# A Content Analysis of the Speaking Skill Authenticity in Student's Book of Action Pack Seven in Jordan

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## Abstract

Based on the specific speaking outcomes under the Speaking Section in the General Guidelines and General and Specific Outcomes for English Language in Jordan of 2006, the present paper aims at analyzing the speaking activities of the student's book in Action Pack Seven to determine to what extent the speaking activities are authentic and meets the specific and general outcomes for English language . Frequencies and Percentages are used to present the results of the questions of the study. The findings of the analysis revealed that the speaking activities of the student's book in Action Pack Seven have a high degree of authenticity. There is a strong match between speaking specific outcomes and the speaking skill's authenticity in Action Pack Seven. Such focus on authentic speaking skill highlights the significance of the speaking skill in building the communicative competence of the Jordanian students at this stage.

**Keywords:** Content analysis, Authenticity, Action Pack Seven

## الخلاصة:

بناء على النتاجات التخصصية للمحادثة تحت قسم المحادثة في كتاب الخطوط العريضة العامة والنتاجات العامة والتخصصية للغة الانجليزية في الاردن لعام ٢٠٠٦، فان هذه الورقة البحثية تهدف الى تحليل انشطة المحادثة في كتاب الطالب "حزم المهام" ٧ لتحديد الى اي درجة انشطة المحادثة اصيلة وتحاكي النتاجات العامة والخاصة. تم استخدام التكرارات والنسب المئوية لعرض نتائج اسئلة الدراسة. وقد كشفت نتائج التحليل ان انشطة المحادثة في كتاب الطالب " حزم المهام" ٧ على درجة عالية من الأصالة. وهناك توافق قوي بين النتاجات التخصصية للمحادثة وأصالة مهارة المحادثة في كتاب "حزم المهام" ٧. وهذا التركيز على أصالة مهارة المحادثة يبرز أهمية مهارة المحادثة في بناء الكفاءة التواصلية للطلاب الاردنيين في هذه المرحلة.

**الكلمات المفتاحية:** تحليل المحتوى، الأصالة، حزم المهام ٧

## Introduction

The Jordanian Ministry of Education (2006) developed general guidelines and general and specific outcomes for English as a foreign language for grades one through twelve. These guidelines describe the four skills students are expected to acquire at each grade. The General Framework describes the features of the new ERFKE curricula. These guidelines (2006) focus on the following: 1- knowledge economy 2- communication technologies 3- New roles for teachers and students 4- Variety of instructional and assessment strategies. They help students communicate effectively (Ministry of Education, 2006).

The English language outcomes are organized into four organizers, which correspond to the four skills of language use (listening, speaking, reading and writing). Foreign language teaching has changed from concentrating on language components; grammar, vocabulary, and pronunciation to a focus on the communicative proficiency and the integration of four skills. The outcomes are designed to develop these skills including using oral language accurately and effectively (Bachman, 2001).

With the rise of the Communicative Language Teaching Approach (CLT) , more emphasis has been placed on productive skills like speaking and writing. Like any skill, speaking is one of the crucial skills in TEFL. To master it, students need to show mastery over the other skills of language. Speaking is an important skill especially in settings where English is taught as a foreign language. It enables students to communicate their thoughts, opinions and feelings in real-life contexts. Proponents of CLT recommend engaging students in authentic, meaningful, communicative activities to enhance their speaking skill. Therefore, teachers should create situations and provide opportunities for students to interact through pair/group work(Ministry of Education, 2006).

In this respect, the Jordanian Ministry of Education (2006) stated that students should respond to authentic contexts. It provides situations that are relevant to the students' daily life and real context, i.e., authentic materials. Moreover, the contexts presented in textbooks should be useful for the students in a way that help them cope with the need of the knowledge explosion and age of communication.

Nunan (1991) stated that authentic texts should be introduced into the learning situation. Omaggio (2001) asserted that "Opportunities must be provided for students to practice using language in a range of contexts likely to be encountered in the target culture. She also stated that authentic language should be used in instruction wherever and whenever possible"(p.90)

## Questions of the Study

Based on the Specific Grade Outcomes in the *General Guidelines and General and Specific Outcomes for English Language in Jordan of 2006*, this paper aims at analyzing the speaking activities in Action Pack Seven to determine to what extent the speaking activities are authentic. It attempts to answer the following questions:

1) To what extent are the speaking activities in Action Pack Seven from module one to module three authentic?

2) To what extent does Action Pack Seven include activities that meet the specific grade outcome S7.2.2 which states ' in a small group, discuss reading material to fill a chart or table'?

3) To what extent does Action Pack Seven include activities that meet the specific grade outcome S7.2.3 which states ' interview peers in a focused discussion(e.g., proper behavior in public)'?

## Significance of Study

Analyzing curricula in general and textbooks in particular plays an important role in EFL teaching and learning. It helps supervisors, authors and researchers to find points of strength and weakness in the textbook. Cunningsworth (1995) explained that knowing strengths and weaknesses in textbooks can be very beneficial to teachers and stakeholders.

Thus, the researcher intends to investigate the required authentic context that should be involved in the content of action pack for seventh grade. Accordingly, a content analysis of English textbooks in this regard becomes a necessity especially when authenticity is concerned. The researcher selected Action Pack for Seventh grade as a sample of the English textbooks used in Jordanian public schools. This study will be the first to be conducted on the authenticity of speaking activities in Action Pack 7. It is an important attempt to analyze the speaking activities. The findings of this study will be useful to educators who are interested in curriculum planning and development, teachers, supervisors and textbook writers.

## Background of the Study

## A-English Language Curricula in Jordan

Action Pack is an English course for basic and secondary level students in Jordan including materials that are based on the General Guidelines and General and Specific Outcomes. It claims that "English language teaching should be interactively attempted and evaluated in light of the basic principles of communicative language teaching." (Ministry of Education 2006, p.9).

Action Pack series is a twelve-level course for Jordanian students, leading them from the basic to the secondary stage. It is based on the communicative language teaching method, combining topic - based approach with functional language practice as well as careful attention to grammar and vocabulary. It offers learners a clear and systematic approach to grammar with thorough practice and integrated- skill syllabus (Ministry of Education, 2006).

The student's book of seventh Grade is divided into six modules. Each focuses on a particular theme which develops it in different ways. The book begins with a two –page 'opener'. The opener is like map of the book that consists of the module and its title, functions, grammar, vocabulary and skills. Each module starts with the outcomes and ends with 'crossword puzzle' and 'project'. The projects give students chances to practice English in a less formal context and encourage cooperation and interaction between students. It may need some research and other preparation which can be done as homework. The book also includes boxes for 'speaking and listening strategies'. There is a section for language development and another for communication workshop. Moreover, Some units contain a 'Factfile' which gives additional information about a particular topic. The students can use this information to support a listening task or to contribute to a group discussion. Most units include a green 'Quote' box. This gives a short quotation, either from famous writer, or from an expert on a particular subject. The quotation stands as a kind of comment on the topic. Furthermore, there is a section entitled 'over to you' which provides a wide space for peer conversation.

Therefore, a textbook is an essential part of the curriculum because it is widely used as a resource that provides the main source of information as well as guidance and structure. It also provides communicative activities, vocabulary, reading, writing, speaking, and listening.

Allwright (1990) views textbooks as resource books for ideas and activities rather than instructional materials. O'Neill (1990) believes that course books have to meet students' needs and interests. Romero (1975) mentioned the following qualities that good English textbooks should include: 1. "A language course should be published in the form of series. 2. The textbook should be attractive. 3. The lessons should be short and well organized. 4. The material should be interesting for students 5. Exercises should be short. 6. The textbook should include short dialogues. 7. The textbook should have achievable aims"(p.63)

## B-Content analysis

Content analysis is a methodology in social sciences and humanities by which texts are studied for authenticity or meaning. Lasswell (cited in Krippendorff ,1980) formulated the major questions of content analysis: "Who says what, to whom, why, to what extent and with what effect?". Hostli (1969) showed the uses and purposes of content analysis as follows: First, making inferences about the antecedents of communications by asking who? and why? Second, describing and making inferences about the characteristics of communications by asking how?, what? and to whom? Third, Making inferences about the consequences of communications by answering the question with what effect?

Berelson (1952) pointed out that content analysis is a systematic technique for analyzing the words of text to form categories based on rules of coding. Then, inferences are made by using other methods of data collection.

Palmquist (1990) asserted that content analysis is a research tool focused on the actual content and internal features of media. It is used to determine the presence of certain words, concepts, themes, phrases, characters, or sentences within texts and to quantify this presence in an objective manner. Texts can be as books, essays, discussions, newspaper headlines, historical documents, speeches, conversations, advertising, theater, or any form of communicative language. To conduct a content analysis on a text, the text is broken down into categories on a variety of levels (word, , phrase, sentence, or theme). Then it is examined using one of content analysis' basic methods: conceptual analysis or relational analysis. The results are then used to make inferences about the messages within the text(s), the writer(s), the audience, and even the culture.

Palmquist (1990) stated that content analysis offers several advantages to researchers. It looks directly at communication via texts. It can allow for both quantitative and qualitative analysis, and can provide valuable historical/cultural insights over time. It can be used to interpret texts and analyze interactions. It is also considered as a research method "based on hard facts, as opposed to Discourse Analysis"( p:3).

## Definition of the Term

## Authenticity

Authenticity in this paper means using language that is relevant to students' context, culture and interests. It also judges the way the content is presented and whether this presentation reflects students' real life or not.

## Content under Analysis

The speaking activities in the first semester, module one to module three, of Action Pack Seven.

## Criteria of Analysis

The criterion used in this study is the existence of authenticity in the speaking activities in Action Pack Seven that meets with the Speaking Specific Outcomes of Seventh Grade, as stated in the General Guidelines for English Language.

## Categories of Analysis

The categories of analysis are pair work and group work.

## Units of Analysis

The units of the present analysis are the Speaking Activities in Action Pack Seven from module one to module three.

## Study Instrument

In order to help answering the questions of the study, the researcher uses content analysis sheet.

## Limitations of the Study

The generalization of the findings of the study is limited to the student's book of Action Pack Seven

## Literature Review

In this literature review, the researcher presents some examples of studies in content analysis that has been used as a research tool.

Hajj-Ismael (2011) analyzed the extent to which the speaking activities in Grade 12 English textbook were well structured and organized in such a way that they could promote speaking skills. The speaking activities were identified and analyzed based on the basic components of communicative tasks as well as the evaluation checklist for communicative tasks suggested by Nunan (1989). Content analysis was used as a major instrument to obtain information regarding how appropriate and suitable the speaking activities were for the students. To analyze and interpret the data, the researcher used qualitative research method. Findings of the study indicated that less credence is given to the oral communicative tasks.

Kartini(2015) conducted a study to describe the speaking activities of English textbook entitled "English Alive 1" for tenth Grade for Senior High School student. The researcher also studies the feasibility of content and presentation of the textbook using descriptive method. The findings concluded that the score of the feasibility of content is 3.4 which means that the content is good. The score of feasibility of presentation is 3.3 which means that the presentation is good. Therefore, speaking activities are appropriate with school-based curriculum.

Al-Mashaqba (2017) investigated the extent to which the listening and speaking lessons which are presented in textbook entitled "Mosaic One Listening and speaking" are characterized with appropriateness and meaningfulness in light of communicative competence and meet the Principles and features of communicative language teaching. The content analysis was at micro and macro level in terms of the availability of seven criteria of communicative competence in the textbook under the study and in terms of strength and weakness of the content. The findings indicate that The English textbook fulfilled 84% of communicative competence's criteria of the good EFL textbook adapted from some experts in the light of communicative competence.

Chaqiqi (2017) analyzed speaking materials in the Course Book Entitled "Scaffolding" For Grade 7. A descriptive qualitative research was used. The instrument in this research was checklist table taken from combining collected data and the criteria. The result of this research is that the quality of the speaking material in  this course book is "Fair" with whole percentage 70,83 % . The speaking materials in the course book is relevant with good speaking criteria on the checklist table.

Hidayah (2017) conducted a study to investigate the task of "Conversation in English Textbook" developed to enhance the students' speaking and listening skills. The researcher used content analysis and documentation as data collecting technique. It involved classifying and describing the kinds of communicative competence, coding and scoring the data, counting the frequency and dominant of the competencies, and drawing conclusion. After analyzing the tasks on the "Conversation in English textbook", the researcher obtained the results. Firstly, the tasks which were designed to develop students' speaking skill were 83 or 74% and the tasks which were designed to develop students' listening skill were 29 or 26%. It means that the material designed in the tasks of the textbook are "sufficient" to develop students' speaking and listening skills. Secondly, it can be concluded that the dominant skill developed on "Conversation in English textbook" is "speaking skill".

Mizbani and Chalak (2017) conducted this study to analyze listening and speaking activities of the textbook "Prospect 3" which is used for Junior High School third graders in Iran. It investigates in which level of lower or higher of the learning objectives related to Bloom's (2001)

Revised Taxonomy of Cognitive Domain they would be classified. The findings revealed that all of the activities of listening and speaking skills were classified as the low level of cognitive complexity and could not train the students of this grade for high levels of learning objectives. Hence, the teachers should employ extra activities to make the students perform in higher levels of thinking skills and book designers should improve the content of the textbook to cover the higher levels of the cognitive domain.

Ratmanida and Suryanti (2019) investigated the quality of speaking materials in the English textbook for the tenth grade of senior high school at Indonisia. The data of this descriptive research is the textbook assessment scores in the form of quantitative data. The instrument used to collect the data is the Textbook evaluation sheet. It was found that the speaking material of the textbook is adequate.

Hoiruddin and Ulfa (2020) studied the feasibility of implementing an inductive approach in teaching speaking skills. The qualitative description was used in this study by using content analysis. The technique of obtaining data used documentation. The data were analyzed by coding, displaying, and making verification. The results of the study indicate the interrelation of the implementation and responses of the students in using inductive approach. The inductive approach is very helpful for students in learning to speak English. It is suggested that inductive approach can be effectively used in speaking class.

Ja'afreh (2020) analyzed the extent to which Action Pack Nine provides and includes communicative activities, identifying the types of the communicative activities addressed in the textbook under analysis and assessing the frequency of the common presentation of these types. To achieve the aims of the study, Bilash Criteria for the communicative activity (2009) were used in order to identify and distinguish between the types of communicative and non-communicative activities. In addition, three content analysis sheets were designed in order to answer the questions of the study. The frequencies and percentages were used to present the results of analysis. The findings reveal that the textbook under analysis includes different types of communicative activities.

Rachmijati and Cahyati (2020) analyzed the language skills presented in the English textbooks. The research employed qualitative content analysis. A checklist was used to collect the data, then presented in the percentages. The result showed that the book "When English Rings the Bell" focused more on Speaking skills (35%), whereas "English in Focus" focused more on Writing skills (48%). Both books have appropriate proportion to support students' literacy skills.

Baig, Javed, Siddiquah and Khanam (2021) analyzed the English textbook of Grade 8 published by Punjab Textbook Board in Pakistan in the light of student learning outcomes (SLOs) of four competencies: reading and thinking skills, writing skills, oral communication skills, and formal and lexical aspects of language of the latest English curriculum in Pakistan. A semi-structured checklist was developed by the researchers. The results revealed that the textbook understudy focuses on reading comprehension only. There is thus a dire need to incorporate thinking skills, writing skills, oral/aural communication skills, and formal and lexical aspects of language in the textbook.

Koral and Mirici (2021) investigated the distribution of the speaking skills in the English language curricula and the course books of high schools in Turkey from the perspective of Bloom's revised taxonomy. The study adopted mixed-methods research design, based on both qualitative and quantitative data. The data were collected from the high school English language curricula and the course books for the grades between 9th and 12th in Turkey. The data obtained were analyzed via content analysis and illustrated in the taxonomy table using the descriptive statistics. The results revealed that both the speaking outcomes in the curricula and the speaking activities in the course-books were mostly placed in the lower order categories according to the cognitive process dimension, in all the grades except for the 12th grade.

Melati (2021) focused his research on speaking activities in two versions of English Textbooks. The researcher used two content analysis matrixes in collecting data. The first analysis matrix will show the suitability of the speaking activities in the two versions of the English textbook with the 2013 curriculum syllabus. The second analysis matrix will show the percentage scores of the two versions of the English textbook based on the criteria of 2013 curriculum. As for the results of data analysis, it shows that speaking activities in the two versions of the English textbook are in accordance with the 2013 curriculum syllabus. In conclusion, both versions of English textbooks are good categories for students in carrying out the teaching and learning process.

## Methodology and Procedures

In order to help answering the questions of the study, the researcher develops content analysis sheet. It is designed to examine the speaking activities in Action Pack Seven.  Frequencies and percentages are used to report this analysis.

## Reliability and Validity of the Instrument

The reliability of a content analysis study refers to its stability, or the tendency for coders to consistently re-code the same data in the same way over a period of time. the analysis was repeated after seven days to find that there is a consistency of (0.98) between the two analyses. This indicates the high reliability of the analysis.

To establish the validity of the list of activities used in the analysis, it is given to a jury of three English teachers to ascertain its appropriateness for the purposes of the research.

## Findings and Discussion

The following Table presents the frequencies and percentages of the speaking activities in Action Pack Seven from module one to module three.

**Table 1: Frequencies and percentages of the speaking activities.**

| No. | Type of Speaking Activities | Frequencies of activities | Percentages Of activities | Frequencies Of Authentic Activities | Percentages Of Authentic Activities |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1- | Pair work | 12 | 60 | 11 | 57.8 |
| 2- | Group work | 8 | 40 | 8 | 42.1 |
| | Total | 20 | 100 | 19 | 99.9 |

The Table shows that there is much more emphasis on authentic speaking. Having a detailed look into the Table, the researcher notices there are 19 authentic activities out of 20 activities. Such focus on authentic speaking highlights the significance of the speaking skill in building the communicative competence of the students.

Considering **the first category**, the researcher finds that there are 11 authentic activities that urge students to do pair work. Examples supporting this finding are scattered throughout Action Pack seven. With regard to (exercise 8,p.8) ,students work in pairs to ask and answer questions about what they do on Friday. They are given an example as a model to follow. This is an authentic activity since students talk about their daily life and the chores they do on Friday. Moreover, the names chosen for the given example (Abla and Nour) are purely authentic.

In (exercise 5,p.10)students are asked to work in pairs and choose one of the activities or jobs mentioned by Dr. Fred. Then, prepare some notes explaining what they do and what they feel when they do it. This activity is highly authentic because students practice talking about dangerous jobs and adventures which they watch in films or read in books, newspapers and magazines.

Concerning *Over to you* activity (Ex.7,p.20),students work in pairs to make a list of actions they can do to fight global warming. Then, they ask and answer questions in pairs with *How often do you…?* The researcher thinks that this activity is authentic since students witness climate change in their daily life. Temperatures are rising leading to global warming. In addition, students are familiar with the term 'global warming' because they read about it in different subjects like science, history, Arabic…etc.

Another authentic activity that deals with pair work is (exercise 3,p.22). Here, students make a list of things that they can and cannot recycle. This is an authentic example in the sense that students talk about recyclable things they have at home.

Souk Jara (Ex.1,p.30) is another authentic activity. It is a market in Jabal Amman. Students ask and answer questions about this market. It is considered authentic because it is related to the context, in which they live, Jordan.

There is only one activity that is not authentic. In (exercise 4,p.34), students take turns to give each other directions to get to the British Museum. It is not authentic since it is about a place that is alien to the students' world. It should be better to talk about a museum in Jordan instead of that one in Britain.

According to **the second category**, all the activities that deal with group work are authentic. In (exercise 4,p.17), students are going to work in a group to discuss the consequences of global warming. This activity is authentic in the sense that students are going to make a list of climate changes in Jordan (changes in the seasons, temperatures, rain , floods, wind and drought).Therefore, they witness these changes in their daily life.

With regard to (exercise 9,p.23), students work in groups to discuss environmental initiative that they can start at school. In this sense, they can talk about establishing ecology club, campaign for cleaning the environment and planting trees in the school garden. It is an authentic activity since students discuss environmental issues related to their school.

Concerning( exercise 10,p.35), students work in a group to give each other directions to see the objects Noura and Ibrahim want to see. This is an authentic activity because students give directions to a place they know well. In addition, (Noura and Ibrahim) are Arabic names connected with Jordanian culture.

In (exercise 2,p.36), students work in a group to make a list of interesting places in their city or in another city in Jordan. This activity is highly authentic because students are required to talk about places in their region. For example, they can talk about famous places in their town like Pella, Um Qais and the Hot Springs in North Shuna.

Therefore, Students discuss topics related to their environment and to their real world. These topics illustrate how the teaching of culture can be achieved while students engage in communicative tasks.

As can be seen in the Table, there are 8 speaking activities out of 20 in Action Pack Seven, First Semester urges students to work in groups. This result shows that the number of these activities is sufficient and meets the Specific Speaking Outcome S7.2.2 stated in the General Guidelines and the General and Specific Outcomes for the English Language,2006. Moreover, it is obvious that there are 12 speaking activities out of 20 in Action Pack Seven that require students to work in pairs. This result shows that the number of these activities is sufficient and meets with the Specific Speaking Outcome S7.2.3 stated in the General Guidelines and the General and Specific Outcomes for the English Language,2006.

## Conclusion

The findings of the analysis reveal that the speaking activities in Action Pack Seven have a high degree of authenticity. There is a strong match between the speaking specific outcomes and the authenticity of speaking activities. Besides, the researcher believes that the Specific Grade Outcome stated in the General Guidelines for the English Language in Jordan is covered and included in acceptable proportions through the speaking activities in module one to module three of Action Pack Seven.

The researcher suggests that extra speaking activities that deal with students' environment are demanded so that students will learn more effectively. The researcher also recommends using varied number of examples related to students' context, culture and interests such as speaking about Jordanian food, weddings and celebrations. Furthermore, the researcher hopes that more group work will be added to Action Pack Seven to make a balance between group work and pair work. Therefore, the exposure to the students 'real environment will motivate them to communicate their thoughts and practice the language effective

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