

The Evaluation of Some Aspects of the English Language Programme for the First and Second Basic Grades

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Abstract:

The present paper is an attempt to investigate some aspects of students' Sunrise programme for the first and second basic grade. This syllabus is widely studied in the basic and high schools of Iraqi Kurdistan Region that plays a stunning role in teaching and using English language for communication and classroom activities. The Sunrise programme has changed English language teaching from teaching about the language to the practical use of the language. The selected approach of this syllabus is the communicative approach that focuses on teaching English through the four skills, especially listening and speaking. The Sunrise programme of the first and second basic grade contain many positive points. Nevertheless, they incorporate some disadvantageous points. For this reason, this paper aims to provide a scientific analysis for the pedagogical problems of Sunrise programme. This paper consists of an introduction, two parts and the concluding points. The first part sheds light on the scientific evaluation of **Sunrise 1**, including the arrangement of the letters, the structure of given examples and the repetition of the topics. The second part deals with the scientific evaluation of **Sunrise 2**, including the imbalance between letters and the given examples, the repetition of the topics and the coordinating conjunction.

1. The Evaluation of the First Basic Grade's Sunrise Programme

In fact, this programme **Sunrise** is a new one which is set for teaching English language to the Kurdish students in Kurdistan Region. As a result of this programme, the style of English language teaching has got lots of improvements because the newly set programme focuses on the practical use of language rather than imparting information about the language. Besides, there exists a strong relation among the students through exchanging information.

From the perspective of the dynamics of communication, this programme strengthens the students' ability in English language learning through the communicative approach. At first, this approach was used in Canada, but nowadays it exists in different parts of the world. The consequences of this approach indicate that the learner could be quite fluent in the foreign language through the exposure to that language. However, this approach does not pay attention to the students' scientific ability. Generally, this approach is a good factor for the students to become active participants of the classroom activities (Schmitt and Celce - Murcia, 2002: 7).

1.1 The Arrangement of the Letters

It was shown that this modern programme **Sunrise 1** is very much preferable because it attracts the students and teachers' attention. However, this programme incorporates some pedagogical problems that affect the process of teaching. The general outline of **Sunrise 1** programme indicates that it is made up of eighteen units, each unit consists of three lessons and there is an additional unit for revision at the end of any three units to revise the subjects that have been studied during these three units.

From the perspective of the alphabetical letters, the **Sunrise 1** programme includes all the letters of English language, but they have not been divided into the units evenly. At the beginning of teaching the foreign languages, the students of the elementary stage at the basic schools should be familiar with the letters of the foreign language because these small units establish the basis of familiarity with the foreign language. The alphabetical letters of any language should be simplified so that the foreign students can learn it easily. As far as the **Sunrise 1** programme is concerned, the uneven division of the letters into the units can be

apparently perceived. When the students study the first three units of **Sunrise 1** which comprises nine lessons and a revision, they do not see any kind of English letter. Instead of the letters, the students are taught some other subjects, such as **saying hello** p.4, **simple classroom language** p.7, and **simple instructions** p.10. During these three units, some words are taught to the students, such as **hello, play, look, sing, clap, listen, come here, stand up, sit down**, etc. The attentive look at these words indicates that they have been structured according to a phonological arrangement of the sounds whose written forms are expressed by the graphemes. Here, the students can ask the question why they have not studied any English letter during these units. If the students had been taught the letters in the preceding units, they would have been acquainted with the letters earlier.

In unit four, students of the first basic stage see the first English letter for the first time. Basically, these letters are painted and presented in an interesting way and they have been illustrated with examples very well. When the students study the letter (a) p.15, the word **apple** has been exemplified and the picture of a big red apple has been drawn so that the students can understand it better. Thus, the students are taught one letter in each unit till unit nine, but this classification changes in unit ten and eleven because they study two letters in each unit, meaning that they study (g, h) p.35 in unit ten and (i, j) p.38 in unit eleven. On the other hand, this classification changes again in unit twelve because the number of letters increases into three letters per unit, meaning that (k, l, m) p.41 are taught to the students in unit twelve. This classification changes again in unit thirteen and fourteen because the students study two letters in each unit, meaning that the letters (n, o) p.45 have been placed in unit thirteen and (p, q) p.48 have been placed in unit fourteen. The number of letters changes again in unit fifteen because they study three letters (r, s, t) p.51 in that unit. The continuous change of letters does not stop because each of the last three units includes two letters, meaning that (u, v) p.55 have been placed in unit sixteen, (w, x) p.58 have been placed in unit seventeen and (y, z) p.61 have been placed in unit eighteen. If someone looks at this uneven classification of English letters into the successive units of **Sunrise 1**, he will come out to the fact that this is an abnormal classification of the letters. This imbalance style of classification leads to have a negative effect in the mind of the students. If the syllabus designers had classified the letters into the units and lessons evenly, there would not have

been so many changes in the arrangement of letters and the students would not have been obliged to study two or three letters in one unit.

1.2 The Description of the Examples

From the perspective of exposing the examples, this programme **Sunrise 1** has illustrated the meaning of many words with fascinating and colourful pictures; this one creates a good pedagogical world for the students. For the ease of learning, when there is the name of a bird, an animal, or an instrument, there will be a beautiful picture of the bird, animal, or instrument. Most of the words, which are given as examples, are simple and appropriate words for that stage because they can be easily articulated by the students of the first basic stage. On the other hand, there can be found some words that consist of more than one syllable; they are di-syllabic or tri-syllabic words. These words require more muscular energy to be articulated by the students. Steinberg (1991: 149) believes that among the stages of child language acquisition, the children reach a stage which is known as holophrastic stage, they can express a single unit utterances. These single units may be words, phrases or sentences, almost all the words are made up of one syllable that is why they can be articulated easily. I think that the same thing can be applied to **Sunrise 1** because when the students of the beginner stage study a foreign language; they should study these words whose structures are simple and they can be expressed easily. This programme incorporates some words that are difficult and cannot be articulated easily. For example, the words **ice-cream** p.38, **umbrella** p.55, **yogurt** and **zebra** p.61 have been given as examples for some letters. These words are somehow difficult to be articulated by the first year students because they consist of two or three syllables. The whole words have to be monosyllabic so that they can be articulated by the students of that stage without difficulty.

1.3 The Repetition of the Topics

Basically, this programme **Sunrise 1** contains a group of useful topics, such as **saying hello, saying goodbye, asking questions, introducing yourself, congratulating someone**, etc. These are useful topics because they are simple topics of daily conversation and they are practical topics because they encourage the students to participate in the classroom activities. The topics include various activities that strengthen the pedagogical aspect of language. However, this programme includes many topics that have been repeated in the other units. It is intrinsically a negative point because it enables the students not to feel a new topic in a new unit. There can be apparently found many repeated topics. For example, the students study a topic in unit one which is entitled **saying hello** p.6, they are also taught a topic in unit six which is entitled **saying hello and goodbye** p.22. The students think that these two topics are identical with a slight difference; the comparison of these two topics indicates that the topic in unit one has been repeated in unit six, but another topic has been added to it.

After that, the students are taught a topic in unit four entitled **saying thank you** p.14, they are also taught the same topic in unit eleven **saying thank you** p.37. Obviously there is a direct relation between the two topics of unit four and unit eleven because the same topic is exactly repeated in the other unit. Both of these topics encourage the students to express thankful feelings in return for doing or offering something. As it was mentioned, the topic of unit six was **saying hello and goodbye**, the students are also taught a topic in unit eighteen entitled **saying goodbye** p.62. It can be apparently seen that the topic of the previous unit is repeated in the other unit. As the students were taught this topic, they know how and when to use goodbye. I think that the topic is better to be taught in unit eighteen rather than unit six because when they are taught the topic in the final unit, they finish the course of English language and they practically say goodbye to the course.

2. The Evaluation of the Second Basic Grade's Sunrise Programme

The English language programme **Sunrise 2**, just like **Sunrise 1**, consists of eighteen units; each unit is made up of three lessons. There is an additional unit at the end of any three units for revision. The students revise the topics that have been studied in the previous units,

this revision seems to be useful because it reminds the students the information that they studied during the three previous units.

2.1 The Arrangement of the Examples

At the beginning of English language programme for second basic stage **Sunrise 2**, the students revise the lower case letters of the first stage so as to remember this type of letter, and at the same time they are taught the capital case letters to draw the distinction between the lower case letters and the capital case ones.

The students of the second basic stage are taught these two types of letters in unit three of **Sunrise 2** p.11. It is the second time that they study the lower case letters, but it is the first time that they study capital case ones. For the first time, the students think that the English language letters have two different pictures; one picture is the lower case letter and the other is the capital case letter. These two forms of letters include two different uses, each one occurs in a specific position. What is worth mentioning is the style of exemplification for these letters. In fact, the examples have been given for these two types of letters, but in an imbalanced way because some letters have been clarified with one, two or three examples, but some others, specially the capital case letters, have been given without any sort of example. When the students of the second basic stage study the letter (A, a) p.11, they are given two examples for (a) including **ant**, and **apple**, but one example has been given for (A) which is **Aveen**. In the same page, there exists another letter which is (B, b), obviously two examples have been given for (b) including **bag**, and **banana**, but for the capital case letter (B), no example has been given. The syllabus designers should have written at least one example because the letter would have been more understandable in use. Let's consider two other letters (C, c and D, d) p.15. The students have been given three examples for the lower case letter including **car**, **cap**, and **cat**, but they find no any example for the capital case letter. The same thing applies for the letter (D, d) because three examples have been written for the lower case letter (d), they are **doll**, **dog**, and **duck**, but no example has been given for the capital case letter (D). Besides, the students study some letters whose examples are different from those of the previous letters. The letter (K, k) has been explained with six examples because three examples are given for the lower case letter, they are **king**, **kitten**, and **kite** and three other examples are given for the capital letter, they are **Karwan**, **Kitten**,

and **Kurdistan**. Another confusing point belongs to the lack of agreement between the letter and example. In **Sunrise 2** p.3, it has been written **A is for apple**, as an example for (A); the confusing point is that the capital case letter has been exemplified with a word starting with a lower case letter. Obviously, this way of exemplification is not appropriate because there is no any recognizable relation between the letter and the example. Then, the students find it confusing when some letters have been explained by one example, but some others by two and some others by three whereas many capital case letters are devoid of any example.

2.2 The Repetition of the Topics

Almost all the subjects of **Sunrise 2** have been illustrated with interesting and colourful pictures; however, some subjects of this programme are considerably similar and related. Possibly, the purpose behind this repetition is to confirm the information and make the students understand the subjects easily. I think that the repeated subjects do not attract the students' attention a lot because once they see the title of the subject; they remember that the subject has been studied earlier. For example, the students are taught a subject in unit three entitled **Asking about objects** p.10; here the students are taught how to ask these questions, such as **what is this?** and **what are these?** Then this subject **Asking about objects** has been repeated in unit five p.17, and the students are taught how to ask this question; **what is that?** After that, this subject **Asking about objects** has been repeated in unit six p.20 for the third time and this question has been elicited **what are those?** Looking at these questions attentively, the question word '**what**' has been used with the demonstratives '**this, that, these, those**'. The difference among them is that '**this**' used for something singular and close to the speaker, but '**that**' is used for something singular, but distant from the speaker. '**These**' is used for something plural and close to the speaker, but '**those**' is used for something plural, but distant from the speaker. Obviously, these demonstratives used for something close to the speaker have been presented in one unit which is unit three, but these demonstratives used for something distant have been presented in two successive units, they are units of five and six. Actually, these subjects talking about objects should have been mentioned in one or two units consecutively, not in four separate units.

There can be found other repeated subjects in **Sunrise 2**. There is a subject entitled **Asking about objects** p. 24 which is taught in unit seven, the students study this subject

what are you doing? Then this subject **Asking about objects** has been repeated in unit eight p.27, and the same question **what are you doing?** is taught to the students. This subject **Asking about objects** has been repeated for the third time in unit eighteenth p.60. The students understand these repeated subjects very apparently; they know that these subjects that are seen twice or three times have a direct relation together. The repeated topics seem to have a negative impact on the process of teaching, once they see a topic in the next unit; they remember the topic of the previous unit. Even if these topics are not repeated, they can be studied again in the unit of revision.

2.3 Coordinating Conjunction

Among the topics introduced in **Sunrise 2**, the students are taught many grammatical topics, such as demonstratives, coordinating conjunctions, question words, etc. What is worth mentioning here is the coordinating conjunction. In fact, the coordinators are used for connecting two or more parts of a sentence. The coordinator used in **Sunrise 2** is **and** “which is used for combining two words, phrases and clauses on the condition that the combined elements are of equal importance, they are nouns, verbs, adjectives, etc. When we have more than two items, the coordinator is typically placed between the last two items because the other parts are separated by comma; it indicates that coordinator is not repeated between any two items” (Ramsey and Aaron, 1998: 189).

In **Sunrise 2**, the coordinator **and** has been used to connect some noun phrases in unit four p.16, it is used in this way **I have a doll and a dog and a hen**. The abnormal use of this coordinator is that it has been repeated between any two noun phrases, but the grammatical use of this coordinator shows that it should be placed between the penultimate and the last noun phrases and the other noun phrases should be separated by a comma in this way **I have a doll, a dog and a hen**. However, this coordinator has been used in some other places correctly, such as **listen, point and say** p.10 and **look, point and say** p.15. This curriculum should include the correctly used grammatical topics because it is prepared for the beginning of basic stage and this stage includes a generation who are at the beginning of acquaintance with the world of English language.

Conclusion

At the end of the research, the researcher has got the following concluding points:

1-The Sunrise programme pays a lot of attention to the use of language which focuses on using all the skills of language learning specially listening and speaking. This programme changed the direction of language teaching from teaching about the language to the practical use of language.

2-The repetition of some topics of Sunrise programme for the first and second basic stage has a negative impact on the students' mind because the repeated topics do not attract the students' attention. Instead of these repeated topics, the programme ought to contain modern and useful topics to be a strong basis for the other stages.

3-From many perspectives, the Sunrise programme incorporates scientific shortcomings that cause problems for the teachers and students because they have a negative influence on the process of teaching, such as the arrangement of the letters, the nature of the examples, the repetition of the topics, etc.

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پوختہ

ئەم تووژینەوہیە کە لە ژێر ناوونیشانی "هەلسەنگاندنی هەندیک لایەنی پرۆگرامی زمانی ئینگلیزی قوئاغی یەکەم و دووہمی بنەرەتی" یە، هەولیکە بۆ تیشک خستنەسەری هەندیک لایەنی بواری فێرکاری هەردووک پرۆگرامی (Sunrise) ی یەکەم و دووہمی بنەرەتی. ئەوپرۆگرامە بە شیوہیەکی فراوان لەخویندنگا بنەرەتی و ئامادەییەکانی هەریمی کوردستان دەخوینرێت، دەوریک تاراددەبەک باشی هەیه لە فێرکردن و پەرەپێدانی زمانی ئینگلیزی لەبواری پەیوہندیکردن وچالاکییەکانی ناو پۆل دا. ئەو پرۆگرامە توانی ئاراستەیی ووتنەوہی زمانی ئینگلیزی لەپێدانی زانیاری لەبارەیی زمانەوہ بۆ بەکارھێنانی کرداریی زمان بگۆرێت. پیم وایە کە یەکێک لەو ھۆکارە سەرەکیانەیی کە بووہتە ھۆی باشی ئەو پرۆگرامە بریتیہیە لەوہی کە پشتی بە رییازی پەیوہندی کردن (Communicative Approach) بەستوہ. ئەو رییازە بەشیک زۆری پێداویستی فێرخوازانانی زمانی بیانی جیبەجی کردوہ و ھەکو سەرچاوەیەکی دەولەمەندی فێربوونی زمانیش سەیر دەکرێت. گرنگی ئەم تووژینەوہ لەوہدایە کە هەلسەنگاندنیکی زانستیانە بۆ پرۆگرامی خویندنی زمانی ئینگلیزی (Sunrise) ی قوئاغی یەکەم و دووہمی بنەرەتی دەکات بە مەبەستی لادان و نەھیشتنی ئەو کەم و کورپانەیی کە لە پرۆگرامەکەداھەن. ناوہرۆکی تووژینەوہکە دابەشکراوہ بۆ دوو بەشی سەرەکی. بەشی یەکەم تەرخان کراوہ بۆ هەلسەنگاندنیکی زانستی (Sunrise 1) ی قوئاغی یەکەمی بنەرەتی کە لە شیوای ریکخستنی پیتەکان، پیکھاتنی ووشەکان و زۆر دووبارەبوونەوہی بابەتەکان دەکوئیتەوہ. بەشی دووہمیش هەلسەنگاندنیکی زانستی بۆ (Sunrise 2) ی قوئاغی دووہمی بنەرەتی دەکات و لە شیوای ریکخستنی نموونەکان، زۆر دووبارەبوونەوہی بابەتەکان و بەکارھێنانی ئامرازی بەیەکەوہ بەستن دەکوئیتەوہ.

الملخص

عنوان البحث هو "تقييم بعض جوانب منهج اللغة الانجليزية للمرحلتين الاولى والثانية الاساسية"، يحاول البحث إلقاء الضوء على بعض النواحي التعليمية لمنهج تدريس اللغة الانجليزية (Sunrise) للمرحلتين الاولى والثانية الاساسية، الذي له شهرة كبيرة في المدارس و الاعداديات في إقليم كوردستان كما له دور فعال إلى حد ما في تعليم اللغة الانجليزية القائم على المشاركة والنشاط الصفي. لقد استطاع منهج (Sunrise) تغيير طريقة تدريس اللغة الانجليزية في التعليم ولعلّ السبب الرئيسي في نجاحه و تفوقه هو إتماده على الحوار و المحادثة (Communicative Approach) الذي يلبي حاجة متعلمي اللغات الاجنبية. و تكمن أهمية البحث في كونه تقييماً علمياً لهذا المنهج. والغاية منه كشف نقاط الضعف والخلل، لتجنبها و إبعادها من هذا المنهج الرصين. ويقوم البحث على قسمين، القسم الاول: يدرس طريقة ترتيب الحروف، تركيب الكلمات وتكرار الموضوعات في منهج (Sunrise) للمرحلة الاولى. أما القسم الثاني: فهو تقييم علمي لطرائق العرض وترتيب الامثلة و التمارين و كثرة تكرار الموضوعات و استعمال أدوات الربط في منهج (Sunrise) للمرحلة الثانية.