

## EVALUATION OF THE CRESCENT ENGLISH COURSE FOR YEMEN: LEVEL 4 BY USING CUNNINGSWORTH'S (1984) CHECKLIST

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### **Abstract:**

*Coursebook evaluation is a very important method in the field of both teaching and learning in order to discover the points of its strength and weakness, so that the course book can be adapted to achieve student needs and objectives, and teacher beliefs.*

*In this paper, first, the literature on the subject of materials evaluation is discussed. Then by applying Cunningsworth's (1984) checklist, a detailed evaluation of the coursebook Crescent English Course for Yemen: 4: is provided.*

*The results obtained from the detailed analysis and evaluation of this course books are specifically strong in providing various authentic, interesting, and motivating topics of different genres. That is, the course book meets the majority of the checklist criteria and the general students' learning needs. However, it is only weak in presenting the phonological aspect of the language.*

**Keywords:** *evaluation, coursebook evaluation, internal evaluation, external evaluation, Crescent English Course for Yemen: 4, evaluation checklist*

### **0 Introduction:**

Teachers may be interested in the process of textbook evaluation. In this case they may wish to evaluate the materials published during a given period of time; therefore, they require some criteria with which to assess these materials. We thus examine criteria in two stages: an external evaluation that offers a brief overview of the materials from the outside (cover, introduction, table of contents), which is then followed by a closer and more detailed internal evaluation.

First of all, we need to know what the term "evaluation" means. Nazeer, Kazim and Sarwat (2015: 52) define evaluation as "a systematic process to investigate data, which is gathered through different instruments and from different sources to determine effectiveness of that data". Tomlinson (2003c) defines materials evaluation as "a procedure that involves measuring the value (or potential value) of a set of learning materials".

### **1 Literature Review**

#### **1.1 Textbook Evaluation**

A textbook is a teaching material designed for the purpose of formal study. It is used as a tool for imparting knowledge. Sometimes it is only the source of content and pedagogic information for the teacher. Ahour and Ahmadi (2012: 176) state that "textbooks are the main sources that convey the knowledge and information to the learners in an easy and organized way". Moreover, Hutchinson and Torres (1994) consider textbook as an essential part of any educational context.

Although the importance of a textbook in both teaching and learning processes, there is still a need for the evaluation for the English language teaching material in order to discover its points of strength and weakness. Grant (1987) states that there are no perfect text books. Tomlinson (2001) states that there is an increase in the teaching material development. He mentions two reasons for that. First, material development helps the teachers to understand and apply the theories of language learning more easily. Second, teachers are in need to evaluate and revise materials, which would be refined form for their

particular learners. He also states that textbook evaluation is an activity within applied linguistics field that can be carried out by teachers, supervisors, administrators, and material developers. On the other hand, Harmer (1996) considers that textbook evaluation is a class internal judgment about the real performance of a book. In this connection, Genesee (2001) argues that book evaluation is a process of collecting, analyzing, and interpreting information. Evaluation is "a matter of judging the fitness of something for a particular purpose which can be undertaken for a variety of purposes and carried out in a variety of ways" (Rubdy, 2003: 41) and "materials evaluation is a procedure that involves measuring the value (or potential value) of a set of learning materials. It involves making judgments about the effect of the materials on the people using them" (Tomlinson, 2003c:15).

### **1.2 Reasons of Evaluating Textbooks**

There are many and varied reasons for materials evaluation. One of the main reasons is that there is a need for adopting new course books. Cunningsworth (1995) mentions another reason, that is, to identify particular strengths and weaknesses in textbooks already in use. Tomlinson (1996) also denotes that the process of materials evaluation can help us to know both acquisition theory and pedagogic practices. Grant (1987: 8) indicates that the "Perfect book does not exist", therefore the evaluation process can help the teacher to look for an alternative book that will be suitable to a particular learner group.

Moreover, evaluation is considered as an integral part of teaching and learning, which determines what learners learn. Cunningsworth (1995: 7) states that "the materials selected should reflect the needs of the learners and the aims, methods and values of the teaching program". Ellis (1997) suggests that textbook evaluation helps to acquire useful, accurate, systematic and contextual insights into the overall nature of textbook material.

### **1.3 Evaluation Frameworks**

Concerning frameworks, McDonough, Shaw & Masuhara (2013) suggest both external and internal evaluations, according to which the evaluation starts from the claims made on the cover of the book and moves toward an in-depth look at two or more units.

External evaluation includes criteria related to the overall organization of the teaching materials as stated explicitly by the author/publisher. McDonough, Shaw & Masuhara (2013: 54) indicate that overall organization of information can be found in:

- the 'blurb', or the claims made on the cover of the teacher's/students' book, and
- the introduction and table of contents

These two aspects of external evaluation enable the evaluator to assess what Tomlinson (2003c: 16) calls analysis in that "it asks questions about what the materials contain, what they aim to achieve and what they ask learners to do". Hence the contents page takes the role of connecting between the external claims made for the materials and what will actually be presented 'inside' the materials themselves. The author's blurb and the publisher's introduction present objectives and the types of audience for whom a certain type of materials are published. To further clarify this to see whether the objectives have been clearly spelt, here is an example of one such 'blurb' taken from a well-known EFL textbook published in 2012:

. . . an integrated skills series which is designed to offer flexibility with different teaching and learning styles. Fun for learners to use and easy for teachers to adapt . . .

Fully integrated grammar, skills and lexical syllabuses provide a balanced learning experience

Engaging topics motivate students and offer greater personalization

A wide range of approaches exploit different learning styles

Clearly structured grammar presentations are reinforced with extensive practice

Contextualized vocabulary focuses on authentic real-world language

A variety of listening and speaking activities develop learning fluency

Learner training throughout the Student's Book and Workbook maximizes skills development.

McDonough, Shaw & Masuhara (2013: 54-55)

Rubdy's (2003) evaluation framework consists of three categories: psychological validity, pedagogical validity, and process and content validity by taking the effectiveness of materials in terms of specific needs and context of learning into consideration. On the other hand, Tomlinson (2003) states that an evaluator should prepare his/her own formal criteria for use in a particular evaluation for a particular context, since the evaluation reasons, objectives and circumstances determine the framework for evaluation of materials.

Abdel Wahab (2013: 56) mentions three basic methods for textbook evaluation: The first method is called impressionistic method which gives a general impression about the book. This general impression can be obtained from reading the blurb, the contents page and then skimming through the book to get a sense of organization, topics, layout and visuals. The second method is called the checklist method. This method is systematic in the way that the criteria on the list are checked off in a certain order. It is also very easy to compare different materials and it is not very time-consuming compared to other methods. The third method, the in-depth method, suggests a careful examination of representative features such as the design of one particular unit or exercise, or the treatment of particular language elements. An obvious disadvantage in this method is that the selected section might not be representative of the book as a whole.

Ellis (1997) mentions two types of materials evaluation: Predictive evaluation and retrospective evaluation. A predictive evaluation is designed to make a decision regarding what materials to use. That is, which materials are best suited to the determined purposes. Once the materials have been used, further evaluation may be conducted to find out whether the materials have worked out for the purposes determined and this type of evaluation is called retrospective evaluation. Both predictive and retrospective evaluations aim at making the teaching/learning environment more effective.

In evaluating a textbook, the first things to consider according to Cunningsworth (1984) are the relative merits of pedagogical factors such as suitability for the age group, cultural appropriateness, methodology, type and number of exercises, availability of teacher's book, variety, pace, and personal involvement.

#### **1.4 Checklist as a Tool of Evaluation**

There is a need to make every effort to establish and apply a wide variety of relevant and contextually appropriate criteria for the evaluation of the textbooks used in language classrooms ensuring careful and appropriate selection of materials reflecting the goals, methods, and values of the teaching program (Cunningsworth, 1995). He also adds that evaluation checklists should have some criteria pertaining to the physical characteristics of textbooks such as layout, organizational, and logistical characteristics.

Sheldon (1988) states that materials evaluation is a practice activity and there is no certain system or a definite measure that can achieve this evaluation; on the contrary, it is necessary and useful to prepare a comprehensive evaluation model of criteria to be used for evaluating any coursebook or applicable on a certain course or group of learners.

Various guidelines, checklists, and frameworks are used for coursebook evaluation and selection, depending on teaching and student-teacher interactions in a particular situation (Byrd, 2002).

Azarnoosh (2014) lists many elements to be evaluated in a coursebook. They are: a textbook's methodology, aims, and approaches and the degree to which a set of materials is teachable and fits the needs of the individual teacher's approach as well as the organization's overall curriculum, the specific language, functions, grammar, and skills content that are covered by a particular textbook as well as the relevance of linguistic items to the prevailing socio-cultural environment, representation of cultural and gender components in addition to the extent to which the linguistic items, subjects, content, and topics match up to students' personalities, backgrounds, needs, and interests as well as those of the teacher and/or institution.

Nazeer, Kazim and Sarwat (2015: 55) list a number of scholars and researchers, who have used

checklists as an evaluation tools such as (Chastain, 1971; Tucker, 1975; Daoud and Celce-Murcia, 1979; Candlin and Breen, 1979; Sheldon, 1988 and Cunningsworth, 1995). The review of textbook evaluation checklists within four decades (1970-2000) by Mukundanand Ahour (2010) described that most of the checklists are qualitative (Rahimy, 2007; Driss, 2006; McDonough and Shaw, 2003; Rubdy, 2003; Garinger, 2002; Krug, 2002; McGrath, 2002; Garinger, 2001; Richards, 2001; Zabawa, 2001; Hemsley, 1997; Cunningsworth, 1995; Griffiths, 1995; Cunningsworth and Kusel, 1991; Harmer, 1991; Sheldon, 1988; Breen & Candlin, 1987; Dougill, 1987; Hutchinson & Waters, 1987; Matthews, 1985; Cunningsworth, 1984; Bruder, 1978; Haycraft, 1978; Robinett, 1978); than quantitative (e.g., Canado & Esteban, 2005; Litz, 2005; Miekley, 2005; Harmer, 1998; Peacock, 1997; Ur, 1996; Skierso, 1991; Sheldon, 1988; Grant, 1987; Williams, 1983; Daoud & Celce-Murcia, 1979; Tucker, 1978); or head words/outline format, i.e., those without rating scales or questions (Ansari & Babaii, 2002; Littlejohn, 1998; Roberts, 1996; Brown, 1995). Our present study adopts Cunningsworth's (1984) checklist.

## **2 Research Question**

Considering the importance and value of coursebook evaluation, the following research question was posed:

What are the features of *Crescent English Course for Yemen: level 4* based on Cunningsworth's (1984) evaluation checklist?

## **3 Methodology**

### **3.1 Materials**

#### **3.1.1 Pupil' Book, Workbook and Teacher's Book: level 4**

These books are selected for analysis and evaluation for the present study. They have been prepared and published under the approval of Government of the Republic of Yemen, Ministry of Education. They are prepared by O'Neill and Snow (2011) through Garnet Publishing Limited.

### **3.2 Instrument**

To evaluate Crescent English Course for Yemen: Book 4, Cunningsworth's (1984) proposal for materials evaluation was considered since it takes both the learner's context and learning principles into account (Rubdy, 2003). Cunningsworth (1984) divides his checklist of evaluation into various variables: language content, selecting and grading of language items, presentation and practice of new language items, developing language skills and communicative abilities, supporting materials, motivation and the learner.

*Crescent English Course for Yemen* is currently used as a comprehensive, general coursebook for both primary and secondary school pupils in Yemen. This course consists of six levels, starting by seven grade of the primary school and ending of twelve grade of the secondary school.

*Crescent English Course for Yemen: Book 4* consists of seven units. Each unit is divided into steps, each of which is intended to be taught in one lesson. The last teaching step in units 2-7 uses the Language Review page in the Pupil's Book to revise the main language points in the unit. To evaluate this book, all aspects in Cunningsworth's (1984) checklist (See Appendix 1) will be covered one by one.

## **4 Major Sections of Evaluation**

### **4.1 Language Content**

This coursebook heavily focuses on teaching both grammatical points and functions of language. As the authors mention in the Teacher's Book, structures and functions are jointly dealt with and recycled through the units of the course in the reading and listening texts so that learners focus on critical grammar points as they occur in the context and real-life reading selections. In the language review section of each unit the grammatical points and their possible functions are summarized. Patterns of communicative interactions are introduced in the Pupil's Book units and then in the application of forms and functions in the Workbook sections where learners participate in the dynamic and creative process of communication.

With respect to phonological aspects (individual sounds, stress, rhythm, intonation), there are only

four word examples of syllable number (*man, wo-man, beau-ti-ful, in-ter-est-ing*) and stress of six words (first syllable stressed: *ENter* and *Elephant*; second syllable stressed: *exCiting* and *giRAFFE*; third syllable stressed: *geneROsity* and *kangaROO*) presented in the Workbook (WB65), since it is a comprehensive general one. Grammar is dealt heavily in the course since as Cunningworth (1984: 18) indicates, "Most coursebooks concentrate heavily on the teaching of grammatical structures and on the whole do it." Teacher's Book (4: 7-10) lists (20) new grammar points and (95) old ones introduced in Crescents 1, 2 and 3.

In this coursebook, vocabulary has extensively been focused on. There are 776 new words in seven units. They are presented in the Pupil's Book in texts supported by coloured pictures where necessary; and they are listed alphabetically unit by unit at the end of the Workbook and in the Unit Word lists in the Teacher's Book 4 and in the vocabulary boxes at the top of each Step (lesson). These words include: Unit (1): 37 words, unit (2): 131 words, unit (3): 150 words, unit (4): 130 words, unit (5): 95 words, unit (6): 132 words and unit (7): 101. The grammatical categories and counts of these words are shown in the following table:

**Table (1): The grammatical categories with their counts**

Unit no.	Nouns	Verbs		Adjectives	Adverbs	Prep. Phrases	Conjunctions/ Prepositions	Total
		One-word verbs	Phrasal/ Prep. verbs					
1	18	4	5	6	1	2	1	37
2	90	15	8	9	4	2	1/2	131
3	108	15	10	10	4	-	1/2	150
4	70	22	7	19	8	3	1/-	130
5	68	7	1	12	3	1	2/1	95
6	*82	*27	3	17	3	-	-	132
7	54	18	1	17	5	5	-/1	101
Total	349	69	18	57	14	6	5	776

\*indicates that 11 words in unit (6) were presented in both noun and verb categories, so they were counted twice.

The table shows that the majority of the words are nouns, one-word verb and adjectives, which are the most important words in language. With respect to nouns there are (77) compound nouns with a percentage of (22%).

With respect to discourse, a wide variety of text types and genres (formal style dialogues, short factual texts, information tables, food and drink menus, formal letters, postcards, instructions, newspaper and magazine headlines and articles) have been included.

The language used in the course book is appropriate to its social context and function for which it has been used. The majority of the language is formal. Informal dialogues are found in Pupil's Book, page 5 between Aref and Aziz and Abba and Mona, because they are friends; in page 6 between Fuad and Talal. Examples of formal style dialogues are found in the majority of the course book: pages 10, 11, 12, 18, 20, 21, 22, 24, 36, 37, 49, 52, 53, since the characters are not friend and the situations are official.

Concerning the language skills, all the four skills are dealt with thoroughly, because the course book is a general, comprehensive one. The general approach to the skills is that they are presented in an

integrated away. Integration of the receptive and productive skills is the trend in modern coursebook design (Brown 1994, White 1988, Stern 1992, Cunningsworth 1995, McDonough and Shaw 1993). O'Neil, Snow and O'Neil (2011: 14) indicate that "Since real communication generally involves more than one language skill, *Crescent* adopts an integrated skills approach. The materials and methodology are essentially pupil-centered, aiming to promote learning through meaningful individual and interactive tasks." These interactive tasks of the four skills are essentially presented in the Workbook. There are not any activities and exercises concerning translation from English into Arabic, or vice versa.

#### 4.2 Selecting and Grading of Language Items

The materials in this coursebook follow a combined functional/ structural syllabus. That is, structures are chosen according to the function type. But both functions and structures are governed by social interactions. The selection and sequence of the language taught is based on an attempt to identify probable student needs since the coursebook presents the language through a variety of text types. Colour pictures provide meaning and context support and also stimulate discussion.

The grading of the linguistic items seems to be steeply graded because in each unit students are faced with many new vocabularies, grammar and function items and too many activities for practicing them in the Workbook. For example, the following table shows the functions and structures expressing them used in unit 2, which consists of 14 steps:

**Table (2): Language functions and structures expressing them in unit 2**

Step no.	Functions	Structures
1-2	Describing a sequence of events and supporting a statement	Time adverbials (at eight, on Friday, every day, in the evening, last week, Thursday) Past passive (was started, bought)
3-4	Identifying jobs Polite requests and instructions	Modals ( <b>can/could/may</b> ) for requesting Imperative + <b>please</b> Auxiliary <b>will</b> for instructions
5	Comparing information	Present/ past simple
6-8	Polite greetings Expressing a polite request	Good morning, sir. Would mind verb + in g ....? + negative response showing agreement.
9-11	Describing past and earlier past events Connecting past events	Past perfect Irregular past tense forms and past participles Connectives: <b>when, but, because, so</b>
12	Asking for and conveying information	<b>Wh-</b> and <b>Yes/No</b> questions
14	Describing past events	Present perfect for indefinite time versus for definite time

The progression of the linguistic items are cyclical since they recur throughout the syllabus and are treated in greater depth or in more detail when they recur. There are many activities and exercises in the WB that lead to consolidation of vocabulary and grammar knowledge. For example the grammar point *present continuous tense* has been recycled in many places in the course with different uses as follows:

**Table (3): Recycling present simple tense in the course with different uses**

Unit no.	Page no.	Its use and meaning
1	PB 3	Describing an action happening at the time of speaking: <i>The woman in the yellow dress is getting into the car.</i>
	PB 5	Describing an action happening at the time of speaking: <i>I'm working in the garden at the moment, I'm washing my hair at the moment.</i>
	WB7/8	Activities depending on PB and Cassette Section (CS)
4	PB34	Using going to + infinitive to describe future intentions: <i>I'm going to be a pilot.</i>
	CS21	
	WB50	Using present continuous to express future arrangements: <i>My uncle is coming to our house on Friday.</i>
5	PB35	Using present continuous tense for action in progress: <i>Kate is a student and is going to the USA to study.</i>
	WB57	

This cyclic nature of facing the same language reinforces language learning.

#### 4.3 Presentation and Practice of New Language Items

The *Crescent English Course for Yemen* is based on communicative approach to language learning and teaching, since the authors believe that language use can be achieved by concentrating on teaching and learning the four skills of language: speaking, listening, reading and writing.

In presenting language rules, the coursebook follows an inductive approach by first presenting the grammatical structures in the texts and then there is a language review at the end of each unit summarizing all the grammatical structures and functions presented in the texts. Language tables or models are provided for use in class and also as a reference for the pupils at home.

In presenting grammatical items, contextualization has been considered so all the grammar points are presented in texts of different types (dialogues, short factual texts, advertisements, newspaper reports ... etc). Sometimes, new points are explicitly taught depending on previously learned rules (e.g., in unit 2, PB9, WB14, the present simple tense is compared with the past simple tense; in unit 3 PB18, WB31, CS12 direct and indirect questions are taught ... etc). Moreover, because of the specific genres of the reading passages, grammar rules are presented appropriate to the given context and learners' needs to understand them. For examples in unit 5 the grammar points are appropriately presented to the title of the topic: present continuous tense, future plans and infinitive of purpose are presented in the topic 'Travellers' (PB35, WB57); expressions of thanks/congratulations are presented in 'a Conversation' (PB36/37, WB59, CS25); past simple tense is presented in the topic 'Biographies of explorers' (PB43, WB75) ... etc.

Language practice exercises are presented in the WB. They are few in number and presented under the title of language study. They can be listed in the following table:

**Table (4): Types of language practice exercises in the WB**

Unit no.	Page no.	Language Study point	The exercise from the WB and its number
1	2	Re-order	B- Put the words in the right order to make sentences. C- What is it? Put the words in the right order to find the answer.
2	13 18 20-21 27	Polite requests (can, could, may, would) Polite request (would you mind...) Past perfect tense Present perfect and simple past	C- What would you say in these situations? B- What would you say in these situations? C- Use the right words from the box below to complete this table: <u>Infinitive Past simple Past perfect</u> Have you ever visited another country? Which countries have ever visited? When did you go there? What did you do there?
4	45-47	Reported statements	B- Write down what these people said. Do not forget to make the necessary changes. C- Write down something that your friend told you yesterday.
5	64-66	Comparing adjectives	A- Complete this table: <u>Adjective Comparative Superlative</u> B- Read these sentences and complete them with the correct form of a suitable adjective.
6	79 83 86 92	Talking about Quantities Causative 'make' The passive Word class	A- Give advice to a friend. D- Complete these sentences. A- Make these sentences passive. B- Read and complete these sentences. Use the correct forms of the verbs in the box. A- Complete these lists: <u>Verb Noun</u> Treat ----- B- Complete these sentences with words from the box. C- Making collocations. Which nouns in Box 2 can you use with the verbs in Box 1?
7	95 98	Re-ordering Verb conjugation	D- Put the words in the correct order to make sentences. A- Complete this table: <u>Infinitive Past simple Past participle</u> B- Join the sentences using <i>when</i> .



On the other hand, the communicative practice activities for new structures are adequate in number and variety. They concentrate on the four skills of language. These activities are meaningful and appropriate to the context and the specific genre, hence learners' needs. They are of the production type and attempts have been made to cover a controlled to free order of pattern practice.

In presenting and practicing new lexis, they are presented in word list both at the end of the Workbook and in the Unit Word Lists in the Teacher's Book 4 and in the vocabulary boxes at the top of each Step, while in the Pupil's Book they are presented in both ways of text and with coloured visual pictures. The meaning is provided in various ways: in context (texts, dialogues, newspaper report advertisements ... etc) in order to help students to work out their meaning easily. Teacher's Book (page 18) presents many techniques that help students work out word meaning from context: synonyms, antonyms, paraphrases, generic terms, contextual clues, word formation and general knowledge. Since the coursebook is based on functional/structural syllabus, new lexis is sometimes used in the subsequent units but not adequately. In the Workbook there are many vocabulary exercises that contribute to the recycling and reviewing of some of the key vocabulary presented in the Pupil's Book. Some of these exercises in the WB are:

- Labeling words to pictures and descriptions (p 1)
- Numbering pictures through listening their names (p 3)
- Comparing jobs names to work place (p 4)
- Comparing sentences to jobs names (p 4)
- Labeling words to a picture of plane parts (p 16)
- Extracting 12 flying words from a box of jumbled letters (p 25)
- Finding words from a text to mean sentences (p 27)
- Labeling words of new villa rooms in a picture (p 29)
- Finding words from Pupil's Book (p 17) to put them under each house rooms (p 30)
- Comparing a street scene words with a listening text (p 35)
- Connecting instruction words to their complements (p 37)
- Matching Arabic to English words (ps 44, 105)
- Finding words that stand for sentences (p 44)
- Matching words to pictures (p 76)
- Classifying words into proteins, fats and carbohydrates (p 78)
- Working out words from a reading text (ps 85, 91)
- Completing sentences with words from a box (p 92)
- Defining words (p 95)
- Completing word tree (ps 96, 102)
- Putting words under headings (p 100)

In this coursebook, there is no systematic attempt to teach the phonological system of English. This is a weakness point. Language learners are in need to focus on phonological aspects specifically stress and intonation patterns to read appropriately; so adding a section concerning hints about correct pronunciation and stress and intonation patterns could have been useful.

#### **4.4 Developing Language Skills and Communicative Abilities**

With respect to free production of speech, Pupil's Book and especially Workbook provide too many writing and speaking activities of the type guided and free ones where individual, pair and group work are needed.

The time devoted in each lesson is defined by the authors in the Teacher's Book for the stages of presentation, practice and production. The general pattern of a lesson should be:

- A short teacher-led introduction
- B pupil activities
- C short teacher-led conclusion (p 13)

They also indicate that the stage B takes most of the lesson time, since there are several activities within this stage. The coursebook contains seven units; each unit contains several steps (lessons). Each step should be covered in a 35 minute period as follows:

Unit	Steps (lessons)
1	15
2	15
3	15
4	15
5	15
6	16
7	16

So the number of the steps to be taught during eight month study in the coursebook is  $92 \times 35 \text{ minute} = 3220 \text{ m}$  divided by  $60 \text{ m} = 53 \text{ hour and a half}$ . So each unit is to be covered in 8.75 hour.

Concerning the nature and extent of materials for reading, as previously mentioned, include topics of wide variety and genre types. They are mentioned in Teacher's Book 4 (20) "conversations, short descriptive and narrative texts, factual texts, newspaper extracts, letters, charts notices, and a serial story". The Workbook includes too many reading activity types: reading for skimming, scanning (intensive reading), enjoyment (extensive reading) and guessing reading. Sometimes reading texts are included in the cassettes for the sake of comparison. Some reading activities are related to the Pupil's Books and others are not.

The listening material is provided in Cassette Sections (CSs). They are used for pronunciation, intonation, scanning, skimming. Some reading texts are recorded so that the pupils can hear them after they have read them for the purpose of consolidation. The majority of the listening activities are found in the Workbook.

The writing activities in *Crescent 4* aim to reinforce pupils' understanding of sentence syntax and develop their ability to write continuous texts. With respect to writing activity varieties, O'Neil, and Snow (2011: 22) state, in the Teacher's Book, that writing activities include "vocabulary exercises, completing grammatical tables, spelling and punctuation exercises, writing answers to questions, completing gapped exercises, rewriting a series of sentences in paragraph form, writing paragraphs or summaries based on notes or answers to comprehension questions."

Integrating the skills of language is considered the most important element in language teaching. The majority of the Workbook activities are of the integration type, where the learners are faced with a real situation to deal with in writing, speaking, listening, and reading in their pair or group discussions (See Appendix 2)

In preparing students for communicative interaction, the main focus of the coursebook is on the four skills and their integration. So there are both spoken and especially written communicative interactions. For example, in writing continuous texts, the pupils are asked to think of ideas and write notes or to elicit ideas from a pupil. In the Workbook, there are many written communicative activities. For instances:

Unit 1: 9 B (p 7) Now imagine that you are Aref. Write a message for Tariq.

1:10 A (p 7) Read the conversation between Abla and Muna on Pupil's Book page (5)

Imagine that you are Abla. Write a message for Shareefa. See also:

Unit 2: 2.2 A, B, C; 2:11 B, C.

Unit 3: 3.4 C; 3.9 C; 3.11 A; 3.12 B; 3.13 B

Unit 4: 4.8 B; 4.11 B

Unit 5: 5.2 A; 5.3 A; 5.4 D; 5.5 B, C; 5.6; 5.11; 5.12 A

Unit 6: 6.1 F; 6.4 B, C; 6.5 A; 6.6 E; 6.7 B, C; 6.12 A; 6.14

**Unit 7: 7.3 A; 7.5 A; 7.6 A; 7.7 A, B, D; 7.10 A**

These activities are important to consider in real communication situations. In fact, it is not possible to separate language skills from one another, and what we learn in relation to one skill helps as when dealing with other ones. So the skills presented in this coursebook can indirectly help the learner in real language use. Moreover, these skills and some of the information presented in the parts entitled *Language Review* such as (tenses, passive, conjunctions, prepositions, reported speech, modals, capitalization, punctuation marks, adjectives, nouns, adverbs ...etc.) provide the learners with some exercises through which they are taught how to combine functional units of language to create discourse.

**4.5 Supporting Materials**

The supporting materials provided in this coursebook include visual and audio materials. The visual ones are colour pictures in each page of the Pupil's Book. These colour pictures provide meaning and context support and also stimulate discussion. They are divided into two types: integral and illustrative visuals. Integral visuals are used for teaching an item such as a new verb form. Illustration visuals make the page look more attractive, and do not form an integral part of the teaching material. They are identified in the coursebook as follows:

**Table (5): Integral and illustrative visuals presented in the Pupil's Book**

Unit no.	Integral visual pictures with page no.	Unit no.	Illustrative visual pictures with page no.
1	1- A street scene picture (2-3) 2- Objects pictures + pictures of persons' jobs (4)	1	1- Pictures of friends telephoning (5) 2- Pictures of two pupils dialoguing (6)
2	3- Pictures of persons' jobs (8)	2	3- Pictures of three airlines (7) 4- Pictures of two landscapes (9) 5- Pictures of passengers and clerks in airways (10-12) 6- A picture of a plane on air (13) 7- Pictures of people doing activities + a television reporter (14)
3	4- A picture of a Yemeni citizen describing a new home to a foreigner (16) 5- Objects with their names (17) 6- A picture showing how to get to the Gold Souk (21) 7- Objects with their names (22) 8- Objects with their names (23) 9- Instructions for making falafel (23) 10- A picture of Instructions for how to get rid of a car from sin king in the sand (24)	3	8- A shopping picture in Exeter (18) 9- A picture of two neighbors talking (20) 10- A picture of women shopping in the souk (21) 11- Two persons talking at the local bakery (22) 12- A picture of a place for learning driving (24) 13- A picture of a diving for treasure (25)
5	11- Pictures of travelling two men and two women with their jobs (35) 12 A map of places in Britain (38)	4	14- A picture of a fisherman escaping from drowning (28) 15- A picture of a reporter speaking to passers-by about public opinion (31-32) 16- A picture of a ship sinking and finding treasure after diving (33)
6	13- Pictures of foods (46) 14- Pictures of how to do body exercises (47) 15- Pictures about how to train a nurse (54)	5	17- A picture of a wedding party in UK (37) 18- Pictures of tourist attractions (39) 19- Cultural pictures in Morocco (40-41) 20- Pictures of tourist sites in Yemen (42)
7	16- Pictures of describing people with coloured dresses and hair (61)	6	21- Pictures of posters for advice (45) 22- Pictures about giving advice about smoking (48 - 49) 33- Pictures of conversations about how to protect yourself against germs (50-51) 34- Pictures from casualty unit (53)
		7	35- Four pictures of job services (57) 36- A picture of an immigration officer's job (58) 37- A picture of a policewoman in the airport (60) 38- A picture of immigration three officers and a line of passengers (62) 39- Four pictures of the firemen's services (63) 40- A picture of firemen saving a blazing school (64) 41- A picture of a reporter speaking to a fisherman

In addition to these visual aids, the audio materials include one cassette. It contains conversations which serve as pronunciation models and texts to develop the listening skill. Many of the reading texts have also been recorded for use after the pupils have done the reading task. This is an aid to pronunciation and also consolidation of the reading texts.

Authentic language use is limited to the type of passages chosen for each unit; they are formal and informal conversations, newspaper and magazine extracts, short descriptive and narrative texts, letters, advertisements, instructions, newspaper headlines, charts, notices and a serial story. This can be considered as one of the strong points of this coursebook which helps learners in reading and understanding passages of different genres that they will encounter in real situations.

Both Pupil's Book and Workbook are supported by a Teacher's Book. It contains 260 pages. Its main sections are: short introductions to the language and learning theories to the coursebook *Crescent English Course for Yemen*, to the Pupil's Book and Workbook 4, its organization, a list of the main grammatical areas taught, pieces of advice to the teacher, general teaching techniques and procedures for (listening, speaking, vocabulary, reading and writing), language work, unit summaries, detailed teaching procedures for each step (lesson) in each unit, word list and a glossary of key words used in the teaching procedures (See Teacher's Book 4: p 3). It is of the type that "take the teacher step by step through every stage of every unit to the extent that every visual to be drawn on the board is given, with accompanying details of exactly what the teacher has to say at each given moment." (Cunningsworth, 1984: 52). It also includes an answer key for all activities in the Pupil's Book and Workbook and language study explanations.

Concerning the availability of an index of grammar items and functions, the authors provide it at the beginning of the Teacher's Book (see pages 7-10). The new grammar items and functions are numbered in brackets for each unit. The other unnumbered items were introduced in Crescent 1, 2 and 3.

With respect to a vocabulary list, the new words for each unit are listed alphabetically at the end of the Workbook and Teacher's Book and in the Unit Word lists at the end of each unit in the Teacher's Book 4 and in the vocabulary boxes at the top of each step (lesson) in the Teacher's Book. The coursebook *Crescent English Course for Yemen* does not have materials for testing. When the teacher would like to test the pupils, he/she prepares his/her own tests.

In evaluating the degree of support for the teacher and the amount and quality of guidance provided, the material does not require a high degree of teacher input and is almost self-sufficient since the material in the Pupil's Book is of various genres and the activities and exercises in the Workbook are various, and the Teacher's Book contain detailed methodology and reviews about language. Thus, it seems that the coursebook can be easily taught by non-native speakers and it does not require the teacher to have a native speaker intuition.

This coursebook imposes some specific physical restraints such as a calm class for listening material and sometimes having certain seating for pair and group works, while others are not required such as a computer, a video.

The subject matter has intrinsic interest in its own right; not only pupils get exposure to English but also their motivation because of the various texts chosen which are interesting, updated, according to their taste and have some degree of authenticity.

In general, the overall composition of the materials is acceptable considering the nature, age and level of the pupils and the type of teaching involved. It seems that we cannot expect a rather different balance between visual material and written text for this level except the one considered by the authors.

#### **4.6 Motivation and the Learner**

Cunningsworth (1984: 59) asserts that to motivate learners, teachers should look for various points in teaching materials such as "variety and pace, attractive appearance and feel, activities leading to personal involvement and self-investment in the learning process, and activities with a competitive or

problem-solving element in them". If texts have the potential to engage language learners, they can help them "achieve a personal multidimensional representation in which inner speech, sensory images and affective stimuli combine to make the text meaningful" (Tomlinson 2011: 110). *Crescent English Course for Yemen: level 4* texts have variety and pace, they are of interest to the learners because they cover various aspects of life that young people mostly deal with and care about so learners' age is also taken into account. The reading and listening texts are mostly about people from different Yemeni social and cultural backgrounds and about Yemeni places thus it adds to the variety. For examples, most of the people names are Yemeni (Aref, Aziz, Abla Saeed, Muna, Fuad Rashid, Talal, Ahmed Said, Hussein, Fuad Hassan, Mariam, Nadia Hassan, Adel Sufian, Mansour, Yousif Saleh, Khalil Ahmed, Laila, Dr. Saleh, Saif, Issa Said, Ali Abdullah, Salman Nasser ... etc.).

However, this does not mean that all the material is culture-specific. By including the interest of pupils from various parts of the world it can be really informative and appealing and makes English as a vehicle for cultural understanding. There are many examples of texts, peoples' names and places names that make the material not completely culture-specific. Examples of foreign people's names (Paul Archer, Jill, Carol, Martin, Jim Duffy, Mark Peters, Len Bush, Sue Nash, Kate, John, Jane, Sue White, Ann, Tom Baker, Dr. King, Tony Newton, Dr. Patel). Examples of reading texts which are not about Yemen: Gulf Air, Emirates, A Flight from England to Australia, Shopping in Exeter, Public opinion, Views from abroad-London, What can you do in Britain, Tourist attractions, Morocco- two holidays, Famous explorers, A day in the life of a London doctor, Great names in medicine). Language learning in that case can be seen as a vehicle for understanding culture by guiding pupils in perceiving and categorizing the social situation they may find themselves in, although the cultural context is subordinated to it.

The material has an attractive appearance. The Pupil's Book has good quality paper, too many coloured pictures, good layout and organization. All these things make learning appealing, attractive and understood.

With respect to role of the learning activities in encouraging the personal involvement of the pupils in the learning process, few activities are found that let the pupils talk about themselves and finding out about each other.

Examples from the Workbook about talking the pupils about themselves:

Unit 1: 1.9 B Now imagine that you are Aref. Write a message to Tariq.

1.10 A Read the conversation between Abla and Muna on Pupil's Book page 5. Imagine that you are Abla. Write a message for Shareefa.

Unit 2: 2.8 D Look at pages 10, 11, and 12 of your Pupil's Book. Make different conversations with your partner about one of these:

Checking-in choosing lunch asking for something to drink

Unit 4: 4.7 B In your copybook write at least five sentences about your own likes.

4.8 B Decide what you are going to do this afternoon and evening, using page 29 of your Pupil's Book. Write your plans here.

Unit 5: 5. 12 A Plan a trip round Yemen for a first-time visitor. Look back at Bob Farmer's itinerary on page 63. Add information about what the visitor can see or do in each place.

B Imagine that your partner is the visitor. Tell him/her about the trip you have planned. Answer any questions the visitor may ask.

Unit 7: 7. 7 D Now write four sentences of your own. Use *if, when, before* and *because*.

7. 10 A Write a description of yourself in your copybook.

Examples from the Workbook about finding out about each other:

Unit 1: 1. 6 A Read what these people are saying. What do you think their jobs are?

Unit 4: 4. 7 A Find out what kinds of programme your partner likes.

The coursebook materials, especially the Workbook activities, put high degree of responsibility for

the learning process on the pupils. All the four skills activities and language exercises are required to be done by the pupils individually, in pairs and collectively. This helps them in achieving autonomy in learning, since some activities contain the elements of competition and problem-solving.

#### 4.7 Overall Evaluation

The objective of *the Crescent English Course for Yemen: level 4* is to achieve in the pupils the two concepts of fluency and accuracy by using a variety of text types and genres to help them develop more effective listening, speaking, reading and writing skills, language analysis skills in grammar, vocabulary and social functions.

The coursebook seems to be more successful in improving the four skills and language analysis among pupils since they are the main goals and focus and most of the suggested time is allocated to them.

The particular strength of the coursebook is in its variety of authentic and compelling topics, recycling grammar and vocabulary inductively where skills activities are achieved and language exercises are answered. Its main weakness can be seen in the lack of a pronunciation teaching with specific focus on stress and intonation patterns since these features are undeniably essential for correct reading, speaking and above all understanding.

The coursebook is only useful for EFL situation, notably Yemeni situation because it is meant for the Yemeni pupils, especially it reflects to great extent the Yemeni culture.

#### 5 Conclusion

This study was conducted to evaluate *Crescent English Course for Yemen: level 4* (O'Neil & Snow, 2011). For this purpose, language content, selecting and grading of language items, presentation and practice of new language items, developing language skills and communicative abilities, supporting materials, motivation and the learner were evaluated based on Cunningsworth's (1984) materials evaluation checklist. In short, the book includes various authentic reading and listening texts of different genres covering a wide range of topics which are appealing to language learners and in accordance with their age and interest.

The coursebook is a general comprehensive one since it teaches all the language skills, language functions and forms and aspects of appropriateness. It concentrates much on the aspect of skills integration, which has been discovered in the Workbook activities. These activities are from controlled to less controlled to free production in both the skills of writing and speaking. The main skills of reading and listening have been tackled such as skimming, scanning and enjoyment. The new words are presented in different ways (coloured pictures, in texts) and they are recycled sufficiently in the subsequent lessons for consolidation of meanings and forms. The grammatical points are inductively introduced and then they are summarized at the end of each unit in the Pupil's Book under the title "Language Review". Moreover, some grammar rules are re-explained in the Teacher's Book and the exercises presented in the Workbook.

The main weakness point in this coursebook is that it has not presented the aspects of phonology, except they are presented incidentally in the cassette sections. This might be in accordance to Cunningsworth's (1984: 17) remark:

The answer probably lies in the immense difficulty of producing a course that is well graded at several levels of language simultaneously... *also* the coursebook writer often finds that incorporating a systematic and carefully graded phonology-teaching component simultaneously is well-nigh impossible.

In general, the result of this evaluation supports to great extent Cunningsworth's (1984: 89) remark:

No coursebook will be totally suited to a particular teaching situation. The teacher will have to find his own way of using it and adapting it if necessary. So we should not be looking for the perfect coursebook which meets all our requirements, but rather for the best possible fit between what the coursebook offers and what we as teachers and students need.

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## Appendix (1)

### 1- Language content:

1.1- What aspects of the language system are taught? To what extent is the material based upon or organized around the teaching of:

(a) language form (b) language function (c) patterns of communicative interaction?

1.2- Which aspects of language form are taught?

(a) phonology (production of individual sounds, stress, rhythm, intonation)

(b) grammar: (i) morphology (ii) syntax

(c) vocabulary (lexis)

(d) discourse (sequence of sentences forming a unified whole)

1.3- What explicit reference is there to appropriateness (the matching of language to its social context and function)? How systematically is it taught? How fully (comprehensively) is it taught?

1.4- What kind of English is taught?

(a) dialect: (i) class (ii) geographic

(b) style: (i) formal (ii) neutral (iii) informal

(c) occupational register

(d) medium: (i) written (ii) spoken

1.5- What language skills are taught?

(a) receptive: (i) written (reading) (ii) spoken (listening)

(b) productive: (i) written (writing) (ii) spoken (speaking)

(c) integration of skills: e.g. note taking, dictation, reading aloud, participating in conversation

(d) translation: (i) into English (ii) from English

### 2- Selection and grading of language items

2.1- Does the material follow

(a) a structural syllabus (b) a functional syllabus

2.2- Is the selection and sequence of the language to be taught based on:

(a) an attempt to identify probable student need (*student-centered approach*)

(b) the internal structure of the language (*subject-centered approach*)

2.3- Grading and recycling

2.3.1 Is the grading of the language content

(a) steep (b) average (c) shallow

2.3.2 Is the progression

(a) linear (b) cyclical

2.3.3 Is there adequate recycling of

(a) grammar items (b) lexis (vocabulary)?

### 3- Presentation and practice of new language items

3.1.1- What the underlying characteristics of the approach to language teaching?

(a) influence of behaviourist learning theory (b) influence of the cognitive view

(c) a combination of both (d) other influences (e.g. group dynamics, humanistic education)

3.1.2- Is the language learning process assumed to be essentially

(a) inductive (b) deductive (c) a combination of both

### 3.2 Presentation and practice of grammar items

3.2.1- Comment on the presentation of new structures (grammar items). How are new structures

presented? To what extent is the presentation:

- (a) related to what has been previously learned (b) meaningful (in context)
- (c) systematic (d) representative of the underlying grammar rule
- (e) appropriate to the given context (f) relevant to learners' needs and interests?

3.2.2- Comment on practice activities for new structures. Are they

- (a) adequate in number (b) varied (c) meaningful
- (d) appropriate to the given context (e) relevant to learners' needs and interests
- (f) sufficiently controlled?

3.3- Comment on the presentation and practice of new lexis (vocabulary)

- (a) How is new lexis presented (e.g. in word lists, with visuals, in text)?
- (b) How is the meaning of new lexis taught (e.g. through context, through explanation, by translation, through the use of semantic relations e.g. synonymy, hyponymy)?
- (c) Is new lexis recycled adequately/
- (d) What is the amount of new lexis taught in each unit, text etc? (This can be expressed as a percentage of new lexis in relation to familiar lexis.)

3.4- Is there any systematic attempt to teach the phonological (sound) system? If so, comment on content and method of teaching under the following headings:

- (a) Recognition of individual sounds (phonemes)
- (b) Production of individual sounds (phonemes)
- (c) Recognition and understanding of stress patterns and intonation contours
- (d) Production (in appropriate contexts) of stress patterns and intonation contours

#### **4- Developing language skills and communicative abilities**

##### **4.1 Free production of speech**

4.1.1- What activities are there for free production of spoken English?

4.1.2- What is the relative proportion of time devoted to presentation of new language items, to practice of these items, and to free production activities?

##### **4.2 Materials for reading, listening and writing**

4.2.1- Comment on the extent and nature of reading texts and accompanying exercises.

4.2.2- Comment on the extent and nature of listening materials and accompanying exercises.

4.2.3- Comment on the extent and nature of writing exercises.

##### **4.3 Integrated skills and communicative abilities**

4.3.1- What activities are there for integrating language skills?

4.3.2- What activities are there for communicative interactions and the teaching of communicative strategies? Are they representative of and modeled on the processes that take place in real language use?

4.3.3- Are there any exercises that implicitly or explicitly teach how to combine functional units of language to create discourse and how to recognize the structure of discourse?

#### **5- Supporting materials**

5.1 Does the course materials include the following? If so, evaluate usefulness in each case.

- (a) visual material (b) recorded material (c) examples of authentic language
- (d) a teacher's book (e) an index of grammar items, functions etc.
- (f) a vocabulary list (preferably indicating in which unit each word is first used)

5.2 Are there any materials for testing?

5.2.1 If so, are there materials for:

- (a) entry testing (diagnostic testing) (b) progress testing (c) achievement testing?

Are there any suggestions for informal continuous assessment?

5.2.2 Are the tests:

(a) discrete item tests (b) communicative tests (c) a combination of both?

5.2.3 Do the tests relate well to:

(a) the learners' communicative needs (b) what is taught by the course material?

### **5.3 Other considerations**

5.3.1 Evaluate the degree of support for the teacher and the amount and quality of guidance provided.

(a) Does the material require a high degree of teacher input?

(b) Is the material almost self-sufficient (teacherproof)?

(c) Is it suitable for a teacher who is not a native speaker?

(d) Does it require the teacher to have a native speaker intuition?

5.3.2 Does the material impose any specific physical restraints (e.g. material only usable in darkened room with projection facilities; material requiring regular use of a language laboratory)?

5.3.3 Does the subject matter contained in the course material have any intrinsic interest in its own right (or is it transparently a pretext for language work)?

5.3.4 Evaluate the overall composition of the material (i.e. the relationship of the parts to the whole).

### **6- Motivation and the learner**

6.1 Does the material have variety and pace?

6.2 Is the subject matter of reading texts, listening passages, etc. likely to be of genuine interest to the learners, taking into account their age, social background and cultural background, their learning objectives and the composition of the class?

6.3 Are the learning activities in the course material likely to appeal to the learners?

6.4 Does the material have an attractive appearance (visuals, layout, typography etc.)?

6.5 Do the activities in the materials encourage the personal involvement of the learners in the learning process (e.g. by taking about themselves or finding out about each other)?

6.6 How much responsibility for the learning process is to be assumed by the learners themselves, individually or collectively?

6.7. Is there a competitive or problem-solving element in the learning activities?

6.8 Does the material have a specific cultural setting (e.g. young, trendy, middle-class London) or is it non culture-specific?

6.9 If material is culture-specific, will this be acceptable to the learners?

6.10 Does the material include aspects of British and/or American culture so that language learning is seen as a vehicle for cultural understanding?

6.11 Is the cultural context included only to provide a setting for the content of the material (i.e. is cultural context subordinated to language learning)?

6.12 Does the cultural context of the material guide the learners in perceiving and categorizing the social situation they may find themselves in, with a view of helping them to match their language to the situation (i.e. to use English appropriately)?

### **7- Overall evaluation**

7.1 Briefly state the objectives of the material.

7.2 To what extent is it successful in achieving these objectives?

7.3 Note particular strengths.

7.4 Note particular weaknesses.

7.5 Are there any notable omissions?

7.6 For what type of learning situations is the material suitable?

7.7 For what type of learning situations is the material unsuitable?

7.8 Comparisons with any other material evaluated.

7.9 General conclusion.

**Appendix (2)**Activities list by page numbers of *Crescent English Course for Yemen: level 4(WB4)*

**RC: Reading comprehension, LC: Listening comprehension, W: Writing, S: Speaking, R+W: Reading and Writing (integrated), L+W: Listening and Writing (integrated), L+S: Listening and Speaking (integrated), R+S: Reading and Speaking (integrated), R+L: Reading and Listening (integrated), G: Grammar, V: Vocabulary and P: Punctuation**

Unit no	RC	LC	W	S	R+W	L+W	L+S	R+S	R+L	G	V	P
1	2,3,4,5	3,5	5,6,7,9	-	4,5,6,7,8,10,11	7	9,10	-	-	2	1,4	6,7
2	15,17		17,24,28		12,14,18,22,23,24,26,27,28	12,17	-	13,18,19	15	18,21,22,27	16,25	-
3	37,39,41	30,32,37	33,37,38	31,35,36	29,32,33,34,40,41	29,35,36	39,40	-	-	-	30,31	-
4	56	42,48,	50	-	42,43,44,50,51,55,56	49,50,54	49,52,53	-	-	45,46,47,54	44	53,54
5	62,75	61	59,61,62,63	-	57,58,60,67,68,73,74,75	61,67,68	71,72,74	-	-	64,65,66,68,69,70	69	-
6	76,78,81,82,83,94	76,83,91	78,79,81,85,93	82	76,77,80,82,83,84,85,88,89,91,92,93,94	80,84,90	89,90,91,94	-	89	79,83,86,87,92	76,78,93	-
7	-	98	97,98,99,102,103,107	-	95,96,100,101,103,104,105,106,107	-	101	95	-	95,98,99,103,104,106	96,100,102,105	97