

CONDUCTING A SWOT ANALYSIS OF ENGLISH TEXTBOOKS FOR THE HIGH SCHOOL OF THE RA AIMED AT THE DEVELOPMENT OF BETTER FOREIGN LANGUAGE CLASSES

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SWOT is an acronym for strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats. **SWOT analysis** is a strategic planning technique used to help a person or organization identify the **strengths, weaknesses, opportunities** and **threats**. This analysis was primarily related to business competition or project planning. It is intended to specify the objectives of the business venture or project and identify the internal and external factors that are favorable and unfavorable to achieving those objectives.

Users of a SWOT analysis often ask and answer questions to generate meaningful information for each category to make the tool useful and identify their competitive advantage.

- **Strengths**: characteristics of the business or project that give it an advantage over others;
- **Weaknesses**: characteristics of the business that place the business or project at a disadvantage relative to others;
- **Opportunities**: elements in the environment that the business or project could exploit to its advantage;
- **Threats**: elements in the environment that could cause trouble for the business or project.

Strengths and weaknesses are often **internal** to the business or project, while opportunities and threats generally relate to **external** factors. For this reason, SWOT is sometimes called **Internal-External Analysis** and the SWOT Matrix is sometimes called an IE Matrix.

“SWOT analysis is an important step in planning and its value is often underestimated despite the simplicity in creation”[1: 382].

Recently the SWOT analysis began to be widely used not only in business, strategic planning or project management but in other spheres as well, e.g. linguistics, educational science, didactics, etc.

SWOT analysis refers to the way of evaluating a situation. It can be used in education to evaluate students, teachers, educational programs (at different levels), or even institutions.

During our internship we decided to conduct a SWOT analysis to evaluate the potential of school textbooks **in the context of text oriented approach**.

SWOT analysis was used as a framework to evaluate competitive position of the textbooks by identifying their strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats.

Before conducting the SWOT analysis we had identified a list of **questions** to be answered:

- ✓ Are there enough text materials presented in the textbooks for each topic?
- ✓ Are the texts linked to the topics set by the Objective criteria and programs for the high school?
- ✓ Are the given texts interesting, motivating, disputable, etc.?
- ✓ Are there enough exercises to check the reading comprehension or others skills (speaking, listening, writing, grammar, etc.) of the learners?
- ✓ Is there a variety of exercises based on the text material?
- ✓ Are there possibilities to use various methods and technologies of teaching/learning while working on the text material?
- ✓ Is there visual aid which can help to comprehend the texts (pictures, tables, schemes, diagrams, etc.)?
- ✓ Is there a CD with the texts?
- ✓ How is the new vocabulary presented?
- ✓ Is grammar material linked to the text material?

First of all we analysed the Objective criteria and programs for the Armenian schools to see which the main topic areas to be covered are. Here is the list of the topics set by the Objective criteria and programs for the Armenian schools [3].

High school		
10th grade	11th grade	12th grade
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Interpersonal Relationships ▪ My future Profession ▪ Health and Food 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Education ▪ Generations Gap ▪ Environmental Issues (Conservation) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Culture and Society ▪ Multilingualism and Multiculturalism ▪ Ecological Issues in

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ International Competitions ▪ The Present, Past and Future of Armenia ▪ Youth (Young Generation) ▪ Imaginary World ▪ Democratic Society 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The World for Everyone ▪ Mass Media 	Armenia and in the World <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Changes in Social Life (Societal change)
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Table 1: Topic areas for the high school

The next step was to analyse English textbooks for the Armenian high schools. For the analysis we took English textbooks by S.Bagdasarian, S.Gurdjayants, H.Avagyan [4; 5; 6].

Here is the SWOT analysis of the English textbooks for **grades 10 to 12** by S. Bagdasarian, S. Gurdjayants, H. Avagyan conducted according to the questions set above:

High school (grades 10,11 and 12)	
Strength	Weakness
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Texts linked to the topics of the lessons; • Exercises based on the texts; • A great variety of <i>reading comprehension</i> exercises; • <i>Grammar</i> exercises; • <i>Listening, reading, writing and speaking</i> exercises; • Extra useful information on different cultures at the end of units; • Focus on <i>phonetics</i>; • <i>Translation</i> exercises (into Armenian and English); • <i>Pair-work/group-work</i> exercises (collaborative/cooperative learning); • <i>Role play</i> exercises; • Exercises to promote <i>Project work</i> activities; • <i>Make presentation</i> exercises; • <i>Quiz</i> exercises; • <i>Check-up</i> exercises. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Listening exercises without a CD at disposal of the teacher or students; • The explanations/definitions of unknown words are always after the texts; • Colorless pictures; • In some units the transcription of the words is given in Armenian symbolic system.
Opportunities	Threats

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Using posters, pictures, tables, schemes, diagrams, etc. • Using computer and Internet technologies in the educational process; • Using different methods of teaching to find the best among them; • Using time management properly; • Taking into account the students' needs, interests and requirements; • Putting the <i>humanistic approach</i> in the first place. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Monotonous teaching process; • Risk of ignoring some of the students; • Behaving as a dominant in the teaching process.
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Table 2: SWOT analysis of the English textbooks for grades 10-12

The great variety of exercises is presented in the following formats:

- *Comprehension question* at the end of texts;
- *Fill in blank* exercises;
- *Insert the words* exercises;
- *Multiple choice* exercises (correctly formulated)
- *Make-dialogue* exercises;
- *True/false* exercises;
- *Correct the error* exercises;
- *Guess the meanings from the context* exercises (aimed at the development of language guess skills);
- *Fit paragraph* exercises;
- *Find synonyms/antonyms* exercises;
- *Paraphrase the words/ sentences* exercises;
- *Word/Sentence formation* exercises;
- *Matching* exercises;
- *Answer the questions* exercises;
- *Divide the text into paragraphs* exercises;
- *Find odd words* exercises.

SWOT Analysis is a simple but extremely useful framework for analyzing strengths and weaknesses, and the opportunities and threats that we can face. It helps us to focus on strengths, minimize threats, and take the greatest possible advantage of available opportunities.

The next stage of the analysis is to take the highest ranking strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats and answer the following questions:

- How to use strengths to take advantage of opportunities?

- How to overcome weaknesses preventing you from taking advantage of opportunities?
- How can your strengths reduce the probability of threats?
- What can you do about your weaknesses to make the threats less likely? [2].

The conducted SWOT analysis gave us the opportunity to see which possibilities of the textbook we can use during our experimental teaching (strengths and opportunities available via the text material presented in the textbooks), how to overcome weaknesses and threats (e.g. bringing into class colourful pictures or other visual and audiovisual materials, giving the definitions/translation of the unknown words before/while/after reading the text, using various methods and technologies to avoid monotonous teaching process, risk of ignoring some of the students and behaving as a dominant in the teaching process).

Therefore, the conducted SWOT analysis helped us greatly in the upcoming teaching experience.

To sum it up, SWOT analysis is a useful tool in the process of evaluating textbooks aimed at the development of better classes, avoiding and overcoming the weaknesses and threats which may occur in the teaching process.

Key words: *SWOT analysis, SWOT in education, evaluation of textbooks, texts.*

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ՀՀ ԱՎԱԳ ԴՊՐՈՑԻ ԱՆԳԼԵՐԵՆԻ ԴԱՍԱԳՐՔԵՐԻ SWOT ՎԵՐԼՈՒԾՈՒԹՅԱՆ ԻՐԱԿԱՆԱՑՈՒՄԸ ՕՏԱՐ ԼԵԶՎԻ ԴԱՍԵՐԻ ԼԱՎԱՐԿՄԱՆ ՆՊԱՏԱԿՈՎ

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բաժնի մագիստրատուրայի շրջանավարտ*

Հոդվածը նվիրված է ՀՀ ավագ դպրոցի անգլերենի դասագրքերի SWOT վերլուծության կիրառման փորձին: Նկարագրված է դասագրքերի տեքստային ներուժը բացահայտելու նպատակով SWOT վերլուծության իրականացման մեթոդաբանությունը: Իրականացված SWOT վերլուծության արդյունքները այնուհետև օգտագործվել են ՀՀ Գեղարքունիքի մարզի Նորատուս գյուղի թիվ 1 հիմնական դպրոցում իրականացված փորձարարական ուսուցման ընթացքում:

***Բանալի բառեր՝** SWOT վերլուծություն, SWOT վերլուծությունը կրթության բնագավառում, դասագրքերի գնահատում, տեքստեր:*

ОСУЩЕСТВЛЕНИЕ SWOT АНАЛИЗА УЧЕБНИКОВ АНГЛИЙСКОГО ЯЗЫКА ДЛЯ СТАРШЕЙ ШКОЛЫ РА С ЦЕЛЬЮ ЛУЧШЕЙ РАЗРАБОТКИ УРОКОВ ИНОСТРАННОГО ЯЗЫКА

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Статья посвящена опыту использования SWOT анализа учебников английского языка для старшей школы РА. Описана методология проведения SWOT анализа с целью выявления текстового потенциала учебников. Результаты проведенного SWOT анализа были использованы в процессе экспериментального обучения в основной школе N1 с. Норатус Гегаркуникской области РА.

Ключевые слова: SWOT анализ, SWOT в образовании, оценка (оценивание) учебников, тексты.

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