CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

2.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter attempts to cover the related literature on coursebook evaluation. To this end, it comprises six main parts. The first part explains the theories of language and learning. The second part deals with coursebooks as instructional materials. This is followed by an elaboration on material evaluation. The fourth part explores the criteria that have been selected for the present study. The next part is an examination of the related studies in coursebook evaluation. Finally, the last part comprises a summary of the chapter.

2.2 THEORIES OF LANGUAGE AND LEARNING

In conducting any learning and teaching program, two most important questions that need to be asked are: first, “what is it that the learners must learn and the teacher teach?”(Brown 2002, p.2) and second, “how does learning take place?” (ibid.). The first question can be answered by describing language. In other words, by describing *what language is,* it can become clear what is going to be learnt by the learners. Describing the theories of learning can help to answer the second question partially. While the language description helps us to understand the nature of a language, the learning theory helps us to understand how people learn that language (Hutchinson &Waters, 1995).

Teaching materials reflect their authors' assumptions about the nature of language and learning which consequently affects indirectly what is taught and learnt in the class. As Hutchinson & Waters (ibid. p. 107) indicate "materials embody a view of the nature of language and learning."

To this end, this section focuses on the two questions raised in this part. The first part deals with *what is language*? It covers three theories on language: structural view, functional view and interactional view. This is followed by another discussion on the theories of learning. This part includes: behaviorism, cognitivism and constructivism.

2.2.1 Language: A Definition

The general definition of language can be: language is a system which consists of units of sound where these units join together and form meaningful words and sentences in a context. Based on Gass and Selinker (2001), phonology, syntax, morphology, semantics, and pragmatics are some of the features of language that can be described systematically. However, a definition of a concept is a statement that includes the key features of that concept. These features may differ according to the understanding of a person of that concept (Brown, 2000). Therefore, giving an exact definition of language has always been difficult for the linguists. Working out a composite definition of language, Brown (ibid.) identifies eight general features of language:

1- Language is systematic.
2- Language is a set of arbitrary symbols.
3- Those symbols are primarily vocal, but may also be visual.
4- The symbols have conventionalized meanings to which they refer.
5- Language is for communication.
6- Language operates in a speech community or culture.
7- Language is essentially human, although possibly not limited to humans.

8- Language is acquired by all people in much the same way; language and language learning both have universal characteristics. (2000, p. 5)

Meanwhile, Richards & Rodgers (2001) identify three theoretical views of language that inform current approaches and methods in language teaching: *the structural view*, *the functional view* and *the interactional view*.

2.2.1.1 The Structural View of Language

In the structural view, language is considered as a system of structures or rules which are used for expressing meaning. In this view, the language can be broken into structures and by describing these structures the language can be described. So, the ultimate goal of the language learner is to master the elements of this system. These elements in general can be defined in terms of "phonological units (e.g. phonemes), grammatical units (e.g. clauses, phrases, and sentences), grammatical operations (e.g. adding, shifting, or transforming elements) and lexical items (e.g. function words and structure words)" (Richards & Rodgers, 2001, p.21).

Substitutional tables are typical means of explaining these structures, where by changing the words inside them, different sentences with different meanings can be formed. The audiolingual method, the total-physical response and the silent way embody structural view of language (Richards & Rodgers, ibid.). They view language as a set of rules and structures which can be broken down and taught separately. By learning those rules and structures they expect the learners to learn the language.

2.2.1.2 The Functional View of Language

The functional view of language which communicative language is based on views language as a means of expressing functional meaning. Language is seen as a system for expressing meaning rather than containing abstract systematic rules (Nunan, 1999b). Consequently, language teaching is more concentrated on semantics and the functional aspects of language instead of only grammatical and structural elements of it. Notional syllabuses make use of the functional view of language. They are based not only on elements of grammar and lexis but also topics, notions and concepts that the learner needs for communication (Richards & Rodgers, 2001). However, the structural and functional approaches can be seen as complementary, where each supports the other one. The relationship between the two can be shown as "structure+content=function" (Hutchinson & Waters, 1995, p.32). In this view of language, language learners learn language in order to do things with it.

2.2.1.3 The Interactional View of Language

The third view of language is the interactional view. According to Richards & Rodgers (2001, p. 21) in this view language is seen "as a vehicle for the realization of interpersonal relationships and for the performance of social transactions between individuals." Language is a means that creates and maintains social relations. Interactional theories' focus is "on the patterns of moves, acts, negotiations and interactions found in conversation exchanges" (ibid.). In this view language is used for socialization. Therefore, the language learners need not only to know the grammar and lexis of the language but also the rules for using them in the whole range of communicative contexts.

In summary, the structural view limits learning a language to learning its structure and vocabulary, while the functional view adds the rules that one needs to know in order to be able to do things with language. The interactional view says that in addition to all these one needs to know whether it is appropriate to do so, i.e. when, where and how it is appropriate to do it. However, as Hutchinson &Waters (1995, p. 37) say these views are not "separate entities. Each stage has reacted to, and drawn inspiration from, those preceding it." A functional approach uses the structural view but adds another aspect to it, as it believes that the structural view is not sufficient for explaining the language. By the same token, the interactional view by accepting the structural and functional views of the language adds another additional aspect to it.

2.2.2 Theories of Learning

The second important issue in language teaching and learning is to understand how people learn. Learning is one of the most crucial issues in psychology; however, it is a difficult concept to define (Hergenhahn & Olson, 2005). "The key to successful language learning and teaching lies not in the analysis of the nature of language but in understanding the structure and process of mind" (Hutchinson & Waters, 1995, p. 39).

To this end, the following sections focus on three main theories of learning: Behaviorism, Cognitivism and Constructivism.

2.2.2.1 The Behavioristic Theory of Learning

Behaviorism which was popular in the 1940s and 1950s is based on the works of Pavlov and Skinner (Lightbown & Spada, 2006). In this theory, language is considered as a form of behavior and learning as habit formation. "It was believed that learning is advanced by making a stimulus-response connection, by creating new habits by means of reinforcement

and practice of the established links between stimuli and responses" (Johnson, 2004, p. 18). The two key notions of behaviorism are *habits* and *errors* (Ellis, 1991).

Habits

According to behaviorism, when a specific response is associated with a specific stimulus a habit is performed. Two important characteristics of habits are: first, they are observable and second, they are automatic (Ellis, 1991). In general, behaviorism is concerned with those aspects of behavior which are observable. Thus, the unobservable aspects such as meaning and thought are unresolved in this theory.

Based on this view, learning is a type of behavior which is controlled by its consequences. If the consequences are rewarding and reinforcing, the behavior will be sustained. But if the consequences are punishing, the behavior will get weaker and extinguished finally (Brown, 2000). Furthermore, these habits are performed automatically without any awareness. Therefore, learning a habit can occur in one of two ways, either it is through *imitation* so that the learner copies the stimulus until it becomes automatic, or through *reinforcement* where the learners' response is rewarded or punished depending on whether it is appropriate or not (Ellis, 1991).

Errors

According to the behavioristic view, old habits can get in the way of the new habits. In the case of second/foreign language learning, it is believed that the first language habits can interfere with the second language habits. The notion of interference has an important role in the behavioristic view of second/foreign language learning (Ellis, 1991). "The difficulty in learning a new habit was associated with interference from the old habit − the learner's first language − …" (Johnson, 2004, pp. 21-22). Therefore, the errors are

undesirable as they indicate the failure of the learner in overcoming the habits of the first language. Thus, the errors should be corrected as soon as possible before they become a habit.

In short, according to this tradition, language learning is explained “in terms of imitation, practice, reinforcement (or feedback on success) and habit information” (Lightbown & Spada, 2006, p. 34).

The behavioristic view of learning was adopted for some time by language professions. Some aspects of it are still in use. For instance, pattern practice which is a central activity in this view “still has a useful role to play in language teaching but as one part of the whole learning process” (Hutchinson & Waters 1995).

2.2.2.2 Cognitivism

One of the first arguments against behaviorism came from Chomsky. He believed that the behavioristic approach to learning was too superficial and concentrated only on the surface structure of the language and ignored the deep structure. He also argued that since human beings can produce an infinite number of sentences that they have never come across before, learning language through stimulus-response and imitation could not explain the creativity of language. He suggested that the human mind was rule governed, i.e. by acquiring a finite number of rules they could produce an infinite number of utterances. Therefore, he concluded that learning is not forming habits but is acquiring the rules. In other words, the mind not only responds to stimuli but uses that stimulus to find and understand the underlying rules or systems (Hutchinson & Waters, 1995).

The cognitive approach to learning relies heavily on Chomsky's linguistic theory of first language acquisition (Johnson, 2004). The cognitive view of learning is concerned with the mental processes. In this tradition, unlike behaviorism, the internal processes are more important than the external processes. Therefore, unlike behaviorism that considered the learner passive, cognitivism considers the learner to be an active thinking body who is responsible for his/her learning. This approach tries to discover the mental processes of the learner, i.e. how learning takes place. In short, "we learn by thinking about and trying to make sense of what we see, feel and hear" (Hutchinson & Waters, 1995, p. 43). According to Celce-Murcia (1991, p. 7), in the cognitive approach language learning is viewed as rule acquisition, not just habit formation, and instruction is often individualized, i.e. learners are responsible for their own learning.

Furthermore, Johnson (2004, p. 12) states that "in the cognitive tradition, in contrast to the behavioristic, the subject's own interpretation of the elicited behavior and understanding of investigated mental phenomena are taken into consideration". In other words, cognitivists believe that by understanding how the human brain processes and learns new information, we can better understand how language is learned. Actually, the focus is on the learner as a thinking individual (Mitchell & Myles, 2004).

The field of second language strongly adheres to the cognitive tradition (Johnson 2004). The cognitive tradition is very vast and many models and researches have been done based on it. Ausabel is one of the cognitive psychologists who worked in this area and proposed *meaningful learning* theory.

Ausubel (see Brown 2000) states that learning takes place when the new material or items are meaningful to the learner and he/she can relate these new items to his/her existing

cognition. Ausubel differentiates between *rote* and *meaningful* learning. He describes the rote learning as "discrete and relatively isolated entities that are related to cognitive structure only in an arbitrary and verbatim fashion, not permitting the establishment of [meaningful] relationship" (cited in Brown, 2000, p. 83). On the other hand, meaningful learning is the process where the new items are connected to the present cognitive structure. As far as learning is concerned, the differences between these two learning may not seem important. However, these two types of learning become more significant when considered in relation to retention. The meaningfully learned items have greater potential to be retained. The importance of Ausubel's theory of learning has a significant implication in second language learning. It emphasizes the meaningful context and exercises in the language classroom in place of rote activities that may be found in these classes (Brown, 2000). It stresses the fact that learners learn better and can retain more when the learning is meaningful for them.

In summary, the cognitive theory emphasizes the mental processes where the learner is a thinking individual who is responsible for his/her learning. It is concerned with why learning takes place and what happens in the learner's mind that leads to learning.

2.2.2.3 Constructivism

Another theory of learning is constructivism which has also been associated with the terms emergentist (Mitchell & Myles, 2004) and dialogical (Johnson, 2004). Piaget and Vygotsky are the names often associated with constructivism. Constructivists argue that as different people interpret reality in different ways, there are many versions of reality (Brown, 2000 & Johnson, 2004). To this end, knowledge does not have its own independent existence but is constructed socially (Nunan, 1999b). It is believed that the

multiple versions of reality exist because “human beings are exposed in the course of their lives to different sociocultural and institutional settings, where they acquire different voices” (Johnson, 2004).

Constructism is a view of knowledge acquisition that emphasizes constructing knowledge rather than transmiting knowledge and recording of information conveyed by others (Zarei, 2005). To this end, learning is a process during which learners built their own understanding of new ideas. Furthermore, this tradition emphasizes “the importance of social, cultural, political, historical, and institutional contexts for the development of human cognition; it highlights the importance for human cognitive development of social interaction in a variety of sociocultural and institutional setting” (Johnson, 2004, p.17).

Furthermore, according to constructivism, there are four central characteristics that are believed to influence learning (Bruning et al., 1995):

1) learners’ construction of their own learning,
2) the dependence of new learning on students’ existing understanding,
3) the critical role of social interaction, and
4) the necessity of authentic learning tasks for meaningful leaning.

In other words, constructivism is based on the belief that knowledge is not received passively but is constructed actively by learners; the learners’ experiential world is organized by cognition which is an adaptive process, and all knowledge is constructed socially (Richards & Schmidt, 2002).

Although Piaget and Vygotsky are both associated with constructivism they hold different views on the importance of social context. While by emphasizing the cognitive

development, Piaget is known as a cognitive constructivist, Vygotsky is described as a social constructionist since he emphasizes the social effect on learning.

Cognitive Constructivism

Piaget's theory has two major parts. The first part is "ages and stages". He identifies the different stages and processes in children's progress. These stages predict what children can and cannot understand at different ages. They are as follows:

- Sensorimotor stage (birth to two)
- Preoperational stage (ages two to seven)
- Operational stage (ages seven to sixteen)
    - Concrete operational stage (ages seven to eleven)
    - Formal operational stage (ages eleven to sixteen) (Brown, 2000, p.61)

The second part of Piaget's theory describes how cognitive structures change through the processes of adaptation: *assimilation* and *accommodation*. Schema is another important term in Piaget's theory. A schema can be defined as "an element in the organism's cognitive structure" (Hergenhahn & Olson, 2005, p. 296). While *assimilation* refers to the adoption of a new object into an old schema, *accommodation* describes the situation where an old schema is adapted to a new object. According to Piaget, educational experiences have to be built around the learner's cognitive structure. On one hand, the educational materials that the learners cannot assimilate into their cognitive structure will have no meaning for them. On the other hand, if the learners can assimilate all the materials completely, no learning will take place. Therefore, in order for the learning to take place, the materials must be partly known and partly unknown. While the part which is known will be assimilated, the cognitive structure will accommodate to the unknown part (Hergenhahn & Olson, 2005).

Thus, for Piaget, education involves experiences that are mildly challenging for the learner where the balance between accommodation and assimilation helps intellectual growth. This growth in the cognitive structure is through the interaction with the environment which results in experience. He believed that "cognitive development is at the very center of the human organism and that language is dependent upon and springs from cognitive development" (Brown, 2000, p.37). According to Piaget's theory, information cannot be given to the human beings but they must construct their own knowledge. This knowledge building is possible through experience which is the result of interaction with the environment (Hergenhahn & Olson, 2005).

Social Constructivism

As mentioned earlier Piaget and Vygotsky differ in the extent to which they emphasize social context. The previous part was focused on Piaget's cognitive constructivism. This section will focus on Vygotsky's social constructivism.

Vygotsky emphasized the influence of the social and cultural context in learning. He believed that social interaction was essential in cognitive development and rejected Piaget's *ages and stages* (Brown, 2000). "Any function in the child's cultural development appears twice, or on two planes. First it appears on the social plane, and then on the psychological plane… social relations or relations among people genetically underline all higher functions and their relationships" (Vygotsky ,1981 cited in Johnson, 2004, p.108). In order to explain interpersonal and intrapersonal plane, Vygotsky introduced the "zone of proximal development" (ZPD). This concept refers to the level of development achieved when learners engage in social interaction. It means that children can, with the help of adults or other children who are more advanced, grasp concepts and ideas that they cannot

understand on their own (Johnson, 2004). According to Vygotsky, most important learning by the child occurs through social interaction with a skillful tutor. In Vygotsky's opinion social interaction through communication is fundamental in the development of cognition. Thus, he places considerable emphasis on social interaction and language in cognitive development.

2.2.2.4 Implication of Constructivism on Language Learning and Teaching

Constructivist theorists view language learning in essentially social terms. Consequently, the classroom is viewed "as a sociocultural setting where an active participation in the target language culture is taught, promoted and cultivated" (Johnson, 2004, p.180). Thus, the language learner has the opportunity to create new ways of meaning through interaction with other users of the language (Mitchell & Myles, 2004). Therefore, the teacher plays a crucial rule in learning in the classroom. The teacher guides students as they come across problems and encourages them to work in groups, to think of solutions to the problems, and also motivates them and gives them advice. In addition, the constructivist view involves a complete change in the focus of teaching and leaning, which puts students' own effort of understanding at the center of the educational program (Zarei, 2005). As Richards and Schmidt (2001, p.114) state, in the field of language learning "constructivism has led to a focus on learning strategies, learner beliefs, teacher thinking and other aspects of learning which stress the individual and personal contribution of learners to learning." To this end, Nunan (1999b, pp.34-35) expresses that "constructivist view is in harmony with ruling concepts on the field, indicating communicative language, task-based language teaching, learner centeredness and negotiated curricula."

Furthermore, Nunan (1999b) refers to the experiential learning which is based on the constructivist approach to education. He describes such a classroom based on cooperative and task-based learning where learners work together in pairs or in small groups. In such a class, students cooperate with others and express their own feelings, ideas and opinions under the teacher's guidance. The learners also learn how to solve a problem systematically.

William & Burden (1997) provide a summary of what they consider as the ten basic propositions involved in applying the constructivist learning theory to EFL education. These ten propositions are as follow:

1- There is a difference between learning and education.
2- Learners learn what is meaningful to them.
3- Learners learn in ways that are meaningful to them.
4- Learners learn better if they feel in control of what they are learning.
5- Learning is closely linked to how people feel about themselves.
6- Learning takes place in a social context through interaction with other people.
7- What teachers do in the classroom will reflect their own beliefs and attitudes.
8- There is a significant role for the teacher as a mediator in the language classroom.
9- Learning tasks represent an interface between teacher and learners.
10- Learning is influenced by the situation in which it occurs. (pp. 204-208)

Moreover, Brooks & Brooks (1999), introduce five guiding principles of constructivism as follows:

1- Posing problems of emerging relevance to learners: by considering the important role of the learners, start with the familiar material and build the new material on them in a way that is meaningful for the learners.

2- Structuring learning around primary concepts: mostly curriculum is presented in small and disconnected parts. Students memorize the material but most of the time they are unable to relate those discrete parts to the whole idea. The curriculum should be represented holistically. The students can pay more attention to those parts that are related to them by teacher mediation.

3- Seeking and valuing students' points of view: the students' individual points of view on the material should be considered important as they are 'teacher's cues' for ensuring a successful class.

4- Addressing students' suppositions by classroom activities: all students bring to the class life experiences which are based on their beliefs about the world. Meaningful classroom experiences either support or change students' experiences by either validating or transforming these beliefs.

5- Assessing student learning in the context of teaching: assessment of student learning is not separate from the classroom's normal activities. Students are assessed while the teacher is teaching and the learners are doing activities. Both right and wrong answers are important as they give insights about the students' understanding. (p.ix)

All in all, three different learning theories were discussed in this section. Each of these theories put emphasis on some aspects of learning. Each theory is placed in a particular paradigm because they stress particular aspects of learning and ignore the others. While behaviorism concentrates on the conditioning process, cognitivism highlights the meaningful cognitive nature of learning, and constructivism underscores social interaction in learning. "However, within almost every theory, certain aspects of other paradigms can be identified" (Hergenhahn & Olson, 2005, p. 49).

Furthermore, while all these theories shed light on the nature of learning, there is no ultimate answer to 'what is learning?'. Learning is a complex process and as Hutchinson & Waters (1995, p.51) state "we still do not know very much about learning". Therefore, "which paradigm is correct? probably all of them." (Hergenhahn & Olson, 2005, p. 49). Hergenhahn & Olson (2005) are of the opinion that learning is like constructing a house. Sometimes the hammer is the most useful instrument, sometimes the screwdriver and sometimes a saw. And the students are like house builders who choose different tools in different learning situations.

2.3 COURSEBOOKS AS INSTRUCTIONAL TOOLS

This part explores coursebooks as instructional tools. Accordingly, it consists of definition of materials and coursebooks, uses of coursebooks and attitudes towards coursebooks as a central tool in ELT programs.

2.3.1 Definition of Materials and Coursebooks

Materials can be defined as anything which can be used in teaching and learning situations. Tomlinson (2002, p.xi) describes materials as "anything which is used to help to teach language learners." He states that they can include textbooks, workbooks, videos, cassettes, CDs, handouts or even a paragraph written on the board. McGrath (2002) defines *text* materials as those which are designed for teaching and learning or authentic materials which are selected by teachers for teaching purposes and also those which are generated by teachers as well as 'learner-generated" materials.

Coursebooks are also one type of materials which are usually used as the core material in a course. The aim of a coursebook is to prepare and present as much as possible the relevant materials in one book so that it can be the only book used by learners during

the course. “ Such a book usually includes work on grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation, functions and the skills of reading, writing, listening and speaking” (Tomlinson, 2002, p. ix).

2.3.2 Uses of Coursebooks

Coursebook use spreads on a continuum where on one side are teachers who follow them as closely as possible. On the other extreme are those teachers who do not use them at all. They either believe that they know their students and context better than any coursebook author, or the appropriate materials are not available for their context (as in ESP courses) and they have to develop their own materials. Meanwhile there is a third group who are in a middle situation and use the coursebooks but make the necessary changes to render them suitable for their own use. McGrath (2002) uses the term *metaphors* to describe such a situation. He states that while some believe in *control*, some others believe in *choice* and somewhere between the two are those who believe in *support.*

Some of the factors that may influence the degree of dependence or autonomy in using coursebooks are as follows:

- Type of educational system
- Syllabus/materials imposed by education authorities
- Culture and expectations of learners
- Nature and amount of training for teachers
- Teachers’ experience and confidence
- Teachers’ command of English (if non-native speakers)
- Availability of alternative coursebooks and resources for materials production (Cunningsworth, 1995, p. 11)

Meanwhile, most of the Iranian teachers seem to fall into the first group of coursebook users who follow the book as closely as possible. This situation in Iran can be

explained by the above mentioned factors proposed by Cunningsworth. That is, the coursebooks, for all grades in school, are prescribed by the Ministry of Education in Iran. In addition, the system of testing follows the imposed coursebooks and even the University Entrance Exam is based on the coursebooks introduced by the educational authorities. Therefore, the students expect the teachers to follow the coursebooks as close as possible. Furthermore, the coursebooks are the main source of language for Iranian teachers who are non-native speakers of English. Besides, these teachers usually do not receive any training on material development and evaluation. When all these factors are considered, teachers' close adherence to the coursebooks seems justifiable.

2.3.3 Attitudes towards Coursebooks

Coursebooks are the crucial elements of almost any ELT program. In fact, teachers, learners and materials are the most common features of ELT classrooms (Richards, 1998). However, as stated earlier there are different attitudes on using coursebooks as the base of language teaching. There appear to be a controversy between different theorists on emphasising the advantages or disadvantages of using the coursebooks.

McGrath (2006) asked two groups, teachers and students, to write their views on coursebooks using a metaphor. The responses revealed some different attitudes. He categorized the teachers' responses into four groups: *guidance*, *support*, *resource* and *constraint*. *Guidance* is at the top which shows "the apparent acceptance by teachers of at least some degree of *control by* the textbook and towards the bottom, at the level of recourse a willingness by the teachers to *take control of* the coursebook" (ibid. p. 174). The first three categories imply a relatively positive attitude towards the coursebook. However, the last one, constraint, contains a negative feeling towards them.

On the whole, on the one hand, there are those who express their concern about basing teaching on coursebooks. The main issue for this group is that they believe that using ready made coursebooks makes the teachers dependent. This makes the teachers rely too much on the book in order to do the real work of teaching. Richards (1998) suggests that most coursebooks, by making decisions, deprive teachers of decision making. He argues that this situation can reduce the role of the teacher and at worst results in *deskilling* the teachers.

Another potential negative impact of using coursebooks according to Richards (ibid.) is *reification*. He states that teachers may believe that coursebooks are carefully developed and tested by experts and specialists in the field. So, they may suppose that they do not have the knowledge and authority to make any changes in the book. As a result teachers fail to look at the book critically and assume that books are superior to their own teaching decisions. This may change the role of the teacher and reduce his/her role as a practitioner.

Richards (1998) summarizes the reasons for discouraging the use of coursebooks as follows:

- Teacher-made materials are more relevant and appropriate.
- Textbooks cannot provide the basis for a comprehensive language course.
- Textbooks are often culturally biased.
- Textbooks are not compatible with a learner-centered philosophy of teaching.
- Textbooks should not be needed by good teachers, who can create their own materials. (pp. 126-127)

He maintains that in spite of the above mentioned statements, the situations in which the coursebooks are not used are in the minority.

Another issue in this field is raised by Allwright (1981, p. 8) who declares that "the whole business of the management of language is far too complex to be satisfactorily catered for by a pre-packaged set of decisions embodied in teaching materials." He (ibid., p. 6) also describes a *deficiency view* of the coursebooks which is based on the assumption that teachers cannot be trusted and the materials are needed to save the learners from teachers' *deficiencies* and to make sure that the syllabus is covered as far as possible.

On the other hand, those who are more optimistic about coursebooks believe that coursebooks can help both teachers and students. They argue that ready made coursebooks make the teachers free from the heavy and time consuming task of material development which instead they can spend on teaching and learners. Furthermore, coursebooks can give cohesion to the teaching and learning process (Mares, 2002). Hutchinson and Torres (1994, p. 327) are of the opinion that education is a complex and messy matter. What the coursebook does is to "create a degree of order within potential chaos." In addition, while the syllabus clarifies aims, objectives and content of the course the materials can "put flesh on the bones of these specifications" (Nunan, 1991, p. 208).

Sheldon (1988, p.238) asserts that the coursebooks are "the invisible heart of any ELT program for both teachers and students". He also states that coursebooks are seen by many as the route map of the ELT program which show "its shape, structure and destination with progress …" (ibid). By referring to the psychological effects of using coursebooks, he suggests that students put more credibility on the coursebooks than the teacher-made materials even though the coursebooks may be inadequate.

Adding to the list of the advantages of coursebook, Grant (1994) indicates that coursebooks can identify what should be taught and learnt and determine the methods

which should be used. They can also save the teachers' time and can be a useful learning aid for the students. Richards (2007) who is favorable towards the use of coursebooks is of the opinion that they provide the content of the lessons, help to standardize the instruction and supply practice and language source for the students while supporting inexperienced teachers to plan and teach. He (1998) also declares that if the teachers have to prepare their own materials, they will need some training in developing materials. This will be an additional responsibility for the teacher who will need a reduction in teaching load so that they can undertake this extra responsibility.

Such a view is also held by Cunningsworth (1995, p. 7) who believes that coursebooks are the source of achieving aims and objectives that have been set in terms of the learner needs. He also states that apart from being a resource for language, activities, ideas, grammar, vocabulary and syllabus, they can be a resource for self-directed learning as well as a support for less experienced teachers. Another point of view regarding the advantages of coursebooks is that they usually represent the new theories and approaches of teaching that results in researched-based coursebooks which are developed by experts (Richards, 1998).

McGrath (2002) summarizes the most frequent arguments in relation to the advantages of using coursebooks in terms of the teachers' and learners' needs as follows:

Why teachers and learners need a coursebook?
- A coursebook is a map. It shows where one is going and where one has been.
- It provides language samples.
- It offers variety.

Why learners need coursebook?
- It defines what is to be learned and what will be tested.

- It reinforces what the teacher has done and makes revision and preparation possible.

Why teachers need a coursebook?
- It provides a structure for teaching.
- It saves time.
- It offers linguistic, cultural and methodological support.
- It is easy to keep track of what you have done and to tell others where you have reached. (pp. 10-11)

It appears that both parties agree on the important role that coursebooks play in ELT programs but they look at it from two different angles. Most educators emphasize the effective use of coursebooks by teachers and learners. On the whole, it is generally accepted that coursebooks can: offer a syllabus, show the route, create a sense of security and progress to both teachers and learners, save time and energy of the teacher and provide language samples. Furthermore, the organization of the materials and type of content and activities are important in shaping the students' view of language. However, there is no single coursebook which fits all the learning and teaching contexts. As Sheldon (1988, p. 238) reminds us "the fact is that coursebooks are *here* … [it] generates expectations about what it [coursebook] should contain, what it should look like and how it should be used." It is a good idea to use any suitable coursebook but the main point is that teachers must judge and decide which parts of the book are appropriate for their use and how they want to use it (McGrath, 2002).

2.4 MATERIAL EVALUATION

This part deals with the evaluation of materials. To this end, it starts with the definition of evaluation. This is followed by a discussion on types of material evaluation.

The next part elaborates on the importance of material evaluation. The final part explores different schemes in coursebook evaluation.

2.4.1 Definition of Evaluation

Evaluation, as the term itself indicates, is about putting a value on somebody or something. It is a process that starts with determining the criteria for evaluation and continues with gathering information and ends with findings that show the extent of the match between our set criteria and the person or thing being evaluated.

In the field of language teaching and learning, evaluation is defined (Nunan, 1999a) as the collection and interpretation of information about different aspects of the curriculum such as teachers, learners, learning, materials, etc.

It is suggested (Nunan, 1999a) that any aspect of the curriculum including program goals and objectives, materials, learning activities, teacher performance etc. may be evaluated because any of these may affect the learners' progress.

Tomlinson (2002, p. xi) describes material evaluation as "the systematic appraisal of the value of materials in relation to their objectives and to the objectives of the learners using them."

Based on Tomlinson (2003) some of the aims of the coursebook evaluation are to measure all or some of the followings:

- the appeal of the materials to the learners
- the credibility of the materials to learners, teachers and administrators
- the validity of the materials
- the reliability of the materials

- the ability of the materials to interest the learners and the teachers

- the ability of the materials to motivate the learners

- the learners' perceptions of the value of the materials

- the teachers' perceptions of the value of the materials (p. 15)

2.4.2 Types of Coursebook Evaluation

Regarding the time or phase of the evaluation, three types of material evaluation have been suggested by Cunningsworth (1995) and Tomlinson (2002): pre-use evaluation, in-use (whilst-use) evaluation and post-use evaluation.

The first type, pre-use, is used in order to select an appropriate coursebook to be used by a particular group of learners in future. The purpose is to predict the potential value of the materials. It is mostly concerned with selecting appropriate materials for a particular group of learners. Ellis (1997) introduced the term *predictive* for this type of evaluation. He (ibid.) suggests two ways of doing it for teachers: teachers can rely on the evaluation of the experts which are published in the journals or they can do it themselves with the help of the numerous guidelines and checklists.

The second type of the evaluation, in-use, refers to the evaluation of coursebooks while they are being used. Its focus is on the extent to which the materials are helping the learner. It can provide teachers with information about whether there is a need for adoption or supplementary materials.

The third type of evaluation, post-use, which is also referred to by Ellis (1997) as *retrospective* evaluation is based on the assessment of the coursebook after it has been used by learners. Its aim is to investigate what learners have learnt or have not learnt, i.e. what

they were supposed to learn. This type of evaluation can provide information on the shortcomings and strengths of the coursebook so that decisions can be made on whether to use it again, discard it or to modify and select some supplementary materials. Ellis (1991, p. 37) has also referred to this issue by emphasizing the post-use (retrospective) evaluations as they provide information for the teachers to decide "whether it is worthwhile using the material again" and how to adapt them for more "effective" use in future.

Although post-use evaluation has a special importance, there are very few published works on it and there is very little information on how to conduct it (Ellis, ibid.). While it is generally stated that the real value of materials will be revealed when they are used in the classroom, it is surprising that the focus of attention has been on the pre-use evaluation. As Ellis (ibid.) states, by reviewing the literature on material evaluation it becomes clear that the pre-use (predictive) evaluation has been the focus of attention. The reason can be the fact that after using the materials teachers know what they should know during the course so they feel there is no need for any formal evaluation (Ellis, 1997& 2002).

McGrath (2002) is of the same opinion when he declares that except for a few cases very little research has been done on in-use and post-use evaluation. He proposes that the reason can be that the writers think that the pre-use is more important than in-use and post-use evaluation, or perhaps the time is not available or those who do them (in-use or post-use evaluation) are too busy to write about what they do. However, coursebook evaluation is not "a one-time activity". Although some part of the material evaluation can be done outside the classroom, after a book is selected, its success or failure can only be evaluated during and after its use in relation to real learners and in real classrooms (Sheldon, 1988; Nunan, 1999a).

Because of the importance of the post-use evaluation and its role in the improvement of the EFL program and the paucity of research on this aspect of evaluation, this study will try to elicit the teachers' and students' perceptions on pre-university level coursebook used in the Iranian schools.

2.4.3 The Importance of Coursebook Evaluation

In the previous sections the important role of the coursebooks in ELT programs and the different roles and advantages of coursebooks were discussed. It was also described that there is a certain amount of controversy associated with the use of coursebooks. But the important point is that both parties agree on the important role of the coursebooks in language learning and teaching.

Coursebooks represent "aims, values and methods in a particular teaching/learning situation" (Hutchinson & Waters, 1987, p. 37) and sometimes are the initial teaching/learning aid which have an influence on what teachers teach and to some extent what learners learn (Cunningsworth, 1995; McGrath 2006). In this situation, a precise evaluation can save a lot of expense and also eliminate the teachers and learners disappointment (Hutchinson & Waters, 1987). As Skierso (1991, p. 441) reminds us, the heavy reliance on the coursebook in ELT programs and "the fact that the teachers and students use the textbook and its ancillary materials as their central guiding force proves the importance of selecting an appropriate text." Sheldon (1988, p. 237) adds another aspect to the importance of material evaluation by stating that choosing a particular coursebook involves "considerable professional, financial and even political investment."

Moreover, it is also important to consider that a coursebook which is appropriate in a context may not work well in another because of the differences in their goals and

aims. As Williams (1983) points out “any textbook should be used judiciously, since it cannot cater equally to the requirements of every classroom setting.” In parallel to this point Cunningsworth (1995) insists on the careful selection of the materials which are in close relation to the goals and methods of the teaching situation. He also argues that “the coursebooks should not determine the aims” nor be the teachers’ and learners’ “master” but be at their “service” (ibid. p.7).

One more reason for material evaluation is introduced by Cunningsworth (ibid). He suggests that material evaluation and analysis is useful in teacher training and teacher development. In the first case it serves two purposes: it familiarizes the student teachers with the important features of the coursebooks which should be considered and also acquaints them with various published materials. In the case of teacher development, material evaluation can help the teachers to obtain useful insights and information on the nature of the materials.

In Iran the Ministry of Education determines the syllabus and the coursebooks which must be used in schools. Every year in Iran millions of students use the English coursebooks which are prescribed by the ministry for different grades. The large number of students, their time and energy, their learning experience and level of proficiency in English as well as the great budget which is being spent by the government on free education makes the importance of choosing the best material more and more necessary. As Cunningsworth (1995) emphasizes, in these situations it is completely important to make sure that the selected coursebooks are the best and most appropriate.

Generally, Iranian students have little exposure to the English language outside the classroom. They also have very little chance to use English in their daily lives. For most of

them school is their only place for exposure and coursebooks are their only recourse of language. They rely heavily on their teachers and coursebooks for learning the English language. Besides, as the teachers are non-native speakers of English the coursebooks are the initial source of teaching tools and materials for their teaching.

The statements made by Richards (1998) may best reflect the dominant situation of coursebooks in Iranian schools:

> In many schools and language programs the textbooks used in the classroom *are* the curriculum. If one wants to determine the objectives of a language program, the kind of syllabus being used, the skills being taught, the content the students will study, and the assumptions about teaching and learning that the course embodies, it is often necessary to look no further than the textbooks used in the program itself. (p. 125)

In summary, the important roles of coursebooks in Iranian schools and the heavy reliance on them both by the learners and teachers, in addition to the fact that they are almost the only source of language for learners makes the evaluation of the coursebooks extremely crucial. To this end, the aim of this study is to discover the teachers' and students' perceptions on the pre-university level English coursebook.

2.4.4 Coursebook Evaluation Schemes

The evaluation of teaching materials has gained a lot of attention in recent decades. Although the literature on the subject of material evaluation is not extensive, a large number of checklists have been proposed by various writers in order to help teachers to choose the most appropriate coursebook for their use (e.g. Tucker, 1975; Allwright, 1981; Williams, 1983; Breen & Candlin, 1987; Grant, 1987; Skierso, 1991; Sheldon, 1988; McDonough & Shaw, 1993; Cunningworth, 1995; Littlejohn, 2002). Due to the large number of these checklists only a few of them are discussed in this section.

One of the earliest checklists was provided by Williams (1983). His framework takes into account “a number of assumptions about second language teaching” (ibid. p. 251). His basic assumptions (ibid. p.252) are as follows:

- up-to-date methodology of L2 learning,
- guidance for non-native speakers of English,
- needs of learners,
- relevance to socio-cultural environment.

Then, he suggests linguistic, pedagogical and technical criteria related to these assumptions. His framework consists of 28 items which come under the main categories of *general, speech, grammar, vocabulary, reading, writing* and *technical.* As Williams (ibid. p. 252) himself states, his criteria are a combination of just linguistic and pedagogical elements of language.

Another framework was offered by Grant four years later, in 1987. He suggests three stages for material evaluation: *initial evaluation*, *detailed evaluation* and *in-use evaluation*. The purpose of the first stage, initial evaluation, is to decide whether the textbook is worth detailed evaluation or not. He proposes a practical test for the *initial* stage called ‘CATALYST’ which stands for: Communicative, Aims, Teachable, Available, Level, Your impression, Students interest, Tried and tested. For the second stage, *detailed evaluation*, he suggests (ibid. p. 121) three main questions as follows:

- Does the coursebook suit your students?
- Does it suit the teacher?
- Does it suit the syllabus?

Each of these main questions consists of 10 detailed questions. The third stage of evaluation, *in-use*, refers to the continuous evaluation of the adopted book, i.e. to check the appropriateness of the chosen book.

Of course, Grant (1994) adds that such a questionnaire, however elaborate, may not give a conclusive answer to the final test: “does it work in the classroom?”

The main criticism leveled at it is by McGrath (2002) who contends that by putting an equal number of questions (ten) for each part, Grant puts equal values for those categories. McGrath (2002, p. 42) argues that “the approach is based on two false premises: that the individual items within each category are equal in importance, and the categories are themselves equally important.” Furthermore, similar to most other checklists he also stops in the *in-use* stage and does not take into account the *post-use* stage.

Sheldon (1988) introduces an inclusive checklist for coursebook evaluation. The checklist includes two main phases: *factual details* and *assessment*. The first part, *factual* details, including 13 items, is concerned with the information about the book such as the title, authors, date of publication, etc. The second part, *assessment*, consists of 53 questions which come under the main 17 topics: *rationale*, *availability*, *user definition*, *layout/graphics*, *accessibility*, *linkage*, *selection/grading*, *physical characteristics*, *appropriacy*, *authenticity*, *sufficiency*, *cultural bias*, *educational validity*, *stimulus/practice/revision*, *flexibility*, *guidance and overall value of money*. His checklist is described by Nunan (1991) as an elaborate checklist which can help in selecting the materials.

In a detailed checklist, Skierso (1991) proposes three main categories for evaluation: *the textbook*, *the teacher’s manual*, and *overall value*. These main categories include several other sub-categories. The whole checklist involves 104 evaluation questions which are based on the following evaluation criteria:

- The textbook:
  A. Bibliographical Data
  B. Aims and Goals
  C. Subject matter
  D. Vocabulary and structure
  E. Exercises and activities
  F. Layout and physical makeup
- The teacher's manual:
  A. General features
  B. Supplementary exercises for each language skill
  C. Methodological and pedagogical guidance
  D. Linguistic background information
- Overall value (1991, p. 440)

Skierso (1991, p.444) declares that his checklist is "comprehensive" and it is not necessary to use all parts of it entirely. He suggests that evaluators "custom-make" their own evaluation checklists by choosing the items related to their "program and situation."

In another framework, McDonough and Shaw (1993) organize the questions in their evaluation checklist into two parts: an *external* evaluation which is followed by an *in-depth internal* evaluation. They define the external evaluation of materials as the *overview* from the outside including: cover, table of content and introduction. They express their aim of the external evaluation as being to find out the organization of the materials by looking through the "blurb" or what has been claimed on the cover and also by examining the introduction and table of contents. They believe that the table of contents is a "bridge" between the external claim and the materials which are presented inside the book. They state that the aim of the internal evaluation is to check to what extent the information of the external evaluation matches with the inside materials. In this (internal) evaluation they are interested in the presentation of skills, the grading and sequencing of the material, skills,

exercises, learning styles as well as the materials' sufficiency in motivating the teachers and the students.

In a very comprehensive work Cunningsworth (1995), one of the leading scholars, introduces an inclusive framework for coursebook evaluation. In his book, *Choosing Your Coursebook*, different types and purposes of evaluation as well as guidelines for material evaluation have been explored. He identifies some general guidelines and criteria which are illustrated by clear examples from published materials. His checklist consists of eight sections including: *aims and approaches*, *design and organization*, *language content*, *skills*, *topic*, *methodology*, *teacher's book* and *practical considerations*. He presents a very detailed checklist for every category. He (ibid.) also introduces four guidelines which he states "underlie" most of the evaluation criteria in his book (*Choosing Your Coursebook*). According to these guidelines coursebooks should:

- correspond to learner's needs and match the aims and objectives of the language-learning program;
- reflect the uses (present or future) which learners will make of the language and help to equip students to use language effectively for their own purpose;
- take account of students' needs as learners and facilitate their learning processes, without dogmatically imposing a rigid 'method';
- have a clear role as a support for learning. Like teachers, they mediate between the target language and the learner (pp.15-16).

Concentrating on the pedagogical viewpoint, Littlejohn (2002) differentiates between *analyzing materials* and analyzing *in-use-materials*. His concern is with analyzing materials 'as they are', not what happens when the material are taught in the classrooms. He believes that there is a need to separate "assumptions about what is desirable from an analysis of the material" (ibid., p. 192). To this end, he pays attention to three important questions: first, what aspects of material should we examine? Second, how can we examine

materials? And third, how can we relate the findings to our own teaching context? With regard to the first question, he identifies two main dimensions: *publication* which refers to the physical aspects of the material and *design* which relates to "the thinking underlying the materials" (ibid., p. 193). The *design* involves considering the aims, selection and sequencing principles, subject matter, types of teaching/learning activities, participation, learners' and teachers' roles and the role of materials as a whole (ibid., p.193). Littlejohn maintains that his concern is to enable a close analysis of materials themselves as a support to designing them.

By reviewing these checklists some similarities can be found amongst them. The most important similarity may be the point that almost all of them are concerned with pre-use and very rarely with in-use evaluation. Another similarity of these checklists lies in the criteria they have suggested for evaluation. For example, *physical aspects*, *organizational characteristics*, *language content*, *skills*, *subject matters* as well as *exercises* are the criteria that appear in most of them.

On the other hand, they may differ "in their scope, form, detailed criteria and the terms used to describe criteria" (McGrath, 2002). Furthermore, some of these dissimilarities refer to the change in priorities of language teaching (Rubdy, 2003). While in the early days coursebooks included mostly readings along with some comprehension questions and some sentences to translate, now they offer a complete "package" for language teaching and learning (Littlejohn, 2002). Writers and publishers are also more careful about the sensitive issues such as culture, social matters, sex and ethnocentrism. While these factors were not so important once, they have been introduced by some writers as a criterion for evaluating a coursebook.

Most of the checklists deal with pre-use evaluation. Commenting on this issue, Nunan (1991) argues that although these checklists are very valuable, they evaluate the material mainly during the pre-use stage. Most of the questions which are asked, such as availability, rationale and layout, are related to out-of-class issues. However, any comprehensive evaluation needs to collect data on the actual use of the materials in the classroom. But, as Ellis (2002) points out, the guidelines which have been designed for pre-use evaluation can also be used for post-use evaluation.

Although using checklists are very useful as they are the result of experience and piloting, the important point is that obtaining a conclusive checklist which can be used by every person in every situation is difficult. Some of the offered checklists may be too complex and time consuming or too simple to be used without making any adaptation. Actually no one is sure which criteria are functional in ELT contexts globally. Although Sheldon (1988) emphasizes the need for a systematic evaluation of material, he declares that the criteria cannot be applied in every situation without making considerable adaptation.

Another issue is that the criteria become dated by the passage of time. McGrath (2002) refers to this fact by declaring that checklists date as fast as the materials. He suggests that the change in the materials should be reflected in the checklists. He concludes that in using a checklist which has been designed by another person, we need to make every necessary change to make it suitable for our own use.

Moreover, frameworks and evaluation checklists “cannot provide a foolproof formula by which all materials can be unerringly judged” for (Sheldon, 1987, p. 5). In

addition, the coursebook evaluation is basically “a rule of thumb activity” that “no neat formula, grid or system will ever provide a definite yardstick” (Sheldon, 1988, p. 245).

In summary, various frameworks have been offered by different authors. There are similarities as well as differences among them. Some part of these dissimilarities refers to the priorities that have been given to different criteria by different authors. Another point is that the changes in teaching/learning theories have caused changes in the coursebooks which have led to the changes in the criteria for material evaluation. Furthermore, the majority of the frameworks seem to be more suitable for pre-use evaluation. Meanwhile, the most important issue is that, not every checklist is suitable for use in every situation. According to one’s specific context, objectives and goals of the evaluation, the change and adaptation of the evaluative lists seems vital.

To this end, this study adapts some of the useful checklists which have been offered by different authors, and these adapted criteria from theory and practice in the field are used for evaluating the Pre-university English coursebook used in Iran. The section below describes how this final checklist was arrived at.

2.5 EVALUATION CRITERIA

In previous sections the importance of coursebooks as instructional tools and the importance of evaluating the coursebooks were discussed. Also, the different checklists offered by different researchers were debated. Furthermore, as stated earlier, not every checklist is appropriate for evaluation of any set of materials. The criteria for coursebook evaluation may be used according to the needs of the researchers and also the objectives of the evaluation. Coursebooks can be evaluated in terms of different criteria. However, “effective evaluation depends on asking appropriate questions” (Cunningsworth, 1995,

p.vi). Moreover, delimiting the criteria of evaluation is of great significance. Otherwise, the evaluation process could be completely complex and confusing which would not lead to the desired results.

To this end, some specific criteria have been chosen for the present study. These criteria have been selected by looking at theory and research in material evaluation. The different checklists offered by authors and also those which have been used by researchers in the field were examined carefully (Ansary & Babaii, 2003; Chastain, 1971; Cunningsworth, 1995; Litz, 2005; Skierso, 1991; Tekir & Arikan, 2007 to name but a few). Considering the objective of this research which is more concerned with the pedagogical aspects of the coursebook, five criteria have been decided upon, which are felt to be appropriate for the purposes of this research. These criteria are: objectives; language content; language skills; topics/themes; and exercises and activities. In addition, each criterion is subdivided into more specific questions. Each of these five criteria is discussed in detail in the following parts.

2.5.1 Criteria for Objectives

Objectives are one of the principle aspects of any coursebook. The objectives give insight to learners on what they are supposed to achieve by using the coursebook. Brown (1995, p.73) defines objectives as "specific statements that describe the particular knowledge, behavior, and/or skills that the learner will be expected to know or perform at the end of a course or program." In other words, objectives of a coursebook are claims that are made by the authors about the book. McDonough & Shaw (1996) describe this as the "blurbs" and Cunningsworth (1984) refers to it as what the coursebooks say about themselves.

In evaluating the coursebooks the criteria which have been suggested or used by different authors and researchers for objectives are as follows:

♦ Objective(s) need to be stated explicitly (Brown, 1995; Ansary& Babaii, 2003; Jahangard, 2007).

♦ The objective(s) of coursebook should accord closely with the objectives of teaching program and students (Skierso, 1991; Brown, 1995; Cunningsworth, 1995; Sorohiti, 2005; Inal, 2006).

In the case of this study, as far as the researcher is concerned, no documented objectives for the English program for the pre-university level in Iran were found. As a result, the accordance between the objectives of the coursebook and the program will not be considered. Therefore, the objectives of the materials will be evaluated only in accordance with the students' objectives in relation to learning English. Furthermore, as the present study is concerned with *post-use* evaluation (see section 2.4.2) of the coursebook, the achievement of the claimed objectives of the coursebook and also the achievement of the students' objectives at the end of its use will be investigated too. To this end, the criteria used for objectives in this research will include:

1- explicit statement of the objectives of the coursebook

2- accordance of the coursebook's objectives with students' objectives

3- achievement of the claimed objectives of the coursebook at the end of the program

4- achievement of the objectives of the students at the end of the program

2.5.2 Language Content

Language content is one of the criteria that has been emphasized and used in many checklists and studies. Language content, i.e. "grammar, vocabulary and phonology form

the foundation of everything else that contributes to the complex process of the language teaching" (Cunningsworth, 1995, p. 31). Thus, phonology, grammar and vocabulary have been identified as elements of language content. However, as the coursebook under study does not cover phonology, only grammar and vocabulary are included in this study. In the following two parts the criteria for grammar and vocabulary are discussed.

2.5.2.1 Criteria for Grammar/Structure

Grammar is an important component probably in every language program. However, its role has been controversial in the history of the ELT. In spite of this fact, Brown (2001) remarks that almost everybody agree on teaching grammar but the point is that they may disagree on how and to what extent it should be taught. According to Cunningsworth (1995, p. 32) "it is the effective teaching of grammar that distinguishes a true language course from a phrasebook"

Consequently, grammar/structure has got the attention of the material evaluators too. The following criteria have been selected by examining the theory and practice in the field of coursebook evaluation:

1- There should be emphasis on language form (Cunningsworth, 1995; Tekir & Arikan, 2007).

2- The grammatical points should be presented in an appropriate sequence (Skierso, 1991; Tekir & Arikan, 2007).

3- The number of grammatical points should be appropriate for the learners' level (Skierso, 1991; Tekir & Arikan, 2007).

4- The grammar points should be presented clearly (Skierso, 1991; Tekir & Arikan, 2007).

5- There should be balance between language form and language use (Cunningsworth, 1995; Stranks, 2003; Tekir & Arikan, 2007).

6- Grammar rules should be introduced in meaningful contexts (Skierso, 1991; Tekir & Arikan, 2007).

The above mentioned criteria for grammar/structure gathered from theory and practice in the field are used as the criteria for grammar/structure in the present study. Furthermore, the present research is a post-use evaluation of the coursebook and one of the primary aims of post-use evaluation is to find out what students have learnt by using the coursebook. Moreover, as Cunningsworth (1995, p. 32) emphasizes "it is an understanding of and an ability to use grammar that equip learners with the ability to create their own utterances and use language for their own purposes". Therefore, two more criteria have been added to the previously mentioned criteria for grammar and structure. They are as follows:

7- The students should be able to use the grammatical points in their writings.

8- The students should be able to use the grammatical points in their speaking.

2.5.2.2 Criteria for Vocabulary

Vocabulary is a significant feature which has a vital role in language teaching and learning. The ultimate goal of language learning is communication where one can convey meaning and meaning is "expressed above all through vocabulary" (Grauberg, 1997, p. 5). Furthermore, vocabulary supports language use through the language skills of listening, speaking, reading and writing (Nation, 2003).

The following criteria have been selected by looking at theory and practice for the evaluation of the vocabulary component in the coursebooks. They are as follows:

1- Vocabulary should be noticed in text through features such as putting the word in italics or bold type, by defining them in the text, or in a glossary or a list at the beginning of the text or by getting the learners to look it up in a dictionary (Nation, 2003).

2- The vocabulary items that have been introduced should be retrieved by receptive retrieval or productive retrieval through four skills of listening, speaking, reading and writing (Nation, 2003).

3- The vocabulary should be presented in a structured, purposeful way (For example: words should be presented with their synonyms or antonyms or they relate to sports, politics and transportation) (Cunningsworth, 1995).

4- The vocabulary load should be reasonable for the students' level (Skierso, 1991; Cunningsworth, 1995; Tekir & Arikan, 2007).

5- The vocabulary should be introduced in appropriate contexts (Williams, 1983; Skierso, 1991; McCarthy, 2003).

6- New vocabulary should be practiced and recycled in subsequent lessons (Skierso, 1991; Tekir & Arikan, 2007).

7- The text should make the vocabulary easily accessible to the learners, through summaries of new words and phrases (Sheldon, 1987; Skierso, 1991; McDonough & Shaw, 1996).

8- Materials should enable students to expand their own vocabulary independently by helping them to develop their own learning strategies (Cunningsworth, 1995).

The above mentioned criteria for vocabulary, gathered from theory and practice in the field are used as the criteria for vocabulary investigation in the present study.

2.5.3 Criteria for Skills

The next criteria for the present study are skills. “The skills dimension complements the dimension of grammatical/lexical/phonological knowledge and focuses on the ability of learners actually to operate in the language”(Cunningsworth, 1995, p.64). The criteria offered by most of the authors and researchers for skills put emphasis on integration of skills and balance between all the four skills in the coursebooks (Cunningsworth, 1995; Jahangard, 2007; McDonough & Shaw, 1996; Grant, 1994; Litz, 2005). However, the coursebook under study in this research is a reading book and the other three skills of listening, speaking and writing are not included in the book. Therefore, only the reading skill is considered in the present study.

According to Cunningsworth (1995) in evaluating the reading component of a coursebook the following elements should be considered:

- the quality of reading materials,
- the type of reading passage included,
- whether any help is given to learners in developing good reading strategies,
- the nature and range of exercises and activities linked to the reading passage (p.74).

Furthermore, concerning the texts themselves, Cunningsworth (ibid.) notes the following points:

- how long they are,
- what the range of vocabulary is,
- whether any specialized background knowledge is needed in order to understand them (p. 75).

Moreover, Cunningsworth (ibid.) refers to the *genre* of the reading materials. He believes the coursebooks should “use a multitude of different types, including press extracts, advertisements, instructions, recipes, information leaflets, poems, letters,

transcripts of interviews, extracts from magazine stories, questionnaire, extracts from factual books such as travel guides, and extracts from novels" (ibid. p. 75).

To this end, the following criteria for evaluating the reading component have mostly been selected from Cunningsworth's checklists by considering the other theories and practice in the field of material evaluation:

1- The length of the reading texts should be reasonable (Cunningsworth, 1995).

2- Different genres should be included (Cunningsworth, 1995).

3- Different purposes of reading should be included (e.g. enjoyment, getting information, getting instruction) (Nunan, 1999b).

4- The materials should involve the learners' knowledge of the world (Cunningsworth, 1995; Williams, 1983).

5- There should be a focus on the development of reading skills and strategies (Cunningsworth, 1995; Litz, 2005; Nunan, 1999b).

The above mentioned criteria for reading skill, gathered from theory and practice in the field are used as the criteria for reading component in the present study. Moreover, as the present study is a post-use evaluation and its aim is to find out what learners have learnt by reading the textbook, two other questions can be included. They are as follows:

6- If the reading strategies are taught, apparently the learners should learn them.

7- The students should be able to use the reading strategies that they have learnt.

2.5.4 Criteria for Subject Matter/Topics

The next element selected for the present study is a non-linguistic feature of the coursebooks, i.e. subject matter/topic. The study of only linguistic features of the language would not help the learners to use it in real world. As a result, "coursebooks must and do

represent language as it is actually used and therefore they contain subject matter and deal with topics of various kinds" (Cunningsworth, 1995, p.86), The following criteria have been selected from theory and practice in the field of material evaluation for subject matter and topics:

1- Real topics should be included (the topics should be about the real aspects of the world, instead of describing some imaginary and non-existent constructs) (Cunningsworth, 1995).

2- They should be suitable for the age group (Cunningsworth, 1995).

3- They should cover a variety of topics suitable to the interest of the learners (Cunningsworth, 1995; Skierso, 1991; Litz, 2005).

4- The topics should be interesting for the learners (Cunningsworth, 1995; Tekir & Arikan, 2007; Jahangard, 2007).

5- The subject matter/topics should not be biased culturally and portray any negative stereotypes (McDonough & Shaw 1995; Skierso, 1991; Litz, 2005; Cunningsworth, 1995).

The above mentioned criteria for subject matter/topic, gathered from theory and practice in the field will be used as the criteria for subject matter/topic in the present study.

2.5.5 Criteria for Exercises and Activities

The last criteria selected for the present research are exercises and activities. They are an important part of every coursebook. After the new materials are introduced, the students should have a chance to practice these points and internalize them. The activities and exercises provide an opportunity for the learners to produce their own piece of language. These criteria have been included in almost most of the checklists and studies in material evaluation (Litz, 2005; Tekir & Arikan, 2007; Skierso, 1991; Ansari, 2003).

The following criteria have been selected from theory and practice in the field of material evaluation:

1- The activities should focus on both accurate and fluent production of language (Litz, 2005; Skierso, 1991; Grant, 1994; Dougil, 1987).

2- They should incorporate individual, pair and group work (Litz, 2005).

3- The activities should promote creative, original and independent responses (Litz, 2005; Dougil, 1987).

4- The exercises should be conducive to the internalization of newly introduced language (Litz, 2005; Tekir & Arikan, 2007; Skierso, 1991).

5- There should be a variety of activities in the coursebook (Tekir & Arikan, 2007; Ansari & Babaii, 2003)

6- The activities should be pitched at the right level for the students (Tekir & Arikan, 2007; Skierso, 1991).

7- The instructions to the activities should be clear and appropriate (Skierso, 1991; Jahangard, 2007; Ansari & Babaii, 2003).

8- The activities should be interesting for the learners (Inal, 2006).

9- The activities should reflect the objectives (Chastain, 1971).

The above mentioned criteria for activities and exercises, gathered from theory and practice in the field will be used as the criteria for activities and exercises in the present study.

2.6 RELATED STUDIES

As it was explained at 2.2.4 section of this chapter, various checklists are suggested by different authors to help the teachers and researchers to evaluate the coursebooks.

Although the literature in the field of empirical coursebook research is not extensive, almost all of the researchers have adopted and adapted checklists of one kind or another. This part deals with several studies in the field of coursebook evaluation carried out in different contexts. One study each from Turkey, Korea, Indonesia, and Malaysia and two studies from Iran are examined.

Tekir and Arikan (2007) carried out a study to evaluate the English coursebooks which were written by Turkish writers for the 7th grade students. Their aim was to study the 7th grade students' and teachers' perceptions towards the coursebook. They also intended to compare the perceptions of these two groups. Their participants were 50 English teachers and 80 seventh grade students. Their only tool of study was a Likert scale questionnaire to be filled out by students and teachers and an open-ended item for the teachers. Tekir and Arikan used five criteria for their evaluation which were: physical appearance, aims and goals, subject matter, vocabulary and structure, and exercises and activities. Each of these criteria also included several questions. On the whole the teachers' questionnaire contained 47 items while the students' questionnaire included 30 items. Their findings revealed that the teachers and the students had rather negative feelings about the textbook under study. However, the teachers had more negative feelings than the students. They concluded that some supplementary materials were needed.

However, the study suffers from a number of limitations. As the researchers themselves confessed, the tool they used was limited only to questionnaire and probably the students did not have enough experience and information on answering the questionnaires. It is probable that some other tools of gathering data could have helped them to gather more precise data.

Furthermore, their method of study was quantitative. Therefore, in order to make generalizations, mentioning sampling and sample size is of great importance. However, there was no reference to the size of the population and whether the coursebook was used nationwide or in a limited context. In this situation their findings might be limited to the context of the study and could not be generalized to other situations.

In another study Litz (2005) evaluated a coursebook (English Firsthand 2) which was used at a South Korean university when he conducted the study. He evaluated the book by using seven criteria: textbook package, layout and design, activities and tasks, skills, language type and content, subject and content and conclusion. These criteria were based on a selection from Williams (1983), Sheldon (1988), Brown (1995), Cunningsworth (1995) and Harmer (1996). Litz's study comprised two phases: he conducted a needs analysis to find out whether the textbook under study met the needs of the students or not. He also administered a questionnaire to gather data on students' and teachers' perceptions towards the coursebook. He stated that the two phases were conducted at the same time. The students' questionnaire included 25 items while the instructors' questionnaire included 40 items. Eight instructors and five hundred students were involved in his study. Litz (2007) concluded his study, thus: "EF2 (English Firsthand2) can be neither whole-heartedly recommended nor unreservedly utilized in this particular teaching and learning situation."

However, the study can be criticized on several counts. Though the study included two phases of conducting needs analysis and finding out the teachers' and students' perception towards the coursebook, during the discussion and conclusion there was no reference to the needs analysis. The findings of the coursebook evaluation were discussed without comparing to the needs of the students. Therefore, the aim of conducting the needs analysis remains unclear in the study.

One more criticism that can be leveled at this study is that Litz used a 10 point Likert scale item. The options ranged from 1 for strongly disagree to 10 for strongly agree. It appears completely confusing when answering the questions. For instance, how can one distinguish the difference between 6 and 7? Or how 5 can be defined in comparison to 4? The distinction between the points of the scale appears difficult which can most probably affect the findings of the study.

Moreover, another problem in his report of study refers to the data analysis. In no instance does the author refer to how the data of the needs analysis and the questionnaire were analyzed and interpreted. This issue can certainly affect the reliability of the research.

In one more study, Sorohiti (2005) analyzed the Indonesian national English textbook. In her study she investigated the degree of the match between the textbook and the learning objectives, themes and functional skills recommended by the curriculum. She limited her study to analyzing the form of the tasks and did not consider their effectiveness. For her analysis, Sorohiti adapts the checklist from Litteljohn (2002). Following Littlejohn's framework, Sorohiti analyses the materials as they are and is not concerned with what will happen when those materials are used in the classroom. She relies only on her own perception and analysis.

However, as the coursebook is used nationwide and teachers and students are the two important stakeholders, excluding these elements from the study does not seem reasonable. Sorohiti studied the match between the coursebook and the curriculum. However, the point is that matching of the coursebook with the teachers' and students' needs and wants (the important users of the coursebook) is ignored.

In another study which was conducted by Ho (1995), she evaluated the Headway coursebooks. She has conducted her evaluation by following Cunningsworth (1984)'s model. She has evaluated the books in terms of four skills (listening, reading, speaking and writing), grammar and vocabulary.

Like Sorohiti (2005), Ho has ignored the main stakeholders, i.e., teachers and students. Her evaluation is based mainly on her own interpretations and view points. Furthermore, she has limited her evaluation to giving view points on different aspects of the coursebooks without making any conclusion about the whole book. After reading the study the question that remains unanswered is that what is the result and use of this study.

In a study which Jahangard (2007) carried out in Iran, he attempted to evaluate the coursebooks which were used in the Iranian secondary schools. He has chosen ten different evaluation checklists proposed by different authors and has adopted 13 common features from among them. He has evaluated the four books against those 13 criteria. He has found out that these books have some weaknesses which need consideration.

Although his study is valuable and reveals some useful information about these books, it suffers from a few weaknesses. The study was carried out based only on the researcher's own perception and analysis. Like Sorohiti (2005), Jahangard ignores the teachers' and the students' perceptions towards the coursebooks. However, Sorohiti's analysis seems more objective than Jahangard's. Some of the criteria which Jahangard has used are completely subjective where different people may have different views about them. For instance, some of them (the criteria) are related to interesting topics and tasks, clear and attractive layout, easy-to-read print and appropriate visual materials. However, while the book may seem boring to one person, another person may find it completely

interesting. Therefore, some of his study's results and interpretations cannot go beyond this study.

In one more study Razmjoo (2007) tries to investigate the extent to which the coursebooks used in the Iranian high schools and private institutes represent the Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) principles. Therefore, he examines the high school coursebooks and Interchange Series. For this study, Razmjoo states that he designed a hybrid evaluation scheme by referring to the literature. However, surprisingly, a study of some of his references (e.g. Tucher, 1975; Williams, 1983; Sheldon, 1988; Skierso, 1991) shows no specific criteria for CLT materials. Nonetheless, he has used five criteria: the quality and quantity of error correction, communicative tasks and activities, place and importance of grammar, the role of the teacher in the classroom, and the role and contribution of learners in the learning process. However, it is not clear how he obtained these criteria.

According to his claim, twenty teachers from two domains (schools and private institutes) analyzed the books to determine the extent to which the books matched the CLT principles. However, he does not specify how many of the teachers are from private institutes and how many from the high schools. Furthermore, there is no explanation on how the data is gathered. That is, whether questionnaire or other means are used is not specified. On the whole, the process of the research is not clear and exact. Nevertheless, Razmjoo claimed that the results of data analysis showed that the coursebooks used in private institutes (Interchange Series) contained more communicative elements than the coursebooks used at high schools.

The present study is concerned with the evaluation of the Pre-university English coursebook used in Iran. Like Tekir and Arikan (2007) and Litz (2005) this study also considers the teachers' and students' perceptions towards the coursebook. As Chamber (1997) suggests when the teaching materials are used by a large cohort of teachers and students, it will be more useful if evaluation be done by all or most of those who are involved in using them. However, as far as the present researcher is concerned no reported study is available on coursebook evaluation that has examined the teachers' and students' perceptions on the English coursebook used at the Pre-university level in Iran. As this study is focused on post-use evaluation, the participants of the study are the teachers and the ex-students. Furthermore, like the other studies reviewed in this part, the present study also enjoys some specific criteria from the literature. The instruments selected for the study are questionnaire and interviews, so that the most precise data can be elicited from the participants. These are discussed in detail in the methodology chapter.

2.7 Summary

This chapter tried to review the related theory and practice pertinent to material evaluation. As the coursebook writers' theoretical view on language and learning affect the content of the books, it started with a discussion on theories of language and learning. The second part dealt with coursebooks as instructional tools. Under this parts the definition of materials and coursebooks, the use of coursebooks as instructional tools, the importance of the coursebooks and various attitudes towards the coursebooks were debated. This was followed by material evaluation. This part elaborated on a definition of material evaluation, types of coursebook evaluation, the importance of coursebook evaluation and coursebook evaluation schemes. The chapter included another part on criteria for evaluation. This part

explained the criteria chosen for the purpose of the present study. Finally, the last part examined some related studies in the field of the coursebook evaluation.

The following chapter deals with the methodology of the present study.