



LEVEL AND QUALITY OF PHYSICAL ASPECTS AND THE DEVELOPMENT OF STRUCTURES AND VOCABULARY OF HIGH SCHOOL MIZO TEXTBOOKS PRESCRIBED BY MIZORAM BOARD OF SCHOOL EDUCATION: AN ANALYTICAL

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Abstract: The study mainly deals with analysis of High School Mizo Textbooks prescribed by Mizoram Board of School Education in terms of the physical aspects which includes cover design, printing and layout, font size, price, quality of papers and illustrations, and the development of structures and vocabularies such as spelling, punctuation, glossaries, sentences etc. for the development of language skills. It was observed that the textbooks cover designs were unattractive where the weights were convenient for the students and the prices were affordable too. Illustrations were not given in both the textbooks although the printing and layout of the textbooks were satisfactory. There were no spelling mistake, incorrect punctuation and sentences to be found, the glossaries presented were sufficient but were less presented in the exercises for the students to apply it in meaningful way. However, some suggestions were also discussed based on the observation.

Key words: Level, quality, physical aspects, development, structures, vocabulary, High School, Mizo Textbooks, MBSE, analytical, study.

1. Introduction:

A good textbook serves as a guide to the syllabus, particularly suggesting what should be taught. Textbook also provide exercises, activities and suggestions for further reading, which encourages the teacher to supplement material from other sources. Physical Aspects can be defined as those elements visible to the eye, specifically the physical elements. This simply means the first thing you see when you look at someone or something. Structures can be defined as the arrangement of and relations between the parts or elements of something complex. It can also be defined as the way that something is built, arranged or organized. Vocabulary is defined as a list or collection of

words and phrases. According to Cambridge English Dictionary, vocabulary is “All the words known and used by a particular person”.

The physical aspects of the prescribed textbooks were analyzed in terms of the textbook cover design, printing and layout, font size, prices, quality of paper and illustrations. Structure and vocabulary is the basis for the development of all the other skills: reading comprehension, listening comprehension, speaking, writing, spelling, pronunciation, glossaries and sentences.

2. Rationale:

Mother tongue is a medium through which one conveys emotions, views, ideas and interests are expressed. It is also further observed as a medium of acquiring knowledge, literacy and understanding. Mother tongue is the dominant language and it is the main component of the cognitive development for the learners. One of the main principles of educational psychology is first to ascertain what the child already knows, and then to start accordingly (Ausubel, 1968 as quoted by Srivastava, A.K and Khatoon, Rashida, 1980). Education in the mother tongue is believed to facilitate richer classroom interaction because it ensures participation of the learners. It also provides them with an opportunity to express themselves freely thus encouraging them to develop their creativity. This in turn ensures a shift from rote learning to constructivism, critical thinking and problem solving attitudes. Hence, learning is made a joyful experience (Kapur, 2009). The UNESCO report (1953) writes, “Psychologically, it is the system of meaningful sign that in his mind works automatically for expression and understanding. Sociologically it is the meaning of identification among the members of the community to which he belongs. Educationally he learns more quickly through it than through an unfamiliar linguistic medium” (Srivastava&Khatoon, 1980).

A book cover design is one of the most important aspects to gain the attention and it must attract the students. It is the first impression that a book creates on its potential readers. It can also make the learners engage in their learning. The printing and layout of the books are very important as it impacts both accessibility and usability for the learners. It is thus needed to understand the target audience, the message we are trying to communicate to the learners, and it is also one way of measuring the quality textbook.

Font size of the textbook means much to the readers as it is one way for attracting the readers. The line spacing must be convenient to read for healthy students and keeping in mind children with different abilities. Moreover, the price of the textbook must be reasonable for all the families and it can be a way for providing equal opportunity for the learners to make the textbook available for them. Textbook is the main source of students; not only teaching materials for teachers.

The quality of paper proves how much value is given to the textbook and therefore, the qualities of papers are needed to be observed to find out whether they are sufficient to use it for the whole session. The illustration enables the readers to explore the world within their imagination and make connections between what they have just read and visual image, however, it is the illustrations that attract and gain the attention of the readers as well as helps them to have an in depth understanding of their lessons. Hence, it is really in need to analyze the illustrations presented on the High School Mizo textbook whether it is sufficient enough for the learners.

Apart from the physical aspects, the structures and vocabulary play an important role for the development of language skills. Through writing, reading, listening and speaking, the students will be able to develop their skills and enrich their vocabulary as well. For this to happen, it is a must to have an analytical study on how the development of structures and vocabulary take place, and how to use and put punctuation at the right time particularly on writing and reading section.

An evaluation of previously revised Mizo textbooks had been taken up in 2010 but no study has been done further. Therefore, the investigator finds it importance to have an analytical study of the quality of physical aspects and the development of structures and vocabulary of high school Mizo textbooks under MBSE for the development of language skills.

3. Objectives:

1. To analyse the physical aspects of high school Mizo Textbooks prescribed by MBSE.
2. To trace and analyse the development of structures and vocabularies for the development of language skills.

4. Methodology and Procedure

Research design: Qualitative research was used by the investigator.

Tools used: High school Mizo Textbooks were the tools used for the study.

Population and sample: All the High School Mizo Textbooks were the population and sample for the study.

Mode of data collection: The investigator read and observed all the textbooks based on the set objectives.

Procedure of data analysis: The researcher used qualitative analysis and further classified different points involved in the textbooks. "Guiding Principles for Quality Textbooks" developed by the Textbook Committee, Education Bureau, June 2016 was used as guidelines.

5. Analysis and Interpretation:

1. Physical Aspects of High School Mizo textbooks in terms of Physical Aspects:

Cover Design: It was found out that the quality of the books' covers of both Class IX and Class X were not satisfactory to use for the whole year or session as they were too thin, the bindings were not strong enough and would be easily torn. Moreover, the color used for Class IX cover, which was reddish brown, was too dark and unattractive for the students. The illustration on the cover i.e. two girls sitting in front of the tomb had no relation to any of the content within the text which proved to be very irrelevant altogether.

Likewise, a picture of suvel (weaving machine) printed on the cover of Class X textbook was observed to be unsatisfactory as the size of the picture was very small. The back cover contained scenery which was not at all related to their course content.

It was observed that the size of the textbooks were appropriate for the students. The technical specification of the size of the books were "18cm x 24cm" which is called crown size, an average magazine size mostly used in Mizoram where the size of the textbooks were fixed by MBSE.

Printing and Layout: It was observed that the printing and layout of the textbooks were both found to be quite appropriate as different topics were presented in unit ways followed by numbers of exercises and activities. The heading of the topics were bold which make it easy for the learners to read and no spelling mistakes were found.

Font Size: The font size of both the Mizo textbooks was fixed by MBSE and found to be appropriate as a whole. Times New Roman with thirteen (13) fonts size were used and the heading of the topics were written in bigger size which shows the uniformity of the textbooks. The line spacing in both the textbooks was found to be convenient to read for healthy students, but there may be some difficulty for children having visual impairment as the line spacing were too closed. Hence, it will be better if the font size is fourteen (14) and widen the line spacing keeping in mind children with different abilities.

Price: The investigator found that the prices of the textbooks were not very expensive and hence it was affordable for majority of the parents. The page of Class IX textbook was 160 and the price was Rs.48 and there was one rapid reader 'Irrawadi Luikamah' written by James Dokhuma with 60 pages and Rs.35.

The page of Class X textbook was 206 with Rs.85 and rapid reader 'Khawnglung Run' written by R.Lalrawna consisted of 90 pages at Rs.50. Thus, we can say that both the prices of Mizo textbooks were not burden for the students comparing with other subjects.

Quality of Paper: The thickness of the paper in both the textbooks as per MBSE guideline was “58gsm cream wove” whereas the standard thickness of papers used in offices is 90gsm. The investigator found that this was not of the best quality since the paper was too thin and the color of the paper was also quite dull especially in Class IX textbook.

As we all know that Class IX students are at the stage of around 13-14 ages who easily damage their belongings and it was found out that some students have to buy two/three textbook at a year and this can become a burden for their family.

Quality of paper determines the price and weight of the textbook. If high quality of paper is used, the weight will be much heavier and the price will be increased. Thus, all these were fixed by MBSE keeping in mind the condition of the learners as it effect the price of the textbook as well. Due to this, the weights of the textbooks were found to be both convenient for handling and carrying by the students. However, the color and brightness of the paper may be improved.

Illustrations: It was found out that there was no artwork or pictures to be seen in both Class IX and Class X Mizo textbooks that had connection with the content. For solving this problem, it will be better to put the picture of the poet in the poetry section and the writer of prose section near the topic.

For instance, a very important topic “Zawlbuk” was taught in Class X and had so many important valuable things of Mizo culture like ‘*khumbeu*’, ‘*thlangra*’, ‘*em*’ etc. where no pictures to be found and even the physical feature of ‘Zawlbuk’ was not display. Hence, textbook is one of the resources where we can portray the image, inculcate the importance and uses of those historical things and for the better understanding of the students, it will be helpful if pictures are printed near the related parts.

2. Development of structures and vocabularies:

Vocabulary represents one of the most important components for teaching and learning Mizo language. It is the basis for the development of all the other skills: reading comprehension, listening comprehension, speaking, writing, spelling and pronunciation.

High school Mizo textbooks were found to be satisfactory in terms of spelling, punctuation and sentences. The spellings were accurate; punctuations were used correctly by putting it at the right time and sentences were grammatically correct.

The poetry section of Class IX Mizo textbook did not give any glossaries in lesson 1 and 2 where the students were asked to translate some words in simple sentence such as: ‘*rating*’, ‘*dairial*’, ‘*lunglai*’, ‘*hrai*’, ‘*hrinhninag*’, ‘*thlafamkhua*’, ‘*arangvai*’ etc. These created problems for the students as the word meaning were not presented in order to gain new vocabularies and create meaningful sentence. It may often be impossible for the students to remember the teacher’s explanation. The rest of the lessons provided glossaries for the students to obtain new words in order to have an in-depth knowledge of the poetry.

The poetry section of Class X was introduced with Christmas songs, as they were common and was familiar for the students glossaries were not presented where the other poems contain glossaries. The level of Class X poetry was quite difficult than the previous year where complex words were presented such as ‘*arhmaitiat*’, ‘*mausam*’, ‘*delhhlumsaei tum*’, ‘*lum par tlan*’ etc. However, these new words provided were not included in the exercises where the students can make use of it by applying to practical situations. Thus, it will be better to utilize the new words by engaging them in making sentences or ask them the synonyms so as to make the students understand better and gain new vocabularies.

The vocabulary and sentences used in the prose section, drama, rapid reader and fiction of Class IX were found to be simple and appropriate for the students’ level, but glossaries were not put in most of the lesson. As the understanding and the intelligence level of the students are different, it will be better to keep the glossaries as far as possible. For instance, words such as ‘*hnemhnanpui*’, ‘*pahmei*’, ‘*pumbilh*’, ‘*hnephnaw*’, ‘*hawihhawm*’, ‘*dimdawi*’ from lesson 13 may be difficult to understand by some students which can create problem for them to comprehend the lesson effectively.

In the same way, Unit I, Unit II, Unit IV, V and rapid reader of class X were found to be appropriate and satisfactory in terms of vocabularies, as glossaries were put according to the difficulty level of the topic and new words were presented in each topic. An example can be taken from the topic of “Zawlbuk” where many

new words were mentioned such as 'bawhbel', 'meisidal', 'tapchepsut', 'buanzawl' etc. that were explained in simple and accurate sentences which were of great use in helping the students to get a mental picture on the history of Mizo culture.

A crucial component of language i.e. grammar was learned in both Class IX and Class X where simple topics were introduced in Class IX level, such as noun, pronoun, gender, punctuation and so on, which was followed by complex ones such as parts of speech, prefix and suffix etc. in the Class X textbook. The grammar unit contained a number of information for promoting and developing the language skills of students, where the students can utilize their previous knowledge to the next step of the chapter by giving exercises to differentiate and classify abstract nouns and the modified form in Class X poetry section. Thus, it can be understood that grammar is presented in such a way that the contents gradually move from simple to complex. But, due to the improper arrangement of the genre, students may face difficulties in grasping the meaning of many words and sentences.

For instance, proverbs such as '*lakaiinpek in lukhawng a neizawk*' '*anchhialawhsuhmahnichungah a let lehthei*' etc. were indicated within the lessons provided in Class IX prose where the students have no knowledge about proverbs that are to be learned in class X as per the current set up of Mizo textbooks. Hence, it will be better to include proverbs in Class IX instead of Class X or can be learned in both of the classes.

Moreover, idioms and phrases mentioned in the textbooks such as '*arhmaitiat*', '*uihumzat*,' '*arangvai*' etc. were not learned in the grammar section of "Tawngupa" (idioms and phrases), which if presented in the idioms and phrases section, would go a long way in reinforcing learning in different sections of the textbooks.

Therefore, we can say that the vocabularies introduced were sufficient but could be arranged in a more meaningful way for the learners as they are not logically presented in the lessons. Hence, the new words or vocabularies and even the idioms and phrases must be utilized by presenting in the exercises and activities sections to promote and develop the language learning, enable the students to make use of previous knowledge for their further learning and enhance the four skills of language.

However, the presentation of the genre were not logical and appropriate, hence, there arise a need to make some alteration in the arrangement of contents in both the textbooks. As mentioned, grammars play an important role for learning language and it is thus found that grammars were included in almost all the exercises. However, it will be better to put in the first or second unit so that they can utilize it in learning different genres. Regarding poetry section, especially in Class X, Christmas songs were used as introductory lessons, but considering the fact that the school session usually starts from April, it seems inappropriate considering the aim of contextual and situational relevance of the lessons which in turn can be a problem for both the learners and the teachers. Thus, it will be desirable if topic like "Zirtukawng" is put in the first lesson for motivating the students.

It was concluded that seventy four (74) new words or vocabularies were introduced in the poetry section of Class IX textbook and a total of fourteen (14) new vocabularies were presented in the prose section. Moreover, thirty five (35) idioms and phrases were also introduced for the development of language skills.

Likewise, in the poetry section of Class X textbook, a number of twenty six (26) new vocabularies were introduced, thirty one (31) new words in the prose section, fifteen (15) vocabularies in the fiction and thirty seven (37) idioms and phrases were presented.

Therefore, it was found out that the vocabularies and structures were presented in a logical way and developed according to the mental level of the learners which were found to be appropriate for the development of language skills.

6. Findings and Discussion:

- The textbooks cover designs were found to be unattractive as the illustration had no relation with the content presented.
- The weights of the textbooks were identified to be convenient for handling by the students.
- The prices of both the textbooks were found to be affordable for majority of the parents.

- It was also found out that the printing and layout of the textbooks were clear and no spelling mistake was made which is in line with the “Guided Principles of Quality Textbook”.
- Though the paper quality of the textbooks were not of best quality, the size and quality of paper to be used were fixed by MBSE keeping in mind the condition of the learners. However, the quality of paper used in Class IX was unsatisfactory as it was little bit thin and the color was dull and not attractive.
- According to the “Guided Principles for Quality Textbook”, it was suggested to use the illustrations to facilitate the learners, but it was found that no artwork or pictures were presented in both the textbooks.
- Both the textbooks were found to be appropriate as they provided glossaries in most of the topics for the students to gain new words.
- The amounts of vocabulary presented in both the textbooks were found to be sufficient.
- The idioms and phrases and proverbs presented within the lessons given in the textbooks were not found in the lessons of ‘Tawngupa’ (idioms and phrases) and ‘MizoThufing’ (proverbs), where they are mostly relevant and most likely to be found. This scattered the learning contents and the vocabularies were hardly reinforced as they should have been.
- It was found out that the new words were less presented in the exercises where the students can apply them. As of now, the students have little or no chance to comprehend or apply it in meaningful situations.
- The sentences and vocabularies used in both the textbooks were found to be appropriate and simple.
- Both the textbooks were observed to be accurate in terms of spelling.
- The constructions of sentences in both the textbooks were grammatically correct.
- The presentation of vocabularies in both the textbooks gradually moves from simple to complex.
- The presentation of the genres in both the textbooks was found to be inappropriate.

Suggestions and conclusion:

Both the covers of the textbooks must be made stronger to be adequate for the learners within the session. Moreover, the paper quality of Class IX textbook must be made more fresh and attractive and the line spacing must be widened so that all the learners will be able to read comfortably. The pictures on the cover of both the textbooks must be related with the content so that the learners can visualize most of the important materials mentioned in the textbooks. However, the pictures of the writers, if possible must be put near the topic so that the learners will be able to recognize who they are and will encourage them in their learning. Neither of the textbooks contains any pictures or artworks; hence, more vivid and interesting illustrations can be given. Apart from these, it will be better to present the new words in the exercises which will improve the students’ comprehension and the genres must be presented in an organized and logical manner by first identifying the important section.

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