Types of Textbooks

Published by the Montgomery Coalition for Adult English Literacy (MCAEL)

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Because there are several types of adult ESL textbooks, it's important to be aware of the categories before evaluating individual books or series.

Core series:

This is a sequence of books, usually from beginning through high-intermediate or advanced levels that sometimes includes a literacy level as well. The four skills (listening, speaking, reading, and writing) are integrated, although according to Betsy Parrish, "many series put a stronger emphasis on listening and speaking skills development and have a life-skills focus." (2004, p. 25). The books include life-skills competencies, grammar and language functions, vocabulary, and often, American social and cultural information. Many series include many components (such as audiovisual elements, teacher materials, Web-based assistance, and assessment options). Most core series try to relate in some way to standardized assessments, national, state, and other standards.

Integrated-skills texts:

These books also provide practice in the four skills, but they are single texts rather than being part of a leveled core series.

Grammar texts:

Some books are core grammar series (going from beginning to advance) and include both presentation and practice for learners. Others are reference books not typically used as student texts, but useful for both teachers and learners as specific questions arise.

Skill-specific texts:

These books focus on one particular skill, such as listening, reading, speaking, vocabulary, or pronunciation.

Literacy texts:

Some books and other materials are designed specifically for learners who have had limited formal education (usually six or fewer years).

Content-based texts:

These books are focused on specific subject areas such as civics or citizenship, job-related topics, or academic preparation.

Dictionaries:

Picture dictionaries for beginning levels and a range of English-only dictionaries (from limited, with simple definitions to high advanced) for other levels can be useful for learners both in and outside of class.

Adapted from: Parrish, B. (2004). *Teaching Adult ESL: A Practical Introduction.* New York: McGraw-Hill ESL/ELT and Santopietro-Weddel, S. (2009). *How to Choose a Good ESL ESL Textbook For Adult Education and Family Literacy Independent Study Course.* Longmont, CO: Northern Colorado Professional Center (available from www.cde.state.co.us/cdeadult/download/NCPDRC/HowToChooseGoodESLTextbook.pdf)

Adult ESOL Textbook Evaluation Checklist*

Title:_____ **Publisher:**_____

Publication Date:_____ **Student Level(s):**_____ **Cost for per student book:**_____

Criteria Observed	Questions to Consider	YES	NO	Notes
text and related materials are up-to-date	Does the text reflect current thinking about adult education? Are topics of current interest to students?			
relates to program mission and goals	Do the text and teacher's materials reflect your program's view of who your students are? Will the content and activities of the book help students make progress toward their goals?			
content relates to adult ESOL standards and standardized assessments	Does the book focus on what learners need know and be able to do in real life?			
contains adult content (topics, issues) relevant to the immigrant learners in your program	Is the book specifically designed for adult English language learners, rather than children, or adult native English speakers? Are adult topics such as work, family, health, and community presented appropriately?			
learner needs, experiences, and goals acknowledged and incorporated throughout	Are learners asked to share their knowledge and experience? Does the book encourage learner-centered activities? Is there ample opportunity for students to share their opinions and reflect on their own progress?			
takes into account linguistic and cultural diversity of the learner population	Do the content and activities address the diverse immigrant experience and introduce learners to salient aspects of American society?			
expectations and directions are clear for students (and teachers)	Are the directions written simply and clearly? Do the exercises match the level/s of the learners the book is designed for?			

receptive skills presented before productive activities (listen/read before speak/write)	Does the text begin with listening and speaking activities, that help students activate their own knowledge on various topics, before they are asked to read or write?			
balanced and realistic four skills integration	Do speaking, listening, reading, and writing activities work together naturally and reflect real-life usage?			
integrates different learning styles: aural, oral, visual, kinesthetic	So that the content will be accessible to all students, do activities address different learning styles?			
incorporates a variety of techniques including cooperative, communicative, and open-ended activities	Are there ample opportunities for learners to work and learn together including opportunities for project-based learning?			
incorporates multiple grouping strategies (whole group, small group, pair, and individual work)	To encourage communicative learning, are all the grouping strategies evident throughout the book?			
language practice represents real-life language and offers learners' opportunities for real-life application	Do the language, topics, and activities reflect real life? Do activities encourage learners to try out new language skills in real life?			
layout, formatting, and graphics are accessible and appropriate for the adult ESOL learners in your program	Is the overall look of the book open and uncluttered? Is the font size appropriate and are graphics clear and understandable?			
	TOTAL			

Summary:

Strengths:_____

Weaknesses:_____

Should/Should not be considered for the program because:

_____
_____

*__Note__: *Several other textbook evaluation forms are available (see bibliography) and any your program uses can be adapted to the particular needs of your program.*