

Abstract

This study investigated how the English textbooks imposed by the Palestinian Ministry of Education have gained the central role in teaching English in the Palestinian public classrooms. It also explored the effects of this centrality on the Palestinian English teachers; their skills, work pressure, social relations and their reaction towards the textbooks. To meet these goals, I used two qualitative data collection instruments, namely, classroom observations and interviews. Twelve English periods for the grades from the seventh till the twelfth were observed. In addition, twenty standardized open-ended interviews were conducted with English teachers who teach in secondary schools in Ramallah directorate. To explore the pressures that the supervisors may exercise on the English teachers to follow the textbooks, all of the five English supervisors in Ramallah directorate were interviewed as well. All of the observations and interviews were then transcribed, coded and categorized which helped me in organizing large amounts of data around specific themes.

The results of this study suggested that the English textbook is the main and basic reference of the English teachers in almost all the aspects of the teaching process; planning, interacting with students, and assessment. Pressures on teachers to follow the textbooks resulted mainly from students' achievement exams and from supervisors who require teachers to cover all of the material of the English textbook. As a result, teachers complained of huge amount of written works, of having no time to cooperate with colleagues, of worries to finish the material, of teaching for the tests, and of feelings that they are burning out.

Teachers also announced that they are losing their creativity and skills and that they are not upgrading or developing themselves. Many of these teachers expressed their hope of leaving schools and changing their careers. This is because they admitted that they cannot fight against these imposed textbooks since the whole system of assessment depends on them.

The study recommended that teachers should be given their autonomy and freedom when they deal with teaching materials specially the textbooks. They should be trained on how to adapt, modify, criticize and evaluate the content of the textbooks they are using.