ESP Textbook Analysis of Midwifery Students of Islamic Azad University, Maragheh Branch, Iran

Mehrdad Ehsanizad

Department of Humanities, Islamic Azad University of Takestan, Takestan, Iran

*E-mail: mehrdad.ehsanizad@yahoo.com

ABSTRACT

Those who are involved in designing books especially course books, at any stage of designing, must be aware of psychological impact of their work on readers attitude (in this case medical students) toward the book. In this study we are going to evaluate and analyze the English for specific purposes (ESP) text book of midwifery students of Maragheh Islamic Azad University. The purpose of this research project was to determine the overall pedagogical value and suitability of the book toward this language course. For this purpose, a questionnaire consisting of 20 questions which were examining 6 factors (practical concerns, materials in relation to course objective, subject matter, linguistic issues, skills and strategies, variety of tasks and activities, and the layout of materials) was used. There were 33 participants which were students of midwifery at Islamic Azad University of Maragheh. The finding indicated that except some minor detail, the book was appropriate for the course.

Key words: ESP text book, Midwifery, Maragheh Islamic Azad University

INTRODUCTION

The Definition of ESP

Hutchinson and Waters (1987) define ESP as an *approach* rather than a product – meaning that ESP does not involve a particular kind of language, teaching material or methodology. ESP is not a matter of teaching 'specialised varieties' of English. The fact that language is used for a specific purpose does not imply that it is a special form of the language, different in kind from the other forms. ESP must be seen as an approach not as a product. ESP is not a particular kind of language or methodology, nor does it consist of a particular type of teaching material. Understood properly, it is an approach to language learning, which is based on learner need. The foundation of all ESP is the simple question; why does this learner need to learn a foreign language? ... ESP then is an approach to language teaching in which all decisions as to content and method are based on the learner's reason for learning (p.18~19).

Strevens (1988) definition of ESP makes a distinction between 1) absolute characteristics (language teaching is designed to meet specified needs of the learner; related in content to particular disciplines, occupation and activities; centered on the language appropriate to those activities in syntax, text, discourse, semantics, etc., and analysis of the discourse; designed in contrast with General English) and 2) two variable characteristics (ESP may be restricted to the language skills to be learned, e.g. reading; and not taught according to any pre-ordained methodology). Robinson's (1991: 3) definition of ESP is based on two criteria: 1) ESP is normally 'goal-directed', and 2) ESP courses develop from a needs analysis which aim to specify what exactly it is that students have to do through the medium of English, and a number of characteristics which explain that ESP courses are generally constrained by a *limited time period* in which their objectives have to be achieved and are taught to *adults* in *homogenous classes* in terms of the work or specialist studies that the students are involved in.

Dudley-Evans and St. John (1998) modified Strevens' definition of ESP:

1) Absolute characteristics: a) ESP is designed to meet specific needs of the learner; b) ESP makes use of the underlying methodology and activities of the disciplines it serves; and c) ESP is centered on the language (grammar, lexis, register), skills, discourse and genres appropriate to these activities.

2) Variable characteristics: a) ESP may be related or designed for specific disciplines; b) ESP may use, in specific teaching situations, a different methodology from that of general English; c) ESP is likely to be designed for adult learners, either at a tertiary level institution or in a professional work situation; it could be used for learners at secondary school level; d) ESP is generally designed for intermediate or advanced learners; and e) Most ESP courses assume basic knowledge of the language system, but it can be used with beginners.

Origins and emergence of ESP

The ESP movement, according to Dudley-Evans and St. John (1998) originated from the massive expansion of scientific, technical, and economic activities on an international scale in the 1950s and 1960s.

Hutchinson and Waters (1987) divided the history of ESP into four phases. The first phase can be traced back to the 1960s and the early 1970s when ESP researchers and teachers concentrated on the lexical and grammatical characteristics of academic/professional registers at the sentence level. The second phase stretched from late 1970s to early 1980s when the focus became more rhetorical and researchers and practitioners began to examine the organization and function of discourse at a number of levels of abstraction. The third phase integrated the discoveries of Phase 1 and Phase 2 when researchers centered on systematic analyses of the target situations in which learners' communicative purposes were more attended to. Recently, in the last phase, researchers have shifted their emphasis on learners' strategies for their effective thinking and learning.

There are especially three reasons common to the emergence of all ESP: the demands of a "Brave New World", a revolution in linguistics, and focus on the learner (Hutchinson and Waters, 1987: 6). Hutchinson and Waters report that there were two key historical periods in the life of ESP. First, the end of the Second World War brought an:

(…) age of enormous and unprecedented expansion in scientific, technical and economic activity on an international scale for various reasons, most notably the economic power of the United States in the post-war world, the role [of international language] fell to English (Hutchinson and Waters, 1987: 6).

Second, the Oil Crisis of the early 1970s resulted in Western money and knowledge flowing into the oil-rich countries. As I have mentioned in the section on globalization of this study, the language of this knowledge became English. The general effect of this development was to apply pressure on the language teaching profession in order to deliver the required skills and linguistic competences. Whereas English had previously decided its own destiny, it now became subject to the wishes, needs and demands of people other than language teachers (Hutchinson and Waters, 1987: 7). Another reason cited as having a tremendous impact on the emergence of ESP was a revolution in linguistics. Whereas traditional linguists set out to describe the features of language, revolutionary pioneers in linguistics began to focus on the ways in which language is used in real communication. Hutchinson and Waters (1987: 75-76) point out that one significant discovery was in the ways that spoken and written English vary. In other words, given the particular context in which English is used, the variant of English will change. If language in different situations varies, then maneuvering language instruction to meet the needs of learners in specific contexts was also possible. Therefore, in the late 1960s and the early 1970s there were many attempts to describe English for Science and Technology (EST). Hutchinson and Waters (1987) identify Jack Ewer and G. Latorre, John Swales, Larry Selinker and Louis Trimble as a few of the EST pioneers.

Features of ESP courses

Considering the characteristics of ESP courses, Carver (1983) states that there are three characteristics common to ESP courses:

1) Authentic materials – the use of authentic learning materials is possible if we accept the claim that ESP courses should be offered at an intermediate or advanced level. The use of such materials, modified by teachers or unmodified, is common in ESP, especially in self-directed studies or research tasks. The students are usually encouraged to conduct research using a variety of different resources including the Internet;

2) purpose-related orientation – refers to the simulation of communicative tasks required by the target situation. The teacher can give students different tasks - to simulate the conference preparation, involving the preparation of papers, reading, note-taking and writing. At Faculty of Agronomy in Cacak, English course for Agribusiness Management involves students in the tasks of presenting a particular agricultural product, logo creation, negotiating with the clients (suppliers and buyers), telephone conversation. They also practice listening skills, though the application is restricted because they employ newly acquired skills during their ESP classes with their colleagues and teacher.

3) Self-direction – means that ESP is concerned with turning learners into users. For self –direction, it is necessary that teacher encourage students to have a certain degree of autonomy – freedom to decide when, what, and how they will study. For high-ability learners it is essential to learn how to access information in a new culture.

Textbook evaluation

The purpose of textbook: Textbooks are a very important part of a course or a curriculum and help the teacher to reach his pre-defined goals. As Hutchinson and Torres (1994) say: The textbook is an almost universal element of [English language] teaching. Millions of copies are sold every year, and numerous aid projects have been set up to produce them in countries such as Sri Lanka, Yemen, and Peru. …No teaching-learning situation, it seems, is complete until it has its relevant textbook. The danger with ready-made textbooks is that they can seem to absolve teachers of responsibility. Instead of participating in the day-to-day decisions that have to be made about what to teach and how to teach it, it is easy to just sit back and operate the system, secure in the belief that the wise and virtuous people who produced the textbook knew what was good for us. Unfortunately this is rarely the case. The number of new textbooks being produced shows no sign of abating. Even more striking is the fact that each new generation of books is more comprehensive and more highly structured than the last. Textbooks clearly survive because they satisfy certain needs (p.315).

The idea that textbooks produce a kind of dependency culture among teachers and learners is echoed by Littlejohn (1992: 84). In his study of some widely-used primary/lower secondary textbooks, he concludes that

'the precise instructions which the materials give reduce the teacher's role to one of managing or overseeing a preplanned classroom event.'

O'Neill (1982) referred to four major points in his article about ESP books. First a great deal of the material, although not specifically designed for this group, was very suitable for their needs. Second the two textbooks made it possible for the group to look ahead to what we were going to do or to look back at what we had done. Third the textbooks provided materials which were well-presented, which could be replaced by me or by someone else only at great cost in terms both of money and of my own time. Fourth the textbooks allowed me to adapt and improvise while I was teaching. Each reason, however banal, needs some additional clarification. Let me go through them again and enlarge upon them. There are a number of things almost any group studying technical English will have in common. Although one group's needs diverge at various points from another's, there is often a common core of needs shared by a variety of groups in different places studying under different conditions at different times.

Textbook selection

A practical, thorough, and straightforward method for choosing ESL textbooks is to analyze the options according to program issues, going from broad (e.g., goals and curriculum) to specific (e.g., exercises and activities). The strategy behind this technique is to eliminate unsatisfactory textbooks at each stage of analysis so that only the most appropriate are left at the end, making the choice clear and manageable Garinger (2002). He also refer to four steps in selecting a textbook that are:

a) **Matching the textbook to the program and the course:** Prior to selecting a textbook, educators should thoroughly examine the program curriculum. If the goals and curriculum of the program are clear and well defined, the parallels with certain textbooks may become obvious. The next question to consider is how well the objectives of the textbook match the objectives of the course. Need for thorough coverage of the course objectives in the textbook. The textbook needs to address a reasonable number of course objectives to make it a worthwhile purchase for both teacher and students. The next evaluation stage is identifying the appropriateness of the text for the intended learners.

b) **Reviewing the skills presented in the textbook:** Improving learners' language skills is frequently the main purpose of ESL programs. However, which skills are taught and how they are taught differs from course to course and program to program. Therefore, the effectiveness of each textbook in helping learners acquire the necessary skills must be considered. Rating this effectiveness involves asking questions such as these:

• Does the text focus on the skills it claims to focus on?
• Does it actually teach these skills or does it merely provide practice in the skills students already have?

In terms of the first question, it is important to ensure, for example, that a textbook claiming to teach reading skills focuses on engaging students in critical analyses of different types of texts, rather than focusing primarily on listening or writing skills.

An example of the second question would be a listening textbook that provides students ample information on how to develop actual listening skills, such as how to listen for main idea versus detail, to recognize organizational patterns, to take more valuable notes, and so forth. In order to accomplish this, there should be evidence that the text gives students adequate guidance on how to do these things. The importance of cognitive skills should not be overlooked when evaluating a textbook. A text should cover a wide range of these skills, especially higher order skills such as analysis, synthesis, and evaluation.

c) **Reviewing Exercises and Activities in the Textbook and:** When evaluating the quality of a textbook's exercises or activities, four key questions should be answered:

(1) Do the exercises and activities in the textbook contribute to learners' language acquisition?
(2) Are the exercises balanced in their format, containing both controlled and free practice?
(3) Are the exercises progressive as the students move through the textbook?
(4) Are the exercises varied and challenging?

Keeping students motivated and interested as they work through a textbook is much easier if the students see something new in each chapter. Familiarity and routine can be comforting, but too much familiarity can lead to disinterest and boredom.

d) **Weighing Practical Concerns:** One set of considerations remains: practical concerns. These issues, which include availability and cost, are often the deciding factor in textbook selection, and they must be acknowledged. Not all textbooks can be purchased and shipped in a reasonable amount of time, and educators often do not have the luxury of planning months in advance. Those who work within an educational system that requires students to purchase their own textbooks should recognize the economic burden faced by students and should be responsible in their textbook choices in terms of cost.

The present study

The evaluation of under study book: Based on the questionnaire that you can find in appendix section of this article and "the checklist for ESL textbook selection" that is extracted from Garinger (2002) article, some evaluations are conducted on the book that was used in midwifery ESP course named "Bridging the Gap: an English and study skill course for the students of medical science by Morteza Aslrasouli". There are some weaknesses and strength that will be mentioned. The cover of the book has a simple design consist of the picture of areolar connective tissue that is mentioned to in the inside cover. The name of the book and the writer are also located on the cover section that in author's idea created a suitable and simple cover for the

book. Next was the table of contents which is a complete section and address the materials inside the book properly and thoroughly.

The: Before You Read" section introduces the sections of the book and also the types of the activities to the students which help them to draw a framework and get rid of confusion about the types of available activities, as Garniger (2002) says: the textbook reflects learners' preferences in terms of layout, design, and organization. Students idea about the other parts of book are being asked in addition to their satisfaction about the quality of the course and its objectives within a questionnaire which will be mention in further sections of this article. Each chapter start with a vocabulary introduction section that introduces new vocabularies to the students. Then the strategy of reading are discussed explicitly and practices after that then the synonyms and antonyms are practiced with exercises, after these initial activities the main concern of the chapter that is introducing the medical text to students is located. Each chapter contain 2 to 3 reading which Almost all of them contain a high level of medical vocabulary that suits the needs of this course. As all the reading sections, activities like reading comprehension, true false questions and new words introduction and matching activities come next. After the reading section "communication skill section" is put forward which is a dialog mostly in hospital or related situation which engage the students' cognitive skills with the task. Last but not the least section is the listening section that is now covered in the class based on the thing that is told to the author by course students that was related to the numerous number of students in each class which was around 50 students and also lack of motivation of the course teacher and also students. After a short brief of the material presentation order in the book it is good to talk about strength and weaknesses. By looking closely and comparing the materials presented in the book with the mentioned criteria of a text book it can be said that most of the presented material are in accord with the textbook selection and evaluation criteria except a group of activities that was asking for different kind of word forms of a given verb, adjective etc. Almost all of the students complained about the difficulty of the task that could not be completed without an online dictionary or so.

METHODOLOGY

a. The participant

The participants for this study were 33 BA students of midwifery (all female) taking an ESP course. All the participants were young people whose age varied from 20 to 28. They studied at the Islamic Azad University, Maragheh Branch.

b. Materials

The book to be evaluated was "Bridging the Gap: an English and study skill course for the students of medical science" the students were supposes to complete the exercises sections of each chapter after being taught and also were given a text about the definition of midwifery, extracted from Wikipedia and were supposed to translate a paragraph and bring it to the class each session. For evaluation a questionnaire consist of 20 questions about the textbook was used (see Appendix A). It was based on Sheldon' (1988) model of evaluation and modified by Karimi (2006). The questionnaire examines 6 parts: practical concerns, materials in relation to course objective, subject matter, linguistic issues, skills and strategies, variety of tasks and activities, and the layout of materials. To make the items easy to understand, the researchers translated the questionnaire into Persian.

c. Procedure

At first, the researcher talked with the participants about the study for a few minutes and made them aware of the processes they were supposed to go through. They were informed that it was not necessary to write their names and their answers would not affect their course grade. To evaluate the effectiveness of the intended textbook, the participants were asked to give their opinion on a five-point scale: excellent, good, average, weak, and very weak

RESULTS

The first areas under investigation were practical concerns: the first question was: to what extent is the textbook available? Despite the fact that the book was not available in the market in printed version and students had to make Xerox the book 6% of the participants chose excellent alternative, 27% of the participants chose good 30% of the participants chose average and 21% of the participants chose weak and 15% of the participants chose very weak.

The second question was: to what extent can the accompanying materials be obtained in a timely manner? 6% of the participants chose excellent, 15% of the participants chose good, 21% of the participants chose average and 57% of the participants chose weak. The third question was: is the text book cost effective? 18% of the participants chose excellent, 30% of the participants chose good 33% of the participants chose average, 12% of the participants chose weak, and 66% of the participants chose very weak alternatives. The second area investigated the relation between course objectives and the textbook: the first question was: to what extent do the objectives of the textbook match the objectives of the course? 15% of the participants chose excellent, 36% chose good, 42% chose average, 6% chose weak alternatives. The second question was:

to what extent does the textbook seem to be in tune with broader educational concerns? 6% chose excellent, 27% of students chose good, 54% chose average, 12% chose weak alternatives. The third question was: to what extent is the textbook appropriate for the audience? 12% chose excellent, 51% chose good, 27% chose average, 9% chose weak alternatives. The third area was related to the subject matter issues: the first question was: to what extent does the subject matter motivate and interest students? 12% of the participants chose excellent, 21% chose good, 42% chose average, 6% chose weak, and the rest chose very weak alternatives. The second question was: to what extent has the ordering of by topics been arranged in a logical fashion? 12% chose excellent, 18% of the participants chose good, 57% chose average, 3% chose weak, and 3% chose very weak alternatives. The third question was: to what extent has the content been graded according to the needs and background knowledge of the students? 3% of the participants chose excellent, 42% chose good, 30% chose average, 39% chose average, 9% of the participants chose weak and the rest chose very weak alternatives.

Table 1 - Summarizes the findings of the study

Criteria \ Degree	Very weak	Weak	Average	Good	Excellent
To what extent is the text book available	15%	21%	30%	27%	6%
To what extent can the accompanying materials be obtained in a timely manner	0%	58%	21%	15%	6%
Is the text book cost-effective?	67%	12%	33%	30%	18%
To what extent do the objectives of the textbook match the objectives of the course	0%	6%	42%	36%	15%
To what extent does the textbook seem to be in tune with broader educational concern	0%	12%	55%	27%	6%
To what extent is the text book appropriate for the audience	0%	9%	27%	52%	12%
To what extent does the textbook contain basic grammatical patterns and vocabulary	0%	21%	45%	21%	12%
To what extent does the presence of structures and vocabularies move gradually from simple to more complex	3%	18%	39%	30%	9%
To what extent are new vocabularies and structures recycled in subsequent units for reinforcement	3%	15%	42%	33%	6%
To what extent does the subject matter motivate and interest you	18%	6%	42%	21%	12%
To what extent has the ordering of the material by topics been arranged in a logical fashion	3%	3%	58%	18%	12%
To what extent has the content been graded according to the need and background knowledge of the students	6%	9%	39%	42%	3%
To what extent does the textbook teach the reading skill	9%	15%	42%	24%	9%
To what extent does the textbook teach reading strategies	9%	15%	48%	24%	3%
To what extent does the textbook teach the speaking skill	30%	27%	27%	15%	0%
Are the exercises and activities varied enough to challenge the students	3%	15%	45%	18%	18%
To what extent does the textbook appear attractive	15%	15%	27%	33%	9%
To what extent do photographs and illustrations in the book motivate you to talk about the subject	9%	27%	39%	12%	12%
To what extent are the materials related to your major	0%	18%	27%	30%	24%
To what extent has the content been graded according to the proficiency level of the students	0%	12%	58%	27%	3%

The next part was related to language issues: the first question was: to what extent does the textbook contain the basic grammatical patterns and vocabulary? 12% of the participants chose excellent, 21% of the students chose good, 45% of the students chose average and 21% chose weak alternatives. The second question was: to what extent does the presentation of structure and vocabulary move from simple to difficult? 9% of the participants chose excellent, 30% chose good, 39% chose average, 18% chose weak, and 3% chose very weak alternatives. The third question was: to what extent are the new vocabulary and structures recycled in the subsequent units for reinforcement? 6% of the participants chose excellent, 33% chose good, 42% chose average, 15% chose weak and rest chose very weak alternatives. The fifth area investigated the skills and strategies involved in the questionnaire. The first question was: to what extent does the textbook teach the reading skill? 9% chose excellent, 24% chose good, 42% chose average, 15% chose weak, and 9% of participant chose very weak alternatives. The second question was To what extent does the textbook teach reading strategies? 3% of the participants chose excellent, 24% chose good, 48% chose average, 15% chose weak and 9% of the participants chose very weak alternatives. The third question was To what extent does the

textbook teach the speaking skill? 15% chose good, 27% chose average, 27% chose weak and 30% of the participants chose very weak alternatives. The next area under investigation dealt with the exercises and activities in the book. The first question was Are the exercises and activities varied enough to challenge the students? 18% of the participants chose excellent, 18% chose good, 45% chose average, 15% chose weak and 3% of the participants chose very weak alternatives. The last part of the questionnaire was related to the layout of the book. The first question was: to what extent does the book appear attractive? 9% of the participants chose excellent, 33% chose good, 27% chose average, 15% chose weak and 15% of the participants chose very weak alternatives.

The second question was: to what extent do photographs and illustrations in the book motivate you to talk about the subject? 12% of the participants chose excellent, 12% chose good, 39% chose average, 27% chose weak and 18% of the participants chose very weak alternatives.

CONCLUSION

As mentioned earlier, the major areas under investigation in the questionnaire were practical concerns, materials in relation to course objectives, exercises and activities, skills and strategies, language issues, and subject matter. At first it should be noted that every textbook or teaching material has its merits. No teaching material is perfect. Regarding the first area, it was revealed that the main problem was with the availability of the book in the market and also supplementary material which can help students improve different aspects of their English.

About The second area investigated that was about the relation between course objectives and the textbook it must be concluded that most of the students were satisfied with the provided material and the book was meeting their expectations. In the third area that was about the subject matter issues it could be said that the book was successful in motivating the students that was related to the rich content and various exercises of the book. The next area was related to language issues which based on the answer of the students to the questionnaire they were pleased with the presented materials and also their order of presentation throughout the book. The fifth area investigated the skills and strategies involved during the course. About the reading skills and strategies the results were good and students were satisfied but bout the speaking skills, because of the fact that there was no oral activity in the class the results are disappointing. The last part of the questionnaire was related to the layout of the book. The layout of the book plays an important role in catching the learners' attention and increasing their motivation. Regardless of the fact that the book was not available in printed and colored format, most of the students gave high scores to its atractivenss and illustration. To provide a suitable textbook for learners, different issues should be taken into consideration like the background knowledge and English level of the learners. As seen in the previous section, most of the participants believed that the book was in harmony with their English proficiency. Simple structures and vocabulary were introduced earlier, and the students were not overwhelmed with a huge number of new structures. Textbooks should provide the learners with activities which ask them to complete tables, flowcharts, and diagrams.

Theses activities draw the learners' attention to the most salient ideas in the text. The content of the books should be related to the previous learning experience and background knowledge of the learners. This is what scholars call meaningful learning. A suitable textbook should cover necessary grammatical structures and be adequate in terms of quantity and range of vocabulary. Besides, it should include pronunciation practice as well as issues of style in correct use of English.

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23

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APPENDIX A QUESTIONNAIRE

Dear participants

The following questionnaire is intended for a research on textbook evaluation. Please read the questions carefully and express your idea by selecting one of the options.

1. To what extent is the book available?
   a. excellent   b. good   c. average   d. weak   e. very weak
2. To what extent can the accompanying materials be obtained in a timely manner?
   a. excellent   b. good   c. average   d. weak   e. very weak
3. Is the text book cost-effective?
   a. excellent   b. good   c. average   d. weak   e. very weak
4. To what extent do the objectives of the textbook match the objectives of the course?
   a. excellent   b. good   c. average   d. weak   e. very weak
5. To what extent does the textbook seem to be in tune with broader educational concern?
   a. excellent   b. good   c. average   d. weak   e. very weak
6. To what extent is the text book appropriate for he audience?
   a. excellent   b. good   c. average   d. weak   e. very weak
7. To what extent does the textbook contain basic grammatical patterns and vocabulary?
   a. excellent   b. good   c. average   d. weak   e. very weak
8. To what extent does the presence of structures and vocabularies move gradually from simple to more complex?
   a. excellent   b. good   c. average   d. weak   e. very weak
9. To what extent are new vocabularies and structures recycled in subsequent units for reinforcement?
   a. excellent   b. good   c. average   d. weak   e. very weak
10. To what extent does the subject matter motivate and interest you?
    a. excellent   b. good   c. average   d. weak   e. very weak
11. To what extent has the ordering of the material by topics been arranged in a logical fashion?
    a. excellent   b. good   c. average   d. weak   e. very weak
12. To what extent has the content been graded according to the need and background knowledge of the students?
    a. excellent   b. good   c. average   d. weak   e. very weak
13. To what extent does the textbook teach the reading skill?
    a. excellent   b. good   c. average   d. weak   e. very weak
14. To what extent does the textbook teach reading strategies?
    a. excellent   b. good   c. average   d. weak   e. very weak
15. To what extent does the textbook teach the speaking skill?
    a. excellent   b. good   c. average   d. weak   e. very weak
16. Are the exercises and activities varied enough to challenge the students?
    a. excellent   b. good   c. average   d. weak   e. very weak
17. To what extent does the textbook appear attractive?
    a. excellent   b. good   c. average   d. weak   e. very weak
18. To what extent do photographs and illustrations in the book motivate you to talk about the subject?
    a. excellent   b. good   c. average   d. weak   e. very weak
19. To what extent are the materials related to your major?
    a. excellent   b. good   c. average   d. weak   e. very weak
20. To what extent has the content been graded according to the proficiency level of the students?
    a. excellent   b. good   c. average   d. weak   e. very weak