

May 2006

What do Exam-oriented Textbooks Look Like?

4th British Universities/MATSDA Postgraduate Research Conference, School of Languages, Leeds Metropolitan University, Leeds, UK.

What do exam-oriented textbooks look like? Findings from a research study

The need for evaluating teaching materials for their appropriateness and effectiveness on language teaching and learning has long been stressed by many writers in the field (Cummingsworth, 1984, 1995; Roberts, 1996; Tomlison, 1998, 2003; McGrath, 2002). Even though a number of studies have looked at the nature and design of general EFL/ESL textbooks, there is very little that we know about EFL exam-preparation textbooks even though their numbers are equally high on the EFL materials market.

The present paper will report the results of a research study that used a special instrument for the analysis and evaluation of five sets of exam-oriented textbooks specially designed to prepare students for a high-stakes language exam, namely the First Certificate in English (FCE) administered by Cambridge ESOL. The paper will present the instrument and discuss the process of its design and validation and will demonstrate how the textbook materials integrate the exam needs and realize these through their materials.

It is hoped that the outcomes of the study will offer a deeper understanding of the nature of exam-oriented textbook materials and the role writers and publishers play in their development.