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Korean EFL Learners' Perspectives on ELT Materials Evaluation Criteria

Bo-Kyung Lee
(Hankuk University of Foreign Studies)

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This study investigates Korean university-level adult learners' opinions on ELT materials evaluation criteria based on the data collected quantitatively through questionnaire of pre-published evaluation checklist and qualitatively from interview and report paper. Quantitative data were collected from 496 survey respondents and qualitative data from 41 interview participants and 30 report-paper submitters. With regard to ELT materials evaluation criteria, the learners have general consensus on the importance of the criteria. 'The quality of audio materials,' and 'affordable price and availability' are considered critically important by the learners whereas 'application of well-established methodology' and 'instruction of individual pronunciation' are relatively less important criteria. It was found that the learners can be qualified evaluators when they are to evaluate their own course books or self-access materials in that they have generally systematic and consistent perspectives on the criteria, and pay substantial attention to in-depth evaluation criteria. The findings suggest that learners' opinions on materials evaluation should be widely utilized in English teaching and learning, and materials writing.

[learners' materials evaluation/materials evaluation criteria/coursebook evaluation/ self-access materials evaluation]

I. INTRODUCTION

In spite of the fact that ELT materials should assist teachers in providing instructions to learners and enabling learners to improve their English language ability, it appears that in reality teachers and learners are not sufficiently considered in the planning, development, and selection stages of materials design. Learners in particular have been ignored in terms of the actual implementation of materials. More practically, when attention is brought to materials evaluation for the purpose of textbook selection in classroom contexts, it appears that learners have been largely excluded from

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decision-making process, whereas the central focus has been on teachers.

McGrath (2002) criticized this oversight and noted that some discussions of materials evaluation and selection surprisingly did not consider the needs of learners. His criticism is justified: ELT materials should inherently be intended to meet learners' needs and wants in English language learning. Weimer (2013) stated that a "learner-centered" approach can be realized when "teaching motivates and empowers students by giving them some control over learning processes" (p. 15). Nunan (1988), discussing the learner-centered curriculum, emphasized that learners can state their own needs and preferences with regard to class content if appropriate opportunities are given. Cunningsworth (1995) and Tomlinson (2011a, 2013) also suggested that learners' opinions on materials are worth careful consideration. Chambers (1997) also stated that a wide range of users should be involved in selecting suitable materials.

Unfortunately, however, studies on learners' materials evaluation lag behind other sub-areas in the field of SLA research. As "learner-centeredness," is now a key concept in the ELT field, addressing learner factors with reference to ELT materials evaluation suits the current trend. The research question for the present study, therefore, is "With respect to ELT materials evaluation criteria, does evaluative consensus exist among university students (EFL learners) of Korea?" This study aims to investigate what learners' general opinions are of ELT materials evaluation criteria, to ascertain which criteria the learners think more or less important, and to see if there is consensus among the learners.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Learners as materials users can offer their own opinions, and their views are "worth canvassing" (Cunningsworth, 1995, p. 8). It is acknowledged that learners, especially adult learners, are capable of stating whether they like their coursebooks and which aspects best suit their needs and interests (Ghang, 2009; Kwon, 2012). Many studies on learners' opinions of materials evaluation have been conducted (Crandall & Basturkmen, 2004; Deaux, 1993; Fenton-Smith, 2010; Holec, 1987; Hutchinson, 1996; Kim, 2003; Kim, 2004; Kim, 2007; Kim, Hong, Kim, & Nimmo, 1996; Mason, 2010; McCullagh, 2010; O'Sullivan, 1991; Reinders & Lewis, 2006; Stillwell, Kidd, Alexander, Mcllroy, Roloff, & Stone, 2010). In similar contexts as in this study, there have been several investigations regarding learners' opinions on materials evaluation. Kim, Hong, Kim, and Nimmo (1996) conducted a survey of Korean university students' thoughts on their English courses and materials. Kim (2004) also investigated Korean university students' opinions on ELT materials evaluation criteria.

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Kim et al. (1996) conducted a survey of 890 university students' needs and wants regarding course books. The authors used sixty-six question items in order to elicit opinions regarding overall purposes and preferences of English courses. With respect to materials, "degree of usefulness and interest in types of materials and topic areas" (p. 69) was considered. The findings showed that Korean university students considered "usefulness" more important than "interest" in terms of materials. Also, the students preferred "topics related to communicating and understanding others" (p. 96). The authors inferred from the results that students like practical English, and they are likely more externally motivated in learning English. Considering the students' concern about job recruitment in this highly competitive society, and its relation to English proficiency, their opinions could be of much help to instructors when selecting materials.

Kim (2004) used Peacock's (1997) checklist, which has been recognized as an all-encompassing checklist, and reduced the 60 original items into 15 by factor analysis. The reduced criteria items were used to collect 1,133 university level students' opinions on criteria for ELT materials evaluation. The results confirmed the consensus in the opinions of the learners. Also the criteria regarding "quality of cassette tapes," "interest," "price," "aims of learning English," "cultural tone," and "coverage of four skills and communicative strategies" were ranked as highly important (p. 3). Based on these results, the researcher concluded that "learners have their own opinions" (p. 22) and they are able to evaluate materials.

Kim (2004) emphasized the importance of learners' participation in materials evaluation to assist teachers' decision-making. He argued that learners' evaluation procedure itself should also be considered to "actualize the idea of learner-centered curriculum" (p. 20). Considering that learners' input into the language learning process is receiving more attention recently, encouraging learners' participation in evaluation procedures could be of much help to learners. In the present study, Kim's (2004) checklist, which consists of 15 evaluation criteria extracted from Peacock's (1997) original checklist, was adopted. The researcher's rationale for selecting Kim's checklist is based on the fact that Kim's research purpose overlaps with that of the present study, the subjects are similar, both university level students, and the research site is Korea.

It appears that there remains a lack of empirical studies examining Korean learners' collected opinions on materials evaluation in spite of the important role learners play as materials users. Therefore, the present study has both theoretical and practical value in terms of the actualization of the learner-centered curriculum and the encouragement of learner participation in materials evaluation, which may result in more effective decisions regarding materials selection.

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III. RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

The research question can be answered by asking 496 learners from four universities in Korea to rate materials evaluation criteria provided in checklist form, by conducting interviews with 41 learners about what criteria they find important when selecting materials, and by analyzing 30 learners' report papers regarding their decision-making process in materials selection.

First, a checklist was used for the learner questionnaire. Kim's (2004) checklist was adopted and revised. It consists of fifteen evaluation criteria. "Cassette tapes" in item no. 14 and 15 from the original was adapted to "audio materials" since cassette tapes are rarely used and have been replaced by CDs and MP3 files. Also, in item no. 15, "teacher's book" was eliminated since this questionnaire is targeted only at learners. Ratings were on a five-point Likert-scale ranging from 1 ("not at all important") to 5 ("very important"). Personal information such as gender, age, year, major, and TOEIC score was also gathered. The questionnaire was first implemented with the 496 learner-subjects, and it was re-implemented with the 125 subjects (out of 496) after a three month period in order to examine the consistency, or changeability, of their opinions.

A total of 496 questionnaires were collected from 11 English language classes of 4 different universities in Korea. Among the respondents, 227 (45.8%) are males and 269 (54.2%) are females. The respondents consist of 152 junior students (30.6%), 127 seniors (25.6%), 118 freshmen (23.8), and 99 sophomores (20.0%). Their majors are diverse in that 144 students are from business-related departments (29.0%), 115 respondents study Engineering-related subjects (23.2%), and 111 respondents are in language majors (22.4%). The rest (25.4%) major in fields related to humanities, social studies, law, art, physical training, education, natural science, and medical science. Their ages range from 18 to 30, and the average age is 21.5. The item reliability of the questionnaire items were measured to check the consistency of the questionnaire. *Cronbach's alpha* was chosen as a measure. The average was computed as .83.5, which indicates that the item reliabilities were generally high.

Second, focus group interviews were carried out. Interviews enrich the results of the study by examining learners' verbal statements. Mackay and Gass (2005) noted that "interviews are advantageous to investigate learners' self-reported perceptions or attitudes" (p. 173). Semi-structured interviews, which give subjects the freedom to digress from pre-made questions, were carried out. Forty-one from the survey respondents were invited to the interview. The pre-arranged interview questions were
1) What criteria do you think is important when evaluating your English coursebook?
2) What criteria do you think is important when selecting your self-study materials?

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After the initial questions, the interviewees were encouraged to discuss their experiences and opinions in a free and autonomous atmosphere. Each interview was audio-recorded and transcribed, and based on the transcripts, a qualitative analysis was conducted.

Thirty learners' report papers on decision-making regarding materials selection were also taken into consideration as qualitative data. They were to select self-access materials on their own, plan and practice learning, and evaluate their learning outcomes, if any, at the end of the semester. The report paper, therefore, was expected to include aspects or criteria considered important when selecting self-access materials.

Data collection was carried out at four universities (one is located in Seoul, two located in Kyunggido, and the other in Chungcheongdo) throughout the two semesters of 2012. SPSS 12.0 and QSR NVivo 10 were used for analysis. For analysis of quantitative data, descriptive statistics, factor analysis, correlation analysis, and *t*-test were conducted. Qualitative data were categorized by referred evaluation criteria and presented on the basis of frequency of reference.

IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

1. Quantitative Findings

1) Consensus in Opinions on Materials Evaluation Criteria

Table 1 displays the descriptive analysis of the survey results. As a group, the learners considered "reasonable price and availability" the most important criterion. This practical reason is understandable given the learners' financial constraints. Most learners tend to be sensitive to the price of materials. "Good quality of audio materials" was ranked the second most important criterion. This result likely explains the learners' frequent use of audio contents as supplementary materials. As the integration of all four language skills has been acknowledged as effective in teaching and learning, almost all ELT coursebooks are published together with audio or multimedia supplementary material. Moreover, most of the respondents are students who attend language examination courses such as TOEIC or FLEX. Therefore, they are likely to be more conscious of the quality of the audio files they have to use in exam preparation. The third most important criterion was "systematic testing and self-study-friendliness." This result indicates that the learners expect their ELT materials to function as self-access materials. In addition, "variety in a unit and systematic

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grading," "cultural tone," "integration of four skills and strategy instruction," and "practicability of English use" are all considered important criteria from the learners' points of view.

TABLE 1
Descriptive Statistics of ratings of ELT materials evaluation criteria

ELT materials evaluation criteria	Descriptive results			Kim(2004)
	Mean	SD	Rank	Rank
1. General impression and condition of editing and printing	3.76	1.04	12	7
2. Cultural tone	3.96	0.80	5	4
3. Appropriacy of the language materials & class activities	2.91	1.04	15	14
4. Interest and relevance	3.81	0.96	10	2
5. Encouragement of learner responsibility	3.77	0.86	11	8
6. Reflection of worldwide acknowledged methodology	3.55	0.97	13	13
7. Guidance of individual pronunciation	3.53	1.00	14	15
8. Integration of 4 skills & communicative strategy instruct	3.93	0.88	6	6
9. Variety in a unit and systematic grading	3.98	0.79	4	10
10. Guidance in use of the book	3.88	0.86	8	12
11. Systematic testing and self-study-friendliness	4.07	0.87	3	9
12. Practicability of the materials to use Eng. outside class	3.89	0.93	7	5
13. Inclusion of summary and index	3.87	0.87	9	11
14. Good quality of audio materials	4.15	0.87	2	1
15. Reasonable price and availability	4.41	0.80	1	3

Meanwhile, "appropriacy of the language materials and classroom activities," "guidance of individual pronunciation," and "reflection of worldwide acknowledged methodology" are ranked as the three least important criteria. It appears that the learners are less interested in language materials and activities. The learners are also likely to pay less attention to pronunciation practices and pedagogic methodologies adopted for the materials development. Since language teaching methodology is generally not considered an area of learner interest but that of teacher interest, the learners' low interest in methodology seems understandable.

In comparison to Kim's (2004) findings, a high level of similarity is observed. The three most important and the least important criteria in both studies are overlap considerably. According to Kim (2004), the three most important criteria were "quality of cassette tapes," "interest and relevance," and "price and availability." As the present study found "reasonable price and availability," "good quality of audio materials," and "systematic testing and self-study-friendliness" to be the three most important criteria, two of the three overlap. In the case of the three least important criteria, both studies have exactly the same criteria in common. However, in terms of rank flow, the learners from the present study and Kim's are likely to have substantially different ideas, especially on the criteria of "interest and relevance," "variety in a unit and systematic grading," and "testing and self-study friendliness."

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This pattern of result suggests that there may exist some degree of consensus among university-level learners' opinions on ELT materials evaluation criteria, especially on high and low priorities. The learners are likely to share a common perspective on the most and least critical criteria. The importance of the criteria found in the middle of the rank are considered to be rather flexible among the learners.

In order to identify underlying variables that explain the pattern of correlations among the fifteen evaluation criteria, exploratory factor analysis was carried out. According to the analysis, the KMO measure of sampling adequacy is .876, and the sphericity is measured as 1880.524 at the significance level below $p<.05$, which indicates that the use of factor analysis of the 15 evaluation criteria is acceptable and that common factors exist. According to the analysis results, the 15 evaluation criteria items are reduced to three underlying factors. Among the 15 criteria, criteria 6 and 15 are excluded from the factor categorization as communality is low (below .40). That is, "world-wide methodology (6)" and "reasonable price (15)" do not belong to any identified factors. Table 2 describes the factors and their loaded criteria.

TABLE 2

Materials evaluation factors and loaded criteria

Factor N.	Factor 1	Factor 2	Factor 3
Evaluation factor	In-depth (Detailed examination)	Learning-simulation (Suitability judge)	Impressionistic (Brief look)
Loaded criteria items	8. Integration of four skills and communicative strategy instruction 9. Variety in a unit and systematic grading 10. Guidance in the use of the book 11. Systematic testing and self-study-friendliness 12. Practicability of the materials to use English outside the classroom 13. Inclusion of summary and index 14. Good quality of audio materials	3. Appropriacy of the language materials and classroom activities 4. Interest and relevance 5. Encouragement of learner responsibility 7. Guidance of individual pronunciation	1. General impression and condition of editing and printing 2. Cultural tone
Mean scores	3.97	3.40	3.86

The three factors identified serve as indicators *of in-depth evaluation, learning-simulation evaluation, and impressionistic evaluation.* Cunningsworth (1995) stated that coursebook evaluation could be carried out through a two-step evaluation process: impressionistic evaluation and in-depth review. According to the analysis, the learners

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are expected to experience a reasonably valid process by taking a brief first look and then concluding with a detailed examination, and judging the suitability between the materials and the learners themselves. According to Table 2, Factor 3 represents the learners' impressionistic evaluation. It appears that the learners scan the materials for an overall impression of the book such as title of chapters, pictures, illustrations, fonts, and so forth. By looking at the illustrations, the learners can make a rough judgment regarding the cultural tone as well. Factor 1, then, represents the learners' in-depth evaluation criteria. The learners are likely to evaluate seriously the content and form of the materials. It appears that they are concerned about the scope and sequence, guidance, integration, practicability, and supplementary materials. Finally, a last factor (Factor 2) represents the learners' learning-simulation evaluation. Factor 2 concerns the learners' subjective view, whereas the two previous evaluation factors involve somewhat objective aspects of the materials. The learners are likely to consider whether the materials fit them personally and to what extent they will facilitate learning. It appears that they evaluate the content, organization, and learnability of the materials while they simulate using the materials.

The mean scores of the three factors' criteria items are 3.97 for in-depth evaluation, 3.86 for impressionistic evaluation, and 3.40 for learning-simulation evaluation. These figures roughly suggest that the learners care more about the detailed examination of the materials. The learners also take into consideration impressionistic evaluation criteria and whether the materials are a good fit in terms of their own learning characteristics. All things considered, the learners should be considered a group of dependable evaluators in that their perspectives toward materials evaluation criteria appear comprehensive and systematic.

Correlation analysis tests were carried out so that the agreement level of the learners' responses to ELT materials evaluation criteria could be checked. *Pearson r* was chosen as a measurement instrument. For analysis, mean scores of learners' responses to each criterion by groups of gender, year, major, and English proficiency were used. Twenty-three pairs of correlation coefficients between groups were estimated: one pair for gender, 6 pairs for year, another 6 pairs for major, and 10 pairs for English proficiency[1]. The average of 23 *Pearson r* correlation coefficients is .92 (SD=.06), which indicates that there is a strong correlations in the learners' responses on the ELT materials evaluation criteria. *Pearson r* for the mean score of criteria between male and female is .94. That is, learners generally have a consensus of opinion on ELT materials evaluation criteria regardless of gender. Meanwhile, as

[1] Based on the subjects' TOEIC scores (990 perfect), four proficiency levels were identified: beginning (below 400), low-intermediate (400~595), upper-intermediate (600~795), and advanced (above 800). No-record group refers to the subjects who did not have test scores.

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shown at Table 3, Pearson r correlation coefficients for the mean scores of criteria according to year, major, and English proficiency are also high in most pairs.

In case of year of the learners, the average of correlation coefficient was calculated as .92 (SD=.06). Especially the correlation between 1st-year and 3rd-year students, and 1st-year and 4th-year students, are notably high at .98 and .97, respectively. It appears that the learners have similar perspectives on ELT materials evaluation criteria regardless of year. As for major, the result was similar to that of year (Average of *Pearson r* =.92, SD=.06). That is, majors of language, business, engineering, and other fields have a tendency to concur with one another in evaluating ELT materials evaluation criteria. Likewise, English proficiency does not dramatically divide the learners' opinions on ELT materials evaluation criteria. The average of the correlation coefficient is calculated at .90 (SD=.05). This indicates that the learners at all proficiency levels appear to have a consensus in their opinions on ELT materials evaluation criteria. Meanwhile, the association between upper-intermediate learners and advanced learners appears to be very strong in particular at .97, and aside from the "no-record" group, the overall correlation coefficients among the four proficiency level groups suggest that the learners of the adjacent proficiency level tend to have stronger correlations than the learners of distant proficiency levels.

TABLE 3
***Pearson r* of ratings by groups of year/major/proficiency**

Year	1	2	3	4	
1					
2	0.89	M=.92	SD=.06		
3	0.98	0.85			
4	0.97	0.85	0.95		
Major	Lang.	Business	Engineer	Others	
Lang					
Business	0.89	M=**.92**	SD=.06		
Engineer	0.98	0.85			
Others	0.97	0.85	0.95		
Proficiency	no-record	Beginning	L-inter	U-inter	Advanced
no-record					
beginning	0.84		M=.90	SD=.05	
low-inter	0.88	0.89			
upper-inter	0.94	0.87	0.95		
advanced	0.92	0.81	0.91	0.97	

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2) Consistent Opinions on Materials Evaluation Criteria

In order to investigate whether the learners maintain their opinions on 15 ELT materials evaluation criteria or undergo significant changes between the beginning of the semester and the end of the semester, 125 out of the 496 subjects who answered the questionnaire at the beginning of the semester were asked to complete the same questionnaire in the last week of the semester. Fifteen weeks' interval exists between the dates of each survey. Kim (2004, p. 23) commented that "it may be worthwhile to examine whether the learners' opinions on criteria are stable or can be changed for a certain period." Table 4 illustrates the change of mean scores of importance of 15 criteria items and the rank and the results of *paired sample t*-tests. According to the results, the change of rank is unnoticeable. Seven out of the fifteen criteria maintain their original standings in rank order. Notably, the high rank and low rank criteria maintain the same position in both surveys. The mean scores of 12 out of 15 evaluation criteria slightly increase except criteria 13, 14, and 15, which decrease. However, the result of *paired sample t*-test shows that the increase or decrease in most of the criteria importance is statistically insignificant.

TABLE 4

Difference of mean scores and rank between 1st and 2nd survey

	Mean scores / Rank				t-test	
	1st survey N=125	Rank	2nd survey N=125	Rank	Mean diff.	p
1. General impression and …	3.85	7	3.96	5	0.11	0.16
2. Cultural tone	3.95	4	4.04	4	0.09	0.24
3. Appropriacy of language …	2.55	15	2.84	15	0.30	0.00
4. Interest and relevance	3.50	13	3.83	11	0.33	0.00
5. Encouragement of learner ...	3.69	11	3.76	12	0.07	0.42
6. Reflection of worldwide…	3.67	12	3.73	13	0.06	0.47
7. Guidance of individual …	3.40	14	3.64	14	0.24	0.01
8. Integration of four skill …	3.81	9	3.86	10	0.05	0.58
9.Variety in a unit and …	3.91	6	3.92	6	0.02	0.83
10. Guidance in use of book…	3.83	8	3.92	7	0.09	0.29
11. Systematic testing and …	4.08	3	4.10	3	0.02	0.86
12. Practicability of materials..	3.74	10	3.88	8	0.14	0.16
13. Inclusion of summary …	3.92	5	3.87	9	-0.06	0.50
14. Good quality of audio…	4.25	2	4.16	2	-0.09	0.32
15. Reasonable price and …	4.42	1	4.28	1	-0.14	0.08
Average	**3.77**		**3.85**			

P<.05*

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In sum, the learners are not likely to change easily their opinions on importance of each evaluation criterion in the majority of the cases. That is, adult learners have consistent perspectives on ELT materials evaluation criteria, and this supports the conclusion that learners are capable and dependable materials evaluators.

In conclusion, according to the analysis of the questionnaire, the 496 university-level learners think "price and availability," "quality of audio materials," "testing and self-study friendliness," "variety in unit and systematic grading," "cultural tone," "coverage of four skills and strategy instruction," and "practicability of English use" are relatively more important criteria. The results of the factor analysis on the fifteen evaluation criteria demonstrate the identity of three factors: *in-depth evaluation, impressionistic evaluation, and learning-simulation evaluation*. That is, learners go through both internal and external evaluations, and they also attempt to judge the suitability of the materials for themselves through learning-simulation evaluations. This finding suggests that the university-level learners are eligible to evaluate their materials comprehensively. The average correlation coefficients of the learners' responses among the groups such as gender, year, major, and English proficiency, was calculated at .92. This result suggests that learners in the Korean university context generally have an agreed opinion of ELT materials evaluation criteria. In addition, learners maintain consistent perspectives on materials evaluation criteria.

2. Qualitative Findings

1) Interview—Opinions on Coursebooks and Self-access Materials

Forty-one learners were asked to give their opinions on their own most highly-valued evaluation criteria for coursebooks and self-access materials, respectively, without referring to any pre-made evaluation checklist. The opinions collected, therefore, are considered to be representative of their own insights regarding ELT materials based on their previous learning experiences. The responses of the interviewees were coded and grouped under relevant categories among the 15 evaluation criteria used for the quantitative analysis. Even though the learner subjects were not informed of the 15 evaluation criteria before the interview, their comments fit into one of the pre-published 15 criteria as a result of the analysis. The findings show that the majority of learners are especially interested in the aspect of "systematic testing and self-study friendliness" relating to the coursebook. Table 5 shows the number of times the interviewees referred to each criterion being the important one during the interviews.

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TABLE 5

Frequency of high-valued coursebook evaluation criteria (by inverview)

Rank	Evaluation Criteria	Frequency of reference	Source (class)
1	11. Systematic testing and self-study friendliness	22 (44%)	5
2	9. Variety in a unit and systematic grading	8 (16%)	4
3	3. Appropriacy of lang. materials and classroom activities	8 (16%)	4
4	1. General impression, printing, and editing, illustration	4 (8%)	3
5	4. Interest and relevance for personal involvement	2 (4%)	2
6	13. Summary and index, list of vocabulary and topics	2 (4%)	1
7	15. Reasonable price and easy availability	2 (4%)	1
8	14. Good quality of audio materials	1 (2%)	1
9	12. Practicability to use English outside the classroom	1 (2%)	1
	Total Frequency	50(100%)	

According to the frequency analysis, as many as nine criteria (11, 9, 3, 1, 4, 13, 15, 14, and 12) out of Kim's (2004) 15 were noted. The learners seem to care mostly about "systematic testing and self-study friendliness" of the coursebook as 22 (44%) out of 50 references were made to it. These 22 references came from all 5 sources (classes). It suggests that many learners consider the testing or self-study pages of the materials important. This criterion was also high-ranked in the survey analysis; it was considered the third most important criterion. In addition, the criteria of "variety in a unit and systematic grading," and "appropriacy of language materials and classroom activities" were noted 8 times, respectively. It appears that the learners are interested in the overall organization of the materials and the flow of the content. Given that the table of contents is comparable to the syllabus of the course, the high value and interest of this criterion seems justifiable. The learners are especially interested in the level of difficulty in reference to "appropriacy of language materials and classroom activities." They want the coursebook to fit their proficiency levels so that they can benefit most from it. Translations of the remarks made by the learners relative to coded categories are illustrated below.

- *I want both lots of questions and lots of explanations for self-study./Sample questions from previous official tests and proper explanations are important for me.* (11. Systematic testing and self-study friendliness)
- *I usually see the general organization and layout of the materials. / I think the organization of each unit is important. It should be easy to understand.* (9. Variety in a unit and systematic grading)
- *I prefer the divided materials according to the level difficulty./ The level of difficulty is important. Every student does not have the same proficiency level, so...*(3. Appropriacy of language materials and classroom activities)

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- *I don't like unnecessary blank or decorating pages./ For me, font is important.* (1. General impression, printing and editing, and illustration)
- *The book should be intriguing. (*4. Interest and relevance)

Table 6 demonstrates the responses of the interviewees considering the three factors that were specified in the quantitative analysis of the survey: *in-depth evaluation, impressionistic evaluation, and learning-simulation evaluation.* It appears that the learners did care much about in-depth evaluation. The learners made reference to *in-depth evaluation* as many as 34 times. The criteria regarding *learning-simulation* evaluation were referred to 10 times, and *impressionistic evaluation* was also considered by referring to the criterion of "general impression and condition" 4 times.

Kim (2004) claimed that learners have the ability to become autonomous evaluators when they are invited to learner interviews. The learner-subjects for this study showed their potential ability to state various evaluation criteria. Moreover, their autonomously volunteered criteria encompass all the factors, including *in-depth, learning-simulation, and impressionistic evaluation.* This result is consistent with that of the survey analysis. That is, learners at the university level have the ability to clearly state their own opinions on ELT coursebooks with or without referring to existing evaluation criteria, and they are likely to care more about *in-depth evaluation* criteria more than others.

TABLE 6

Coursebook evaluation factors and coded criteria (by interview)

Factor N.	Factor 1	Factor 2	Factor 3
Evaluation Factor	In-depth (Detailed examination)	Learning-simulation (Suitability judge)	Impressionistic (Brief look)
Coded criteria items	9. Variety in a unit & systematic… 11. Systematic testing & self-study.. 12. Practicability of the materials… 13. Inclusion of summary and index 14. Good quality of audio materials	3. Appropriacy of the language materials and classroom activities 4. Interest and relevance	1. General impression and condition of editing and printing
Frequency	34	10	4

The interview also considered the learners' own evaluation criteria regarding self-access materials. The same 41 learner subjects were asked what criteria they place higher importance on when they select or buy their own self-access materials. The responses of the interviewees were categorized in the same way as that of course materials. However, some responses were not appropriate under any criterion among the 15 evaluation criteria; therefore, they were classified as separate criteria. For

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example, one interviewee noted "best-selling book is preferred," and another interviewee chose "sales ranking informed from on-line bookstores is important," and "well-known publishing company or author is important." These criteria tend to reflect the learners' dependence on the reputation of the book or other student's choice.

As shown at Table 7, the interviewees stated six criteria (11, 9, 1, 3, 12, and 15) out of the 15, and three additional criteria such as "best-selling," "well-known publishing company or author," and "recommendation." Aside from the three additional criteria, the six criteria were considered generally important for coursebook evaluation as well. The most frequently referred to criterion was "systematic testing and self-study friendliness" in both coursebooks and self-access materials. In the case of coursebook evaluation, 44% (See Table 5) of all the criteria references were related to this criterion, and for self-access materials evaluation, 36% of the total references belong to this criterion. This finding suggests that the learners' top priority for their ELT materials evaluation is whether the materials are useful for their self-teaching or learning regardless of type. "Variety in a unit and systematic grading," "general impression, printing, editing, and illustration," and "appropriacy of the language materials" were also referred to by the interviewees similar to the results of the coursebook evaluation criteria.

TABLE 7

Frequency of high-valued self-access materials evaluation criteria (by interview)

Rank	Evaluation Criteria	Frequency of reference	Source (class)
1	11. Systematic testing and self-study friendliness	16 (36%)	5
2	Best-selling*	7 (16%)	4
3	9. Variety in a unit and systematic grading	5 (11%)	4
4	Well-known publishing company or author*	5 (11%)	2
5	1. General impression, printing, and editing, illustration	4 (8.8%)	2
6	3. Appropriacy of the language materials (difficulty level)	3 (6.6%)	2
7	12. Practicability to use English outside the classroom	2 (4.4%)	2
8	Recommendation*	2 (4.4%)	1
9	15. Reasonable price and easy availability	1 (2.2%)	1
	Total frequency	45 (100%)	

* Newly-commented criteria which do not belong to existing 15 criteria

The learners identified "best-selling," "well-known publishing company or author," and "recommendation" to be important criteria. These criteria are considered to be indirect, or secondary, as learners want to take advantage of the reputation of the materials rather than by previewing the materials themselves. These criteria were not claimed when they evaluated coursebooks. Even though learners can be more

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independent doers in the case of self-access materials evaluation, they are more likely to depend on pre-established feedback and the background of the materials in other cases. This suggests that learners become more cautious and prefer safer ways when choosing their own self-study materials.

Translations of the remarks made by the learners relative to coded categories are illustrated below.

- *The materials should be kind enough for me to study alone./ I want the materials to have lots of comprehension questions./ I prefer appropriate translations, explanations, and interpretation of all the questions provided.* (11. Systematic testing and self-study friendliness)
- *I tend to select best-selling books./ I usually choose one among the books which language institutes use for their students./ I consult sales-rank of on-line bookstores.* (best-selling)
- *I want a couple of grammar pages first and then comprehension questions followed./ I like the organization which provides everyday schedule for me.* (9. Variety in a unit and systematic grading)
- *I care about the publisher or the author./ Well-known or widely-accepted book will be all right.* (Well-known publishing company or author)
- *Design of the book is also important for me./ I don't want a page crammed with too many letters./ The book should be generally comfortable for my eyes.*(1. General impression, printing and editing, and illustration)
- *Level of difficulty is important in case of self-access materials./ The book should not be too difficult.* (3. Appropriacy of the language materials)

Table 8 demonstrates the responses of the interviewees on the three existing factors and one additional factor with regard to evaluation of self-access materials. As shown, it appears that the learners cared much more about the *in-depth evaluation* than the *impressionistic evaluation* and *learning-simulation evaluation*. Regarding *in-depth evaluation*, as many as 23 references were made. However, the learners considered the materials' reputation as well, which was not noted during the interview for coursebook evaluation criteria. "Best-selling," "well-known publishing company or author," and "other people's recommendation" were noted fourteen times; as a result, these criteria were categorized into a new aspect: "reputation."

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TABLE 8

Self-access materials evaluation factors and coded criteria (by interview)

Factor	Factor 1	Factor 2	Factor 3	Factor4 (extra)
Evaluation Factor	In-depth (Detailed examination)	Learning-simulation (Suitability judge)	Impressionistic (Brief look)	Reputation
Coded criteria items	9. Variety in a unit & systematic… 11. Systematic testing and … 12. Practicability of the materials to use English outside the classroom	3. Appropriacy of the language materials and classroom activities (difficulty level)	1.General impression and condition of editing and printing	Best-selling* Well-known publishing company or author* Recommen-dation*
Frequency	23	3	4	14

* Newly-commented criteria which do not belong to existing 15 criteria

The findings clearly indicate that learners have the ability to make judgments in order to evaluate ELT materials based on their own perspectives. The referred evaluation criteria for coursebook and self-access materials are similar in that the learners are concerned about "testing and self-study friendliness," "variety in a unit and systematic grading," "appropriacy of language materials and activities," and "general impression." The learners pay much attention to *in-depth evaluation* criteria for the evaluation of both types of materials. This suggests that learners tend to examine their ELT materials not in a sloppy manner but by serious and earnest reflection. However, learners tend to be dependent on the reputation of the materials when they have to select their own self-access materials. This suggests that an appropriate evaluation checklist should be applied relative to different types of materials. An appropriate evaluation checklist can vary to a certain degree depending on the type of materials such as coursebook, self-access materials, or supplementary.

2) Report Paper—Opinions on Self-access Materials

For learners' opinions on the evaluation criteria for self-access materials, additional data gathering were conducted. Thirty learners were asked to select their own self-study materials at the beginning of the semester and write a report paper on the process. The learners elaborated on the evaluation criteria that they actually considered when selecting materials in their papers.

The criteria that the learners claimed to value in their report papers were analyzed in the same manner as those for the interviews. Fifteen evaluation criteria (eleven such as

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3, 11, 9, 1, 13, 12, 4, 7, 8, 5, and 15 from Kim (2004) and four additional criteria) were 82 times redundantly referred to. As Table 9 shows, it is found that learners considered "appropriacy of language materials" to be the most important criterion when evaluating self-access materials. This criterion amounts to 20.73% of the total. This indicates that the learners are mostly concerned about the difficulty level of the materials such as vocabulary level, grammar level, and cognitive demand of the explanations. Most learners who noted this criterion emphasized the importance of finding an appropriate level of book, and they paid attention to whether the materials fit their English proficiency. Criteria such as "systematic testing and self-study friendliness," "variety in a unit and systematic grading," "recommendation," and "general impression, printing and editing, and illustration" were also referred to as weighty criteria. These criteria were also high-ranked in the results of the interviews. That is, the results of the report papers are largely consistent with those of the interviews.

TABLE 9

Frequency of high-valued self-access materials evaluation criteria (by report paper)

Rank	Evaluation Criteria	Frequency of reference	Source (paper)
1	3. Appropriacy of language materials (difficulty level)	17(20.73%)	16
2	11. Systematic testing and self-study friendliness	13(15.85%)	12
3	9. Variety in a unit and systematic grading	11(13.41%)	11
4	Recommendation*	10(12.2%)	10
5	1. General impression, printing, and editing, illustration	9(10.97%)	9
6	13. Inclusion of summary	6(7.31%)	6
7	Supplementary materials (complimentary on-line)*	3(3.65%)	3
8	Well-known publishing company or author*	2(2.44%)	2
8	Best-selling*	2(2.44%)	2
8	12. Practicability to use English outside the classroom	2(2.44%)	2
8	4. Interest and relevance	2(2.44%)	2
8	7. Pronunciation	2(2.44%)	2
9	8. Integration	1(1.22%)	1
9	5. Encouragement of learner responsibility	1(1.22%)	1
9	15. Reasonable price	1(1.22%)	1
	Total frequency	82(100%)	80

* Newly-commented criteria which do not belong to existing 15 criteria

Translations of the remarks made by the learners relative to coded categories are illustrated below.

- *This book is best appropriate to me since it is designed for beginners./The vocabulary are not too difficult.* (3. Appropriacy of language materials)
- *Explanation is easy to understand and many excellent questions are*

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*presented for review./Review test is provided so that I can literally review what I have learned. (*11. Systematic testing and self-study friendliness)

- *I like the parts between chapters which I can take my time. / Grammar explanation by unit is useful. (*9. Variety in a unit and systematic grading)
- *This book was recommended by many users on internet./ I bought this book by the recommendation of my friend.* (Recommendation)
- *I enjoy seeing the illustrations./ The book is not very thick, so..../The fonts and the pictures are colorful. (*1. General impression, printing and editing, and illustration.)
- *The tables and charts are provided.../ The vocabulary which are over 3000 is well-summarized.* (13. Inclusion of summary)
- *Free access to online lectures and complimentary on-line mock test is available.* (supplementary materials)

Table 10 shows the responses of learners under the three existing factors and one additional aspect, "reputation," which was uncovered in the interviews. As shown, it appears that the learners cared much more about *in-depth evaluation* than *impressionistic evaluation* in the same way as in the interview results. Regarding *in-depth evaluation*, as many as 36 references (out of 82 references) were made. That is, it clearly indicates that the learners are most concerned about *in-depth evaluation* criteria when they are to evaluate self-access materials.

TABLE 10

Self-access materials evaluation factors and coded criteria (by report paper)

Factor	Factor 1	Factor 2	Factor 3	Factor 4 (extra)
Evaluation Factor	In-depth (Detailed examination)	Learning-simulation (Suitability judge)	Impressionistic (Brief look)	Reputation
Coded criteria items	8. Integration of four skills 9. Systematic grading 11.Testing and self-study-friendliness 12. Practicability to use English outside… 13. Inclusion of summary Supplementary materials*	3. Appropriacy of the lang. materials (level) 4. Interest and relevance 5. Encouragement of learner responsibility 7. Pronunciation	1.General impression and condition of editing and printing	Best-selling* Well-known publishing company or author* Recommen-dation*
Frequency	36	22	9	14

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The difference between the interviews and report papers is, however, the degree of importance of "learning-simulation evaluation," and "reputation." In the case of the interviews for the evaluation criteria of self-access materials, the findings show that the learners are more concerned with "reputation" than "learning-simulation evaluation," whereas the report papers demonstrate that learners are much more concerned with "learning-simulation" evaluation criteria than "reputation" criteria. This can be explained by the different stance of the learners in their report papers. In the papers, unlike in the interviews or on the questionnaires, the learners were to select their own self-study materials based on their own evaluation criteria. This background may have resulted in initiatives and immersion in suitability judgments. They are likely to have become more conscious of well-matched materials for their English proficiency levels, their learning objectives, their learning styles, and so on.

3. Synthesis of Quantitative and Qualitative Findings

Based on the quantitative and qualitative analyses, the results indicate that learners generally have consensus and consistency on the importance of ELT materials evaluation criteria. Notably, they have a common idea on ranking high and low priorities among the given evaluation criteria.

According to the quantitative analysis, it was found that the learners care more about *in-depth evaluation* criteria rather than *impressionistic* or *learning-simulation* evaluation criteria. This indicates that university-level learners are capable evaluators who can examine materials effectively. Qualitative materials also demonstrate that the learners are capable of stating their own high-valued evaluation criteria in terms of coursebooks and self-access materials without a referential evaluation checklist. By examining the high-valued criteria in terms of the evaluation factors, it was found that the learners care mostly about *in-depth evaluation* and *learning-simulation evaluation*. That is, learners focus on detailed examinations and suitability judgments when evaluating their ELT materials. Also, learners seem to consider the reputation or popularity of the materials when choosing self-access materials.

In sum, the learners were found to be qualified evaluators when required to evaluate ELT materials through questionnaire, interview, and document. As addressed by many theoreticians in this field (Cunningsworth, 1995; McDonough & Shaw, 2013; Tomlinson, 2011b) the learners for the present study have shown that they can consider *micro-evaluation* and *macro-evaluation*, or *external evaluation* and *internal evaluation*, or *impressionistic evaluation* and *in-depth evaluation*. Further, it was concluded that the learners were able to judge whether the materials were personally suitable, for example, in terms of their needs and proficiency levels.

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V. CONCLUSION

Learners are able to provide useful information on ELT materials evaluation to teachers and materials writers. The results of the present study confirm that university-level EFL learners are capable of systematically evaluating ELT coursebooks and self-access materials with or without referential evaluation checklists, and their perspectives on materials evaluation criteria are stable and coherent. Moreover, there was general consensus among the learners regarding the importance of the evaluation criteria. This result suggests that learners' opinions should be heard and referred to by teachers and materials writers to facilitate more effective and advanced applications of ELT materials.

Teachers can use information collected from their students' opinions on ELT material evaluation criteria for materials selection, adaptation, and the development of teaching methods. It cannot be denied that teachers' professional evaluation procedures should be most important when evaluating and selecting course materials. However, information drawn from students should not be neglected. It is evident that learners' opinions are not always the same as those of teachers. Teachers can take advantage of learners' opinions on materials evaluation criteria, gathered before or after the materials use, not only for better choice of materials but also for teachers' professional growth as materials specialists.

Materials writers also need to pay attention to learners' opinions on materials evaluation criteria to better develop more effective materials that best fit the target learners' needs and wants. Nowadays, the importance of "localization" of the coursebook is becoming more important as globalized coursebooks are widely in use in English language programs in many universities. For more effective and accurate localization, the target learners' perspectives on materials evaluation criteria are crucial. The present study demonstrated that university students in Korea generally share similar opinions on high and low priorities among the given evaluation criteria, but they also have different perspectives with respect to some aspects, depending on their demographic and educational backgrounds. Therefore, materials writers need to consider the target learners' perspectives with regard to ELT materials.

Learners themselves can take advantage of considering ELT materials evaluation criteria to take more responsibility for their own English learning and to become more effectual users of both coursebooks and self-access materials. This study illuminated the university-level EFL learners' capability as reliable materials evaluators. Learners' realization of materials evaluation should benefit the learners themselves as well as provide useful information to teachers and materials writers. Attempts at a better understanding and selection of their coursebooks and self-access materials in daily use

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should encourage learners to become more interested in the ELT materials they study and increase their autonomy.

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APPENDIX

Questionnaire on materials evaluation criteria (Korean version)

다음은 **영어교재(학교수업교재)를 평가할 때**, 생각해 볼 수 있는 요소들입니다. 각 평가항목들이 얼마나 중요하다고 생각하는 지, 해당되는 칸에 O 표시하세요.

(5: 매우 중요하다/ 4: 중요하다/ 3: 보통이다/ 2: 중요하지 않다./ 1: 전혀 중요하지 않다)

	←매우중요				전혀 안 중요→
1. 편집, 인쇄, 삽화의 수준 및 페이지 구성이 잘 되어 있어야하며, 최근에 출판된 것이어야 한다.	5	4	3	2	1
2. 소개되는 문화적 내용은 수업에 적절하며 학습자가 받아들일 수 있는 정도여야 한다.	5	4	3	2	1
3. 학습자가 수업시간에 적절하게 수행할 수 있는 역할극이나 활동 자료를 포함하고 있어야 한다.	5	4	3	2	1
4. 흥미를 불러일으키는 다양하며 적절한 자료 수록으로, 학습자의 (학습) 참여도를 높여야 한다.	5	4	3	2	1
5. 학습자가 스스로 학습에 책임감을 갖게끔 안내하는 자료를 포함하고 있어야 한다.	5	4	3	2	1
6. 교재는 현재 세계적으로 보편적인 학습 이론과 방법론에 기초한 것이어야 한다.	5	4	3	2	1
7. 강세 유형이나 억양, 개별음의 인식, 발화를 위한 발음연습의 자료가 있어야 한다.	5	4	3	2	1
8. 듣기/말하기/읽기/쓰기 등의 언어 기술을 균형 있게 제시하며, 다양한 수업활동을 소개하여 학습자의 의사소통 전략 발달을 도와야 한다.	5	4	3	2	1
9. 각단원은 다양한 학습활동을 포함하며, 새로운 문법사항은 적절하고 체계적으로 제시되야 한다.	5	4	3	2	1
10. 학습자의 올바른 교재 사용을 위해 안내하는 부분이 있어야 한다.	5	4	3	2	1
11. 학습자가 배운 바를 점검하고 평가할 수 있는 자료 (e.g. 학습성취도 평가시험) 등을 포함하고, 학습자 혼자서도 학습할 수 있도록 해야 한다.	5	4	3	2	1
12. 교재는 학습자가 교실 밖에서도 영어를 사용할 수 있게끔 인도해야 한다.	5	4	3	2	1
13. 문법사항, 언어기능항목 요약, 색인, 새로 나온 어휘, 내용소재 등의 목록표가 제공되야 한다.	5	4	3	2	1
14. 음성자료의 음질이 좋고, 다양한 원어민 목소리의 정상적인 대화 속도로 녹음되어 있어야 한다.	5	4	3	2	1
15. 교재 (책, 음성자료, 워크북 등 포함) 는 구입이 용이하고 비싸지 않아야 한다.	5	4	3	2	1

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Examples in: English
Applicable Languages: English
Applicable Levels: Tertiary

Bo-Kyung Lee
Dept. of TESOL, Graduate School
Hankuk University of Foreign Studies
270 Imun-dong, Dongdaemun-gu, Seoul, Korea
TEL: 010-2541-7142
Email: bobo7142@gmail.com

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