from the first to the twelfth grade. It includes students' book, activity book, teacher's book, audio CDs, flashcards and wall charts.

### **Methodology**

#### **Criterion of Analysis**

The criterion of analysis is the appropriateness of the reading texts of Action Pack Six to the students' level and environment.

#### **Unit of Analysis**

The unit of analysis is each reading text in the pupil's Book- Action Pack Six. All the texts in Action Pack 6 are under the title of:

Read and Answer

Listen and Read

Read and Choose

Read and Match

#### **Categories of Analysis**

Texts could be as the following in Action Pack 6:

An article

An article about Umm Qais is on page 6.

A homework project

In each unit of revision, there is a homework project. For example, a project in Revision 2 is done by Kareem (one of the textbook's characters) in which he writes about his favourite places in Jordan.

A story

There is a story with the title of A Holiday Surprise on page 18.

A letter

There is a letter with an attached photo about the bird park on page 26.

A poem

In review 2, there is a poem titled A Visit to Grandpa by Hussien.

Limitation of the Study

The generalization of the findings of the study is limited to the pupil's book of Action Pack Six 2018-2019.

### Reliability of Analysis

The researchers analyzed the reading texts in the pupil's Book- Action Pack for the sixth Grade which are characterized with appropriateness to the learners' level and environment. The analysis was repeated after seven days to find if there is a consistency between the two analyses. It was found to be 0.98 which indicates a high reliability of agreement.

Findings and Discussion

In order to answer the research question, the researchers divided the findings of the question into the learners' level and the learners' environment.

Table 1 below presents the frequencies and percentages of the reading texts in Action Pack Six and their appropriateness to the learners' level.

**Table 1: Frequencies and Percentages of the Reading Texts in the Pupil's Book of Action Pack Six and their Appropriateness to the Learners' Level**

Type of text	Frequencies of Text			Percentages	Appropriateness to the learners' level	Percentages of the appropriate texts to the learners' level
	For the 1 <sup>st</sup> term	For the 2 <sup>nd</sup> term	Total			
An article	6	5	11	50	11	50
A letter	1	2	3	14	3	14
A homework project						

A story	2	2	4	18	4	18
A poem	1	1	2	9	2	9
Total	11	11	22	100	22	100

The percentage of the articles is the highest among the others. Articles usually have general information about certain things such as famous festivals that are held in Jordan like an article under the title " Summer Festivals in Jordan" on page 14 or about some traditional crafts like the article " Traditional Jordanian Crafts" on page 50. whereas, other types of texts are presented to teach the students different genres in English literature like letters, stories or poems. It is clear that there is a good balance of distribution in the number of texts in the two semesters.

The researchers noticed that most of the sentences in the different texts are short and simple that suit the level of the students. For example, "Karak Castle is in the city of Karak, 140 kilometers south of Amman (p:10)", "On Tuesday, we went to Sidon. It is a city by the sea (p:42)", and "In this experiment, the warm air goes into the balloon and the balloon gets bigger (p:62)". The sentences in the first units are almost shorter than the ones in the last units as shown in the sentences above from Appendix 1. The researchers believe that this is natural since the level of the learners is improving through their learning process all along the textbook and is exactly relevant to what to what other scholars suggested before (Brown, 2001; Mackay, 2006 and Omaggio, 2002). Nevertheless, enough illustrations and pictures accompany each text in order to simplify the new vocabulary items, to create a suitable context or the relate the texts with the learners' own environment.

However, the researchers decided to scrutinize more both grammatical structures and the vocabulary items used in the reading texts in order to evaluate how these texts are appropriate to the level of the learners in the sixth grade.

Most of the articles of the textbook use the simple present or the simple past to express present events or old ones in describing places, famous buildings in Jordan, some Jordanian festivals, some sport activities or to talk about a young Jordanian inventor. The students can use these two tenses successfully at their recent level and they are supposed to distinguish between actions in the past or present from the used verbs. In an article about Queen Alia International Airport, Samira- who is the writer of the article and a student in the sixth grade too- begins her article using the simple past to express old events and moves to the use of simple present to describe the airport. "We went to Queen Alia International Airport on Saturday. It is the biggest airport in Jordan (p:46)". In the article "The Young Inventor", the first sentence uses the simple present: "Abdelrahman Alzorgan is an inventor from Jordan (p:66)". While the other sentences use the simple past because they



discuss some of Alzogan's previous inventions. For Instance, "while they were still at school, Abdelrahman and his brother invented a new machine (p:66)".

The simple past tense is used to narrate the first story in Review1, whereas the simple past tense and the past continuous are used to narrate the second one in Review 3 which recycles the structures and vocabulary items in units 8, 9 and 10. The main focus in unit 9 and 10 is on the past continuous with the simple past using the conjunctions while or when. Hence, it can be noticed that the reading texts are sequences and integrated with other language aspects in a way that suits the learners' level.

Another example is utilizing the present perfect which is the focus in unit 7 in an article about A Doctor's Day in the same unit. "This morning I have talked to the night doctors...so I have not seen them before (p:34)". The present perfect is also used in the homework project and in the poem in the next unit (Review 2) as the following: "I have been to many different places...and I have also visited Jerash and Salt (p:36)". And in the poem as: "Have you had your breakfast?.Have you had any water (p:38)". From all the examples above, it is obvious how appropriate are the grammatical structures in the reading texts to the level of the learners because the students have already learnt them or they are the recent focus of some recent units.

Regarding the vocabulary items used in the reading texts, there are some new words in each text that enrich the learners' knowledge but do not inhibit their understandings which is consistent with Brown's concept of readability (2001). The learners can guess the meaning of the new vocabulary items from the context of each text. In the article about Summer Festivals in Jordan, the most important word is festival which student can guess its meaning from the related picture on page 14. Besides that, lots of words are repeated more than once in different articles which facilitate reading texts. For example, the words "jewelry, dresses, and mosaics" exist in The Global Village Festival in unit 3, in the Traditional Jordanian Crafts in unit 10 and in the letter in unit 14 as shown from the quotations here: " I like looking at the stall with jewelry, dresses and mosaics (p:14)", "they embroider dresses, cushions...they make the mosaics from tiny squares (p:50)" and the letter in unit 14: "you can buy food, pictures, toys...and jewelry (p:70)". So, it is so obvious that vocabulary items are repeated in different ways so that students can produce them communicatively. This is a clear example on successful recycling of the some of the words appropriately.

In a letter by Kareem and Samira who are the main characters in the textbook to their grandmother on page 26, the children are writing about their visit to the bird park in Amman. The vocabulary items are about birds and animals that the learners are familiar with. For example: ducks, geese, turkeys, chicken, pigeons and peacocks with a related picture of the peacock because it is a new world.

In the poem, simple vocabulary items are used. The poem on page 71 with a related picture of the world with animals like a camel, a lion, a turtle and a deer. This is one verse from the poem: "The

camels and the lion, the turtle and deer, we have to help our planet, so they will always be here (p:71)".

The homework projects usually have the same vocabulary items throughout the previous units. In the homework project in Review 3, Kareem writes down what his father could do when he was young. All the vocabulary items used in this project have been already introduced in the last two units.

Both stories in the textbook are interesting and very short which encourage the learners to be motivated to read them. The vocabulary items are relevant to the level of the learners because even if there are some new words, they are able to understand the story. These two sentences are from the first story: "One morning, the children were very excited. They were ready to go on a weekend trip (p:18). Consequently, all the reading texts are appropriate to the level of the sixth grade learners and increase their motivation so that their reading skill can be improved effectively.

**Table 2: Frequencies and Percentages of the Reading Texts in the Pupil's Book of Action Pack Six and their Appropriateness to the Learners' Environment**

Type of text	Frequencies of reading texts	percentages	Appropriate text	Inappropriate text	Percentage of the appropriate texts	Percentage of inappropriate texts
An article	11	50	11	---	50	---
A letter	3	14	3	---	14	---
A homework project	4	18	3	1	14	4
A story	2	9	2	---	9	---
A poem	2	9	2	---	9	---
Total	22	100	21	1	96	4

There are several articles that discuss one topic which is about some places and monuments in Jordan, such as Umm Qais (p:6), Karak Castle (p: 10), Ajolun (p:22) or some famous buildings in Jordan like: King Abdullah University Hospital (p:34), Queen Alia International Airport (p:46) or

The Jordan Museum (p:58). Even some of the letters and the homework projects discuss the same topic. For instance, the first homework project in Review 1 is about monuments and modern building in Amman and the second homework project is about different places in Jordan. In a letter on page 70, the main characters of the book are sending their grandparents a letter about Dhana Nature Reserve in the south of Jordan. It is so clear that all these texts are appropriate to the learners' environment. They feel familiar with all these places in Jordan and that exactly what Brown (2001) suggest in order to have a meaningful language.

In an article on page 22, a boy from Ajloun is comparing it with Kuwait city where his cousin lives. Moreover, there is a letter on page 42 from a Jordanian family who visits Lebanon and describes different places there. The researchers believe that these two reading texts are appropriate to the learners' environment too. Not only because Lebanon and Kuwait are from the Arab world, but also due to the fact that a lot of Jordanian families have relatives abroad especially in the gulf countries and also many people go for tourisms to some neighboring countries like Lebanon. These texts may encourage the learners to talk about similar experiences from their own environment either by talking about their relatives or about their own journeys.

The textbook presents other reading texts that deal with different activities in Jordan such as some of the traditional crafts in Jordan, a famous marathon in the Dead Sea, a doctor's day in King Abdullah Hospital or about some inventions by young Jordanian inventors which make the learners proud of Jordan and the different achievements in the country.

The textbook attempts to integrate using English with other disciplines like science. In the article "My Favourite Science", there is an integration between using English in a scientific experiment with the learners' environment by having a photo of balloons from Wadi Rum. The experiment explains how these hot air balloons work using simple instructions and tools.

Furthermore, the first poem describes the relation between the learners with their relatives especially their grandparents while the other poem on page 71 deals with some global topic which is protecting the animals and the planet. Similarly, the last homework project in Review 4 describes the British Museum. Although that this museum is not from the student's environment, but it helps the students to utilize the things they have learnt from their environment to explore other things all over the world. Besides, this text prepares the learners to transit easily to the rest of Action Pack series that tackle more global issues. The findings of this study are consistent with the claims of Brown (2001) who confirmed that materials and tasks should be carefully designed to suit the students' level, interests and environment. Along the same lines, Al-Barakat, Bataineh, Al- Karasneh and Bataineh (2006) pointed out that Action Pack through the first to the fourth grade are appropriate to the needs and levels of the students which is also consistent with the findings of this study.

## **Inferences**

The researchers believe that the authors of Action Pack Six are very successful in creating suitable contexts and appropriate reading texts exactly suit the learners' level and environment. The researchers noticed that there is an excellent balance in the reading texts all through the units, a logical sequence of the reading texts from simple to more difficult and from local issues to global ones. Besides, there is an appropriate utilization of the grammatical structures and the vocabulary items in the reading texts. To conclude, the reading texts in Action Pack Six are appropriate to the learners' level and so close to their environment. However, the scope of this study was limited to one textbook, Action Pack Six. The researchers recommend that more analyses should be conducted to other textbooks from the same series especially those from the seventh to the twelfth ones.

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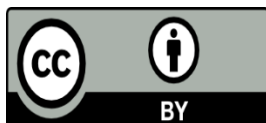
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