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A Content Analysis of Grammar Activities in Student's Book of Action Pack Seven as a Textbook for Teaching English as a Foreign Language in Jordan

Firas Ali Suleiman Zawahreh, Ph.D.

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Abstract

This study aimed at analyzing the grammar activities in the six modules of the students' book of Action Pack Seven used as a textbook for teaching English as a foreign Language in Jordan to find out to what extent to which these activities meet the criterion proposed by it compared to those criterion proposed by Celce-Murcia (1991),so the researcher used the following criterion: First, the appropriateness of number balance of the grammar activities, second, the accuracy of the linguistic data; third, the clarity and completeness of the grammar activities, and the fourth, the presentations of linguistic items in meaningful context.

The results of the study showed the following: First, the number of the grammar activities is appropriate and distributed in a good balanced way between the six modules of the textbook. Second, all of the grammar activities meet the second criteria because all of the linguistic data are accurate and correct in details. Third, fifty

Language in India www.languageinindia.com

12 : 4 April 2012

Firas Ali Sulieman Zawahreh, Ph.D.

A Content Analysis of Grammar Activities in

Student's Book of Action Pack Seven as a Textbook for Teaching English as a
Foreign Language in Jordan 160

five out of the sixty grammar activities meet the criteria "clarity and completeness". Fourth, fifty out of sixty grammar activities are presented in meaningful context which meet the fourth criteria "meaningful context".

Key terms: Content Analysis, Action Pack seven, Grammar, Grammar Activities and Clarity.

Introduction

Nobody can deny that teachers' approach to language teaching is obviously the keystone to their teaching methodology in the classroom. Nowadays the current recognized approach that is generally followed and accepted in the field of language teaching is the communicative language teaching approach. Jordan is not an exception. One of the main characteristics of this approach is that classroom goals are focused on all of the components (grammatical, discourse, function, sociolinguistics and strategic) of the communicative competence. This means that grammatical competence occupies prior prominent position as a major component of communicative competence. Grammar is one of these dimensions of language. The other two dimensions are semantic and pragmatic. It is important for us to become aware that all of these three dimensions are interconnected, so no one can deny that grammar is irrelevant or that grammar is no longer needed in the communicative language teaching framework.

Communicative language teaching pays attention to the presentation and discussion of the grammatical rules in the classroom, so the researcher finds out that it is very important to analyze the grammar activities in the students' book of Action Pack Seven as a level of the series used in Jordanian classrooms since English language teaching in Jordan is based upon the communicative language teaching approach.

Theoretical Background

A-Action pack

Language in India www.languageinindia.com

12 : 4 April 2012

Firas Ali Sulieman Zawahreh, Ph.D.

A Content Analysis of Grammar Activities in
Student's Book of Action Pack Seven as a Textbook for Teaching English as a
Foreign Language in Jordan 161

Action pack is an English course for Primary, preparatory and secondary levels students in Jordan. Action Pack Seven as a level of action Pack includes a students' book, two cassettes with listening material, workbook and teacher's book.

These materials are based on the general framework and outcomes of English Curricula in Jordan, where this language is regarded as a foreign Language. Although the English Curricula outcomes of the Jordanian Ministry of Education approach the language skills separately, the Action Pack materials have approached these skills in an integrated way in terms of the tasks and activities for both learners and teachers. Therefore, the outcomes, appearing at the beginning of each unit, harmonize with and are relevant to the integrity of these skills and interactivity between learners and teachers.

What Action Pack provides

Action Pack provides many regional and international topic- based contents which are designed to appeal to the educational needs and interests of students in Jordan.

The course also builds on and broadens students' knowledge, through text - based work within the topics, and vocabulary development. The “Did you know?” boxes present interesting and fruitful facts, which the students could collect and add to the activities with their special ideas.

The student's book is divided into six modules. Each focuses on a particular theme which develops it in different ways. At the end of each module there is a project.

Language

Action Pack is of comprehensive language syllabus, presenting contextualized grammar and providing scheduled practice.

Skills

The skills syllabus provides regular, staged practice in reading, listening, speaking and writing, where the emphasis is on practice and production of language. There are

Language in India www.languageinindia.com

12 : 4 April 2012

Firas Ali Sulieman Zawahreh, Ph.D.

A Content Analysis of Grammar Activities in

Student's Book of Action Pack Seven as a Textbook for Teaching English as a Foreign Language in Jordan 162

also many of opportunities for students to enhance critical thinking skills and express their special opinions.

Pronunciation

Action Pack also contains regular pronunciation section which provides practice and guidance in areas of difficulty for Arabic speakers. There are different sounds and sound combinations in English. It contains useful and meaningful contrasts between English sounds which are easily confused by Arabic speakers, with many practices in recognizing the differences as well as listening.

Project

The projects give students chances to practice English in a less formal context and encourage groups cooperation and interaction. A project could need extra materials. It involves some research and other preparation which can be done as homework.

The role of the students' book

The students' Book is not designed to be written in, so every student should have an exercise book for writing exercises, and recording what they learn in class.

The role of the workbook

The workbook is designed to the students' writing. it can be used for extra work for the students' homework.

The role of the teacher's book

The Teacher's Book is designed to give comprehensive guidance notes and full answers keys for teachers, as well as complete typescripts for listening materials and a work book answer key at the back. Extra listening for each module is also included.

B-Content Analysis

Language in India www.languageinindia.com

12 : 4 April 2012

Firas Ali Sulieman Zawahreh, Ph.D.

A Content Analysis of Grammar Activities in
Student's Book of Action Pack Seven as a Textbook for Teaching English as a
Foreign Language in Jordan 163

Berelson (1962) insisted that Content Analysis is “ a research technique for the objective, systematic, and quantitative description of manifest content of communications”. It is seen as a research tool which focuses on the actual content and internal features of media and it is used to determine the presence of certain words, concepts, themes, phrases, characters and sentences within texts or sets of texts and to quantify this presence in an objective manner.

Some find that texts can be defined broadly as books, book chapters, essays, interviews, discussions, newspaper headlines and articles, historical documents, speeches, conversations, advertising, theater, informal conversation, or any occurrence of communicative language. To conduct a content analysis on a text, the text is coded, or broken down, into manageable categories on a variety of levels--word, word sense, phrase, sentence, or theme--and then examined using one of content analysis' basic methods: (a)- conceptual analysis or (b)- relational analysis.

The results are then used to make inferences about the messages within (a)- the text(s), (b)- the writer(s), (c)- the audience, and even (d)- the culture and time of which these are a part.

For example, Content Analysis can indicate some features such as comprehensiveness of coverage or the intentions, biases, prejudices, and oversights of authors, publishers, as well as all other persons responsible for the content materials..

Uses of Content Analysis

Because of the fact that it can be applied to test and examine any piece of writing or occurrence of recorded communication, it can be said that content analysis is used in large number of fields, ranging from marketing and mass media studies, to literature and rhetoric, ethnography and cultural studies, gender and age issues, sociology and political science, psychology and cognitive science. In addition, content analysis does reflect a good relationship with socio- and psycholinguistics, and is playing an important role in the development of artificial intelligence.

Language in India www.languageinindia.com

12 : 4 April 2012

Firas Ali Sulieman Zawahreh, Ph.D.

A Content Analysis of Grammar Activities in
Student's Book of Action Pack Seven as a Textbook for Teaching English as a
Foreign Language in Jordan 164

The following offers more possibilities for the uses of content analysis: First, revealing international differences in communication content. Second, detecting the existence of propaganda. Third, identifying the intentions and focusing or communication trends of an individual, group or institution. Fourth, describing attitudinal and behavioral responses to communications. Fifth, determining psychological or emotional state of persons or groups (Berelson, 1952).

Reliability and Validity

It can be said that reliability and validity of content analysis are joined with those addressed in other research methods. The reliability of a content analysis study is a matter of stability, or the tendency for coders to consistently re-code the same data in the same way over a period of time; reproducibility, or the tendency for a group of coders to classify categories membership in the same way; and accuracy, or the extent to which the classification of a text corresponds to a standard or norm statistically.

One of the most important problem of concept analysis research is the challengeable nature of conclusions reached by its procedures. The question is in what level of implication is allowable. in other words, does the conclusion follow from the data or is it explainable due to some other phenomenon?

Advantages of Content Analysis

Content analysis can introduce many great advantages to researchers who are using it. In particular: First, it looks directly at communication via texts or transcripts, and hence gets at the central aspect of social interaction. Second, it can allow for both quantitative and qualitative operations. Third, it can provides valuable historical/cultural insights over time through analysis of texts. Fourth, it allows a closeness to text which can alternate between specific categories and relationships and also statistically analyzes the coded form of the text. Fifth, it can be used to interpret texts for purposes such as the development of expert systems (since knowledge and rules can both be coded in terms of explicit statements about the relationships among

Language in India www.languageinindia.com

12 : 4 April 2012

Firas Ali Sulieman Zawahreh, Ph.D.

A Content Analysis of Grammar Activities in

Student's Book of Action Pack Seven as a Textbook for Teaching English as a Foreign Language in Jordan 165

concepts). Sixth, it is an unobtrusive means of analyzing interactions. seventh, it provides insights into complex models of human thought and language use.

Uses of Content Analysis

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?

The process of a content analysis

According to Krippendorff (2004) six questions must be addressed in every content analysis: First, which data are analyzed? Second, how are they defined? Third, what is the Population from which they are drawn? Fourth, what is the Context relative to which the data are analyzed? Fifth, what are the boundaries of the analysis? sixth, what is the target of the inferences?

Literature review

As a matter of fact, Content Analysis as a research method or tool has been used in a wide variety of disciplines from the mass media, linguistics, history and education. Joubish (2009) considered content analysis as a scholarly methodology in the humanities by which texts are studied as to authorship, authenticity, or meaning. This latter subject include philology, hermeneutics, and semiotics. The uses of content analysis covers a large number of texts including books, essays, interviews, lectures, newspapers, magazines, documents, speeches, advertisements, plays and films (Dweikat, 2006).

In this literature review, and in the terms of using content analysis in education and practically in language of textbooks, the researcher presents few examples of studies in content analysis has been used as a research tool.

Language in India www.languageinindia.com

12 : 4 April 2012

Firas Ali Sulieman Zawahreh, Ph.D.

A Content Analysis of Grammar Activities in
Student's Book of Action Pack Seven as a Textbook for Teaching English as a
Foreign Language in Jordan 166

Al-Momani (1998) conducted a study to evaluate AMRA textbooks for the first and second classes in Jordan. Some of the results of the study showed: first, the objectives of AMRA textbooks were based on teaching English for communication, and they met the students' needs and interests. second, the vocabulary items were selected to suit the students' level and to facilitate communication. third, the rationale of AMRA textbooks was suitable. fourth, the exercises in AMRA workbooks were not related completely to the material.

Shatnawi (2005) conducted a study to investigate the role of culture in foreign language textbooks through content analysis and the extent to which culture is represented in "cutting edge" series. The researcher analyzed the content of Cutting Edge series to find out the cultural aspects in these textbooks. The analysis revealed that the textbooks include the cultural aspects: historical, economical, geographical, literary, political, religious, social, man-woman relationship, habits, customs and traditions.

Deiwkat (2006) conducted a content analysis of exercises and Activities of EFL textbooks for the tenth Grade in Palestine. This study investigated the following: to what extent do the activities and exercises meet the behavioral objectives delineated in the syllabus and curriculum?, to what extent do the exercises and activities promote meaningful communication via language?, to what extent do the exercise and activities provide the development of systematic skills?, to what extent do the exercise and activities encourage the students' active Participation?, to what extent do the exercises and activities promote critical thinking? and to what extent do the exercises and activities provide for the development of study skills, such as skimming, note taking, outlining and looking up words in the dictionary?

The study revealed the following: First, "The English for Palestine" textbook showed that the exercises and activities meet to some extent the general behavioral objectives delineated in the syllabus mainly 'to help students learn English and encourage them to become confident users of English. Second, The exercises and activities promote to some extent meaningful communication via the language since the textbooks has a

Language in India www.languageinindia.com

12 : 4 April 2012

Firas Ali Sulieman Zawahreh, Ph.D.

A Content Analysis of Grammar Activities in
Student's Book of Action Pack Seven as a Textbook for Teaching English as a
Foreign Language in Jordan 167

good percentage of meaningful and communicative exercises and activities. Third, the exercises and activities provide for the development of systematic language skills because the four skills are clearly and appropriately integrated in each unit of the textbook. Fourth, the exercises and activities encourage the students' active participation. Fifth, the exercises and activities promote to some extent critical thinking. Sixth, the exercise and activities meet to some extent the background and interests of the students.

Statement of the problem

Textbooks of FL should be designed in accordance with the educational policy advocated in the Jordanian content. It can be said that the best way to make sure this is through reliable and valid analysis of the context of the textbooks.

English language teaching should be evaluated in the light of communicative approach which pays attention to the activities in which grammar rules should be presented. Unfortunately, little attention have been paid towards grammar activities included in English textbooks. Action Pack seven is not an exception because it is taught for the first year in schools of Jordan; Therefore this study aims at analyzing the grammar activities in the students' book of Action Pack seven.

Questions of the Study

This content analysis study attempts to answer the following question:

To what extent do grammar activities in the six modules in the Students' Book of Action Pack seven meet the criteria proposed by Celce – Murcia (1991)?

Purpose of the Study

This content analysis study aims at analyzing the grammar activities in the six modules in the Students' Book of Action to find out the extent to which these activities meet the criteria proposed by Action pack Seven compared by those proposed by celce – Murcia (1991).

Language in India www.languageinindia.com

12 : 4 April 2012

Firas Ali Sulieman Zawahreh, Ph.D.

A Content Analysis of Grammar Activities in
Student's Book of Action Pack Seven as a Textbook for Teaching English as a
Foreign Language in Jordan 168

Significance of the study

Action Pack series is a twelve-level course for Jordanian students, leading them from the basic to the secondary stage. It is claimed that it is based on the most modern methods of teaching language, combining topic - based approach with functional language practice, careful attention to grammar and vocabulary and a comprehensive skill syllabus. It is also claimed that it offers learners a clear and systematic approach to grammar with thorough practice. Action Pack seven is a level of this series and it is taught for the first year in schools of Jordan, as a result, this content analysis study will be an important attempt to analyze the grammar activities in the Students' Book of Action Pack seven and the findings of this study will be useful and fruitful to the ministry of education of Jordan, supervisors, teacher, students, parents and anybody interested in action pack seven, especially those who are specialist and interested in curricula design and development.

Criterion of the Study

The researcher used the following criterion depending on Celce- Murcia (1991) :

1. The appropriateness of number balance of the grammatical activities.
2. The accuracy of the linguistic data.
3. The clarity and completeness of the grammar activities.
4. The presentations of linguistic items in meaningful contexts.

Unit of analysis

The researcher used the grammar activities as the unit of analysis.

Definitions of terms

Grammar is the system of rules governing the conventional arrangement and relationship of words in a sentence (Brown, 2001).

Grammar activities: and all the exercise in the students' book of Action Pack seven that introduce grammatical rules that are represented in grammar activities.

Language in India www.languageinindia.com

12 : 4 April 2012

Firas Ali Sulieman Zawahreh, Ph.D.

A Content Analysis of Grammar Activities in
Student's Book of Action Pack Seven as a Textbook for Teaching English as a
Foreign Language in Jordan 169

Meaningful contexts are the activities that are represented in real situations and everyday life language.

Clarity is presenting the grammar activities using simple clear instructions and simple models to be followed.

Completeness is introducing full clear instructions about how to deal with each grammar activities.

Limitations of the Study

This content analysis study is limited to the Student' Book of Action Pack Seven. Moreover, it is limited to the grammar activities.

Reliability of Content Analysis

1. The researcher developed a pre-defined set of concepts and categories. The researcher precisely defined the categories used in this analysis so to ensure the consistency of the analysis.

2. The researcher repeated the analysis again using the same rules and procedures consequently; Scott co-efficient was used to compute the consistency co-efficiency between the two analyses. It was found that the consistency was (0.95) which indicates a high coincidence between the two analyses.

Findings and discussion

This section presents the findings and the discussion of the analysis according to the question of the content analysis study.

Table (1) presents the frequencies and percentage of the appropriateness of number balance, accuracy, clarity and completeness, and meaningful contexts of the grammar activities in the students' Book of Action Pack seven.

Table 1

Language in India www.languageinindia.com

12 : 4 April 2012

Firas Ali Sulieman Zawahreh, Ph.D.

A Content Analysis of Grammar Activities in

Student's Book of Action Pack Seven as a Textbook for Teaching English as a Foreign Language in Jordan 170

Frequencies and percentage of the appropriateness of number balance, accuracy, clarity and completeness, and meaningful contexts of the grammar activities in the students' Book of Action Pack seven.

Module	The appropriateness of number balance		Accuracy		Clarity and completeness		Meaningful Context	
	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage
One	9	14.8%	9	14.8%	7	12.7%	17	14%
Two	17	23%	14	23%	13	23.7%	10	20%
Three	11	18%	11	18%	10	18%	9	18%
Four	11	18%	11	18%	9	16.4%	8	16%
Five	9	14.8%	9	14.8%	9	16.4%	9	18%
Six	7	11.4%	7	11.4%	7	12.8%	7	14%
Total	61		61		55		50	227
Percentage	26.95		26.9%		24.2%		22%	100%

Table one shows that we have 61 grammar activities distributed in the six modules in the Students' Book of Action pack seven. Nine grammar activities are in module one, fourteen grammar activities are in module two, eleven grammar activities are in module three, eleven grammar activities are in module four, nine grammar activities are in module five and seven grammar activities are in module six.

The analysis shows that the number of grammar activities is appropriate and distributed in a good balanced way between the six modules because the range is between seven grammar activities (module six) and fourteen grammar activities (module two).Regarding this issue, the analysis show another positive kind of balance between the number of the grammar activities in the whole units of all the modules, the range is between three grammar activities unit eleven of module six) and seven grammar activities (unit three of module two) students' book.

Language in India www.languageinindia.com

12 : 4 April 2012

Firas Ali Sulieman Zawahreh, Ph.D.

A Content Analysis of Grammar Activities in
Student's Book of Action Pack Seven as a Textbook for Teaching English as a
Foreign Language in Jordan 171

Regarding the grammar activities that meet the second Criterion A which is accuracy, the analysis shows that all the grammar activities meet this criteria. In fact all of the grammar activities are accurate and correct in detail. For example, in module one, unit one, grammar activity number four, the linguistic data is very accurate. It uses tables to present the negative of present simple as the following:

Negative with <i>do/ does not</i>		
Salma	(1).....work	During the day.
Nurses	(2).....have	Time to talk to people during the day.

Negative with <i>is/ are not</i>		
Salma	(3).....	a doctor
People in the hospital	(4).....	alone at night.

The first table shows that the linguistic data is very accurate because it shows how to negate present simple when the subject is singular and when it is plural. In fact, putting the linguistic data in a table makes it more accurate and clear cut which helps the students to make negative present simple easily.

Again, the students can make use from the well accurate illustrated linguistic data given in the second table by comparing it with those given in the first one. so, they find it easy how and when to use do not, does not, is not and are not.

Another example, in module six, unit twelve, grammar activities numbers one and two present the use of “present continuous”. The linguistic data is very accurate because it shows how the students use “present continuous” and when to use it. The grammar activity makes use of the subject of the beach of sea to teach them how to use the present continuous functionally. We can notice the following sentences written under the picture of the beach:

Language in India www.languageinindia.com

12 : 4 April 2012

Firas Ali Sulieman Zawahreh, Ph.D.

A Content Analysis of Grammar Activities in

Student’s Book of Action Pack Seven as a Textbook for Teaching English as a Foreign Language in Jordan 172

"Right now I'm lying under a tree. I'm resting because we are cycling up a mountain.

We are enjoying the wonderful weather: the sun's shining !"

Regarding the grammar activities which meet the third criterion clarity and completeness, the analysis shows that fifty five grammar activities out of sixty one meet the criterion. In fact, having a close look into most of the grammar activities, it would be very easy to notice how they are clear and complete .Grammar activity number four of module four, page thirty seven is a good example. This grammar activity demands the students to write the missing words by choosing the right form of the verb to- *is ('s), are ('r), isn't, and aren't*. The activity explains to the students that they have to do the following to get the job done.

- 1-They have to choose the verb.
- 2-They have to change the form from the base to the past form.
- 3-The activity pays the attention of the students that some words or verbs are used more than once and shows the students how many times they are going to use it by writing the number beside the verb itself.

These clear complete steps show the students what they should do to accomplish the activity clearly and completely,

Another example is grammar activity number eight of module two page eighty five. It presents how to form comparatives and superlatives forms of adjectives in a clear and complete way. The activity shows the students how to do the job using the following table :

Adjective	Comparative	Superlative
Old	Older	The oldest
Pleasant	More pleasant	The most pleasant
Hot	Hotter

Language in India www.languageinindia.com

12 : 4 April 2012

Firas Ali Sulieman Zawahreh, Ph.D.

A Content Analysis of Grammar Activities in
Student's Book of Action Pack Seven as a Textbook for Teaching English as a
Foreign Language in Jordan 173

Famous	More famous
Good	Better
Bad	Worse

When it comes to discuss the grammar activities which are not presented clearly and completely, we find that they are six. Grammar activity number nine of module five is an example. The students are asked to use adjectives to complete the task but the activity is not presented clearly and completely because of the following:

- 1-The grammar activity does not explain or show the function or the use of adjectives in English in general.
- 2-The grammar activity does not show the student the place of the adjective in the sentence.
- 3-The grammar activity does not give examples.
- 4-the grammar activity does not pay the attention of the student that there are some irregular adjectives.

The researcher thinks that the clarity and completeness of this activity can be achieved more successfully if this grammar activity shows and explains the function of the adjectives, shows the place of the adjective in the sentence, gives enough examples which show the possible situations that may face the students and pays their attention to the irregular adjectives, especially that these irregular adjectives are limited in English language.

Grammar activity number one of module three is another example of the grammar activities which are not presented clearly and completely. This grammar activity asks the students to write *some or a/ an* in front of the shopping list while it does not show them when and how to use each one of these, especially that it is not easy for students to differentiate between the uses of them. The researcher thinks that this grammar

activity will be more fruitful and its clarity and completeness will be achieved more successfully if it shows the students the following:

- 1-when to use “a “and “an “and relates that to the vowels and consonants in English.
- 2-When to use” some “and “any “and relates that to the countable and uncountable nouns in English.
- 3-Giving enough examples showing the uses of them.

Grammar activity number four of module three is another example of the grammar activities which are not presented clearly and completely. This grammar activity asks the students to correct the mistakes in the sentences while it does not show them when and how to correct each one of these sentences, especially that it is not easy for students to differentiate between of these sentences. The researcher thinks that this grammar activity will be more fruitful and its clarity and completeness will be achieved more successfully if it shows the students how to do the job by explaining that using enough examples.

Regarding the grammar activities that meet the fourth criteria "meaningful contexts", the analysis shows that fifty grammar activities out of sixty one grammar activities meet the criterion. In fact, the linguistic items in these fifty grammar activities are presented in meaningful contexts. Grammar activity number one of module two is a good example. Pictures and clear cut accurate sentences are used well to present and illustrate the Imperative (affirmative and negative).Students are asked to use the words *walk, plant, ,Don't play, take and start* to complete the following sentences written under well clear drawn pictures:

A picture
of a bus

(1).....or

(2).....

The bus to school

A girl with a
brush teeth

(3).....off the

Water while you brush
your teeth.

A boy playing
video games

(4).....

video games all the time

A girl planting
a small tree.

(5).....trees or (6).....a vegetable garden

Another example shows that the linguistic items are presented in meaningful contexts is grammar activity number five of module five. In this activity, students are asked to fill in the blanks with the verbs investigated, knew, robbed, came, saw, arrived, made and followed paying their attention that these verbs are in the past form mentioning clear cut example.

On the other hand, grammar activity number four of module five is an example of those grammar activities which its linguistic items are not introduced in meaningful contexts. The students are asked to write sentences to compare between two shown books by using a list of adjectives at the time the example given does not explain when to add *er* to some adjectives while to add more in front of some others.

Inferences

After the analysis of the findings, the researcher finds that the students' Book of Action Pack seven mostly offers good useful grammar activities because these grammar activities are enough and distributed in a good balanced way between the six modules and the units given in each unit, all of the linguistic items presented in these

Language in India www.languageinindia.com

12 : 4 April 2012

Firas Ali Sulieman Zawahreh, Ph.D.

A Content Analysis of Grammar Activities in
Student's Book of Action Pack Seven as a Textbook for Teaching English as a
Foreign Language in Jordan 176

activities accurately, most of the presentations of these grammar activities are clear and complete enough and most of these grammar activities are presented and introduced in meaningful contexts.

Recommendations

In the light of the results of this content analysis study, the researcher finds that most of the linguistic items in the grammar activities in the Students' Book are presented clearly and completely, and most of the linguistic items in these grammar activities are presented in meaningful contexts but some of grammar activities are not clear and not presented in meaningful context so they should be revised and edited to make all of them presented clearly and presented in meaningful contexts.

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Language in India www.languageinindia.com

12 : 4 April 2012

Firas Ali Sulieman Zawahreh, Ph.D.

A Content Analysis of Grammar Activities in
Student's Book of Action Pack Seven as a Textbook for Teaching English as a
Foreign Language in Jordan 177

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Language in India www.languageinindia.com

12 : 4 April 2012

Firas Ali Sulieman Zawahreh, Ph.D.

A Content Analysis of Grammar Activities in
Student's Book of Action Pack Seven as a Textbook for Teaching English as a
Foreign Language in Jordan 178