

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSIONS

5.1 INTRODUCTION

The analysis of data in the previous chapter revealed some interesting and valuable facts about the coursebook under study. This concluding chapter presents a summary of the study and its findings. Also, based on the perceptions of the teachers and the students, some suggestions are made that are consistent with the third research question. It is hoped that the discussion here will answer the three research questions stated in chapter one.

Thus, after introduction, a summary of the study is presented. It is followed by a summary of the findings. Next, some suggestions are made for modifying the quality of the coursebook under study. Also, the implications of the study are discussed in a separate section. After that, some recommendations are made for further studies. The final section is a summary of the chapter.

5.2 SUMMARY OF THE STUDY

This study aimed to evaluate the pre-university English coursebook (*Learning to Read English for Pre-University Students*) used in Iran. To this end, three research questions were formed. While the first research question tried to seek the perceptions of the teachers towards the coursebook, the second one attempted to elicit the ex-students' perceptions towards the coursebook under study. Since all aspects of a coursebook cannot

be studied in a research, for this study, five general elements were selected by reviewing the literature on material evaluation. These five elements included: objectives, language content, language skills, subject matter and activities and exercises. However, the coursebook under study was a reading book and the other three skills (speaking, listening and writing) were excluded. Therefore, under language skills only reading skills were included. Furthermore, under the language content element only grammar and vocabulary elements were considered. The first and second research questions seek the teachers' and the ex-students' perceptions towards the coursebook in terms of the six elements of objectives, grammar, vocabulary, reading skills, subject matter and exercises and activities. The third research question searches for some ways of modifying the quality of the coursebook using the teachers' and students' view points.

The study was based on a post-use evaluation to find out what happens as the result of using the coursebook. To this end, the sample of the study comprised the pre-university teachers and ex-students who were university freshmen at the time of the study. The pre-university centers in Tabriz city, a city in the North West of Iran, and Tabriz University, a state university in Tabriz, were selected as the site of the study. Also, both qualitative and quantitative data were gathered through questionnaires and interviews. The quantitative data were analyzed using SPSS version 11.5 and the qualitative data were analyzed interpretatively. A summary of the findings are presented in the next section.

5.3 SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

This section presents a summary of the findings with regard to research questions one and two. The answer to research question three is discussed in *the suggestions* part of this chapter.

5.3.1 Research Questions One and Two

1-What are the high school teachers' perceptions towards the coursebook: *Learning to Read English for Pre-university Students* in terms of the:

- Objectives
- Language Content
 - Grammar
 - Vocabulary
- Language Skills
 - Reading Skills
- Subject Matter/Topic
- Exercises and Activities

2-What are the ex-students' perceptions towards the coursebook: *Learning to Read English for Pre-university Students* in terms of the:

- Objectives
- Language Content
 - Grammar
 - Vocabulary
- Language Skills
 - Reading Skills
- Subject Matter/Topic
- Exercises and Activities

5.3.1.1 Objectives

One of the important starting points in any coursebook evaluation is its objectives. Consequently, the first element that this study tried to elicit was the teachers and the students' perceptions towards objectives. The results obtained from the study revealed that only some of the objectives of the coursebook are stated clearly. According to the authors, the coursebook tries to improve the students' reading skills. However, it is not

mentioned clearly what kind of skills the learners are meant to learn. Furthermore, the results of the study revealed that there is a gap between the students' objectives and the coursebook's. Although the results imply that passing the university entrance exam which is based on the high school coursebooks is of high priority for most of the students, acquiring communicative skills, which are neglected by the coursebook, are also of high priority for the students. Consequently, some of the students' objectives are not in accordance with the coursebook's objectives and as a result they are not achieved at the end of the course. Furthermore, the results also suggest that the objectives claimed by the coursebook writers are not fully achieved at the end of the course.

5.3.1.2 Grammar

Another important element selected for evaluating the coursebook in this study was grammar. With respect to the treatment of grammatical structures, the results of the study suggest that the grammatical points of the units are neither at the right level for pre-university students nor have they been graded according to any approach. Another problem related to grammar and structure was the fact that the grammar points are presented neither clearly nor in context. Moreover, the results of the study revealed that the coursebook is more concerned with grammatical forms rather than their meaning. The final problem is centered on the use of the grammatical points by the students. It was believed that many of the learners were unable to use most of grammatical points in their writing and speaking.

5.3.1.3 Vocabulary

The vocabulary element was another criterion selected for eliciting the teachers' and the students' perceptions towards the coursebook. With regard to the vocabulary, most of the teachers and the students believed that after the new vocabulary was introduced they

were practiced neither through receptive nor productive skills in the units or subsequent lessons. Furthermore, the results of the study indicated that the vocabulary items are not selected and presented in any purposeful way. Another result that both quantitative and qualitative data suggest is that the load of the vocabulary is not sufficient for pre-university level. The results obtained from the study also revealed that both the teachers and the students were happy with the introduction of the new vocabulary in contexts. Also, the study has found that the teachers and the students preferred a summary of new vocabulary with their pronunciation and meaning in English at the end of the units or coursebook. Finally, based on the results, it seems that although some vocabulary development strategies are introduced in the coursebook, both the teachers and the students believed that the learners have acquired only a few of them. Based on the participants' views, this could have been stemmed from the fact that the coursebook does not provide any opportunities for the students to practice these strategies.

5.3.1.4 Reading Skills

Emphasis on skills in coursebooks can change according to the students' needs, syllabus type that is adopted or the aim of the course. Since only the reading skills are emphasized in the present coursebook, the next element selected for the present study was reading skills.

The results of the study revealed that the reading texts are too long and they are insufficient in number. Also, it was indicated that different genres and purposes of reading are not included in the coursebook. Furthermore, the results suggest that some of the students do not have background knowledge about some of the texts. With respect to reading strategies, both the teachers and the students were of the opinion that many reading

strategies are included in the coursebook. However, there was mixed opinions regarding the students' ability to apply those strategies in their reading. While most of the teachers were of the opinion that many of the students are unable to use those strategies in their reading, around half of the students agreed with them. Around a quarter of them stated they are not sure and another quarter of them expressed that they could apply them (the strategies). This mixed opinion may stem from the fact that students have different interests and abilities; the authors of the coursebook under study should have considered individual differences of the students in the coursebooks.

5.3.1.5 Subject Matter/Topic

The other element used in the present research was a non-linguistic aspect of the coursebook: subject matter and topics. Regarding the subject matter/topics, the results of the study revealed that only some of the topics are related to real life situations and are appropriate for pre-university level. Also, the results suggested that the coursebook under study does not cover a wide variety or interesting topics. However, both the teachers and the students felt that the topics are culturally appropriate for Iranian students.

5.3.1.6 Exercises and Activities

The last element selected to be studied in the present research was exercises and activities. The results of the study indicated that neither effective grammar exercises nor communicative exercises are included in the coursebook. Furthermore, the results suggested that only individual work is emphasized in the coursebook and the authors of the coursebook under study have ignored pair work and group work. Also, the results of the study demonstrated that the authors are more focused on controlled activities and the students are hardly allowed to produce creative and independent responses. Moreover, the

results showed that most of the activities are neither interesting nor helpful in internalizing the newly introduced language. With regard to the variety of the activities, the results indicated that there is not much variety in the activities. In terms of the level of the activities, the results of the study revealed mixed opinions among the students. This may stem from the individual differences of the students. The results of the study also indicate that only some of the activities reflect the objectives of the coursebook. However, the study revealed that the instructions to most of the activities are clear.

5.4 SUGGESTIONS

The results of the study enable us to deduce some suggestions for modifying the coursebook under study. It is hoped that this section can answer the third research question which is:

3- How can the quality of the coursebook: *Learning to Read English for Pre-university Students* be modified based on the teachers' and students' suggestions?

With respect to the objectives of this coursebook, it seems that the coursebook objectives are not in exact accordance with the students'. Investigating and considering the needs and wants of the students might improve the quality of the coursebook to a great extent. Also, specifying the exact objectives of the coursebook and concentrating on them throughout the whole coursebook may help in achieving them at the end of the course.

With respect to the treatment of grammatical structures, it appears that the authors have concentrated more on form rather than meaning. However, for learning and using the grammar points for their own purposes, the students need to learn both form and meaning. Moreover, the results also indicated that the grammatical points are not introduced in

meaningful contexts and they do not promote meaningful learning and actual communication. Therefore, paying more attention to meaning and the communicative aspects of grammatical points might help the students in improving their communicative skills.

Another problem concerning the grammatical points is that the students and the teachers agreed that although the grammatical points introduced in the coursebook are not so difficult in themselves, the instructions to them are not clear and make the students confused. Moreover, some grammatical structures seemed unnecessary to some of the teachers and the students. Considering the needs of the students, presenting the grammatical points and introducing them in clear ways can help the students in better learning and using these points.

An additional characteristic of treatment of grammatical points that is both problematic and worthy of closer scrutiny is that most of the students and teachers expressed that the students are unable to use the grammatical points of the coursebook in their writing and speaking. Definitely the purpose of teaching the grammar points is to enable the students to use them for their own purposes. However, the present coursebook seems to fail in this respect. A careful investigation and study of the reasons of this failure seems of great importance.

As regards the vocabulary, this coursebook seems not to provide sufficient and appropriate opportunities for the students to practice new items. Furthermore, the number of the vocabulary items seems insufficient for pre-university level. Presenting more vocabulary items and introducing meaningful practices through both receptive and productive skills and recycling the new vocabulary in subsequent lessons can help the

students to expand their vocabulary domain. Another glaring problem with the vocabulary section of the coursebook is that in dealing with the new vocabulary, most of the students seem unable to use the strategies introduced in the coursebook. According to some of the teachers and the students, the reason can be inappropriate presentation of these strategies and insufficient practices of them. A careful examination of the reasons of this failure might improve the quality of the coursebook and ultimately help the students to learn better.

In terms of the reading skills, the coursebook includes limited genres and purposes of reading. Also, the length of the reading texts seems long for the students. Furthermore, some students seem not to have enough world knowledge about some of the readings. Therefore, familiarizing the students with different types and purposes of reading and selecting texts with appropriate length based on their previous knowledge can improve the reading element of the coursebook. Another problem with the reading component of the coursebook is that although different strategies of reading are included, many of the students seem unable to use most of them in their readings. Some of the teachers and the students suggested that the reason is that after introducing the strategies, there are not enough opportunities for the students to practice them. As the present coursebook is a reading coursebook and the primary aim of it is to improve the students' reading skills, it is reasonable to suggest that there should be a close examination of this issue.

With regard to the subject matters and topics of the coursebook, it appears that the authors need to include more varied and interesting topics based on real life situations. The students can learn better when the learning is interesting and meaningful for them and they feel a connection with them. The pre-university level students are young adolescents and there is a wide range of topics that can be interesting and related to them.

With respect to the exercises and activities of the coursebook, the authors seem to need to reexamine the types and amounts of the exercises. Including more effective and meaningful communicative and grammar exercises that allow the students to not only work individually but also in pairs and in groups seems necessary in the coursebook. It also seems helpful that the authors include more exercises which allow the students to produce their own responses freely in order to communicate their thoughts and opinions. Moreover, there seems a need for including various types of activities that could help the students to internalize the newly introduced language. Furthermore, considering individual differences and the different linguistic levels of the students are important too. While some students master a point with a few exercises, some others are slower and need more practice. Since each learner has his or her own pace of learning, one cannot expect all the learners to progress at the same speed. Therefore, including extra exercises in the coursebook or introducing a separate workbook can help the slow learners. The last point that needs to be stated about the activities and exercises of the coursebook is the fact that only some of them are in accordance with the objectives of the coursebook. This may suggest reconsidering either the objectives of the coursebook or the exercises.

5.5 IMPLICATIONS

The findings of this study indicate that there is a need for improvement with regard to the coursebook under study. It revealed some problems and weaknesses with the coursebook that are worthy of closer consideration. These weaknesses are related to the objectives, grammar, vocabulary, reading skills, subject matter and activities and exercises. These highlighted weaknesses deserve the serious attention and consideration of the Ministry of the Education of Iran which is responsible for selecting and providing the coursebooks for different levels at schools. The findings of the study may contribute to

better decision making and provide invaluable information for them if they decide to make any revisions later.

Also, the findings of this study can be helpful to the teachers who are teaching it at schools but do not have enough time to conduct a systematic evaluation of the coursebook. This can help them in making better decisions in the classrooms. Moreover, the findings may provide useful information for material writers by familiarizing them with the teachers and the students' expectations of this coursebook.

5.6 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER STUDIES

Evaluating the coursebooks and eliciting the perceptions of the teachers and the students who are their main users is of great importance. Since this study was only limited to pre-university level, there is still room for further studies to be carried out to investigate the coursebooks used at other levels.

Also, the present study investigated the teachers' and the students' perceptions regarding only six elements, namely, objectives, grammar, vocabulary, reading skills, subject matter and exercises and activities. For further research, more elements such as methodology, the physical layout, style and appropriacy can be included. It would also be beneficial to investigate the other teachers and students' view points in other parts of Iran to gain more insights or compare the results.

5.7 SUMMARY

Probably, coursebooks are one of the most important elements in ELT classes. Especially in situations like Iran, where English is a foreign language and the learners do not have enough exposure to it in the society, coursebooks play a more vital role. In these

situations they are the main source of language for the students and the teachers. Even their content determines the students' perceptions of what language is and how it should be learnt. To this end, coursebook evaluation not only before its use but also after its use is valuable. It can reveal the weaknesses and strengths of the coursebooks and enable the direct and indirect authorities involved in decision making to focus on the weak points and adapt and supplement them accordingly. When a coursebook is used on a large scale, its evaluation and making sure that it is the right one for the students becomes especially more important.

This study aimed to evaluate the pre-university English coursebook, *Learning to Read English for Pre-university Students*, used in Iran. This study did identify some disconcerting problems with the coursebook under study. The results revealed that this coursebook needs some revisions in terms of the all six elements (objectives, grammar, vocabulary, reading skills, subject matter and exercises and activities) that were studied in this research. It is hoped that this study has been informative enough and has aroused the interest of the relevant authorities to take the necessary steps to improve the quality of this coursebook for the benefits of future students.