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ى -

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***Investigating the Implementation of the Instructional Objectives in Relation to two Principles of Mastery Learning Approach in EFL Textbooks: The Case of the First Year Secondary School Textbook At the Crossroads***

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*To my beloved family:*

*My precious mother and my dearest father*

*My beloved sister Lydia and my dear brother Ahmed*

*To all my friends and all my relatives*

*Syria*

*To my beloved family:*

*My dear parents*

*My Fiancée Arezki*

*My dear sisters and dear brothers*

*My friends and relatives*

*Rezika*

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## **Abstract**

*This study dealt with the evaluation of the EFL textbook At the Crossroads designed for first-year learners in the Algerian Secondary School in terms of its instructional objectives. More precisely, the study was about the evaluation of the instructional objectives included in the textbook in relation to two main principles of the mastery learning approach which are “time flexible principle” and “achievability principle”. That is, research was carried out to determine whether the learning objectives implemented in At the Crossroads can be learned by the students within the allotted time (20 hours for each unit). To reach this objective, Bloom’s (1968) mastery learning approach was used as a framework. The mixed research method combining qualitative and quantitative methods was used. In addition, the descriptive statistical method was employed so as to calculate the number of the textbook’s instructional objectives and the number of its tasks as well. Content Analysis was employed for the explanation and the interpretation of the findings. Our results indicate that the textbook’s instructional objectives meet the “Achievability principle”; that is, they do not go beyond the students’ learning capacities. However, the textbook includes too many learning objectives, which means that the “Time Flexible Principle” is not met.*

**Keywords** : *Instructional Objectives, Instruction, the Teaching-Learning process, At the Crossroads, Time Flexible Principle, Achievability Principle, learners, teachers, Mastery Learning.*

## **List of Abbreviations**

- CA : Content Analysis
- CBALT : Competency Based Approach to Language Teaching
- CLT : Communicative Language Teaching
- EFL : English as a Foreign Language
- IO : Instructional Objective

## List of Symbols

- % : Percentage
- X : The Calculated Percentage
- Z : The Number of Instructional Objectives and Tasks
- Y : The Total Number of Instructional Objectives and Tasks
- x : Multiply
- = : Equal
- $\div$  : Division

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## General Introduction

- **Statement of the Problem**

In the field of English language teaching and learning the selection and development of teaching materials is important. Due to the immense change in different domains mainly, education, new textbooks are adopted and published especially in the Algerian context such as *On the Move, Getting Through, New Prospects....etc.* The question to be asked is whether this change is relevant and beneficial to learners or not. That is, the designed textbooks have been all criticized in terms of their content and objectives i.e they all suffer from certain drawbacks that impede the teaching-learning process. So, to find an answer to this, the focus of our study is on the evaluation of the Algerian Secondary EFL School textbook named *At the Crossroads*.

Our study investigates the analysis of this textbook in relation to its instructional objectives. It aims to determine whether the instructional objectives of *At the Crossroads* are being defined and designed so as to meet the two principles of mastery learning approach which are: “*Time Flexible Principle*” and “*Achievability Principle*”. That is, to find whether the instructional objectives included within this textbook can be attained and learned by the learners in the intended time, and that such learning objectives do not go beyond the learners’ cognitive capacities.

A wide range of studies have been conducted on this matter. Researchers such as Bloom (1968), Mager (1962/1975), Keith (2004) and others come to define an instructional objective as the expected result of a given instruction. Put differently, an instructional objective specifies what the learners will be able to do at the end of a unit or a course. Moreover, Mager (1984) defines an instructional objective as the expected behavior that the learner will be able to perform after having attended a lesson. Mager (1984) in his book “*Preparing Instructional objectives*” tries to show the value and the importance of instructional objectives in the whole teaching-learning process. Also, James Popham (1969) in his book entitled “*Instructional*

*Objectives*” discussed the main aims and functions of instructional objectives in facilitating learning.

The context of our investigation is the Algerian secondary school, namely, first year. The textbook under evaluation and analysis is *At the Crossroads* which is based on the two approaches: Competency Based Approach to Language Teaching (CBALT) and Communicative Language Teaching Approach (CLT). On the one hand, CBALT aims to develop the learners’ ability to be communicatively competent in various life situations. On the other hand, CLT stresses the learners’ ability to make use of language for communication. These approaches are new within the Algerian education since they introduce new concepts and develop new skills.

- **Aims and Significance of the Study**

Throughout this study the focus will be on the instructional objectives of the English textbooks within the Algerian context. To deal with this, we selected *At the Crossroads* as the teaching material to evaluate. As it has been mentioned above, the main objective of this study is to evaluate the textbook in terms of its instructional objectives and, thus, to examine its positive and negative points in relation to our issue.

The main aim of our study is to determine whether or not the instructional objectives implemented within the textbook are learnable and attainable by learners i.e they do not go beyond their levels and abilities. Moreover, our study seeks to find whether it is possible to teach and assess all the instructional objectives of *At the Crossroads* within time limitations.

- **Research Questions and Hypotheses**

To reach the aims of our study, two research questions are asked:

**Q1-** Are the instructional objectives implemented in *At the Crossroads* attainable; that is, they do not go beyond the students’ learning abilities?

**Q2-** Is it possible to teach and assess all the instructional objectives implemented in each unit of the textbook within time limits?

To answer these research questions, we have suggested four hypotheses which are as follows:

**H1-**The instructional objectives of *At the Crossroads* are attainable.

**H2-**Some objectives could not be attained by the learners.

**H3-** Yes, it is possible to teach and assess all the instructional objectives of *At the Crossroads* within time limits.

**H4-** No, it is not possible to teach and assess all the instructional objectives of *At the Crossroads* within time limits.

- **Research Techniques and Methodology**

To conduct our study we use the mixed method approach which is a combination of both the qualitative and quantitative methods. The objective is to provide deeper analysis and understanding of the research topic investigated.

To analyse data we use the qualitative research method so as to deal with the content of the textbook and to evaluate its objectives. We do this through analyzing, and evaluating the different units, sections, tasks included within this textbook.

To analyse the results obtained we use different strategies for data analysis such as the descriptive statistical method as well as content analysis. The rule of three is used as well. Moreover, our inquiry is based on the theoretical framework developed by Bloom S. Benjamin (1968)

- **Structure of the Dissertation**

This dissertation follows the traditional-simple format. It starts first with a “**General Introduction**” which consists of five fundamental steps which are: the statement of the problem, aims and significance of the study, research questions and hypotheses, research techniques and methodology and the last one is the structure of the dissertation.

The general introduction is followed by four chapters; the first is named ***“Review of Literature”*** which reviews the most important works about the research topic investigated. The second is ***“Research Design and Methodology”*** which develops the research techniques and tools used throughout the study. The third chapter is ***“the Presentation of the Findings”***, in which the results obtained are presented in different tables and diagrams. The last chapter is called ***“Discussion of the Findings”*** where the findings are discussed and analyzed so as to find appropriate answers to the previous research questions. At the end of the dissertation, a ***“General Conclusion”*** is provided which functions as a brief review of the most important points considered throughout the study.

## **Chapter One: Review of Literature**

### **Introduction**

The aim of this section is to provide an overview of the most important concepts concerning this study. Therefore, this section is divided into three parts: the first one deals with what a textbook evaluation is. Then, the next section seeks to define instruction, instructional objectives, their characteristics, types and importance. The last part is devoted to the two principles of the Mastery Learning Approach which are: “*Achievability Principle*” and “*Time Flexible Principle*”.

#### **1. Textbook Evaluation**

Textbook evaluation is an essential aspect in education. According to Hutchinson and Waters (1987: 96) “*evaluation is a matter of judging the fitness of something for a particular purpose.*” That is, evaluation deals with checking the success or the failure of something in a given area. In relation to our study, evaluation is the process whereby we determine the extent to which the instructional objectives of *At the Crossroads* can be realized by pupils within time limitations, and that the objectives can be assimilated and grasped by the learners. Hence, the main aim of the evaluation process is to check if the evaluated part of the textbook *At the Crossroads* is effective and where it needs improvement.

Another definition of an evaluation is: “*a process that critically examines a program. It involves collecting and analyzing information about a program’s activities, characteristics, and outcomes. Its purpose is to make judgments about a program, to improve its effectiveness, and/or to inform programming decision*” (Patton, 1987: 33). This means that evaluation plays a crucial role in curriculum development as it allows instructors, material designers to check

the usefulness and efficiency of a particular program and make decisions about it; that is, to make the evaluated materials better. For example, the speaking part of a given textbook does not fit the learners' needs; thus, textbook can be improved by adjusting or replacing it.

### **1.1. Types of Textbook Evaluation**

Ellis (1997) distinguishes two types of materials evaluation, namely, "*predictive evaluation*" and "*retrospective evaluation*". A predictive evaluation is when the lesson is not yet introduced to learners while retrospective evaluation is after the lesson has been attended.

Ellis (1997: 36) states:

Teachers are often faced with the task of choosing what teaching materials to use. In effect, they are required to carry out a predictive evaluation of the materials available to them in order to determine which are best suited to their purposes. Then, once they have used the materials, they may feel the need to undertake a further evaluation to determine whether the materials have worked for them. This constitutes a retrospective evaluation.

That is, predictive evaluation, on the one hand, is designed by teachers to make decisions regarding what is the most appropriate material to use before introducing the lesson. Retrospective evaluation, on the other hand, is the evaluation that is conducted after the lesson has been accomplished to check if the selected materials have been useful and whether they have had good effects on the learners.

Therefore, both predictive and retrospective evaluations aim at making the teaching-learning process more accurate. They both help teachers to make appropriate decisions concerning the effectiveness of their teaching methods (Toy, 2010: 510).

In addition, Tomlinson and Masuhara (2004: 11) say: "*textbook evaluation involves measuring the value or (potential value) of a set of learning material (textbook) by making judgments about the effect of the materials (textbook) on the people using them.*" In other words, textbook evaluation has the purpose of determining the impact of a given textbook after its use. For example, to consider whether a given textbook helped teachers to effectively teach grammar to their learners in a communicative way.

## **1.2. The Importance of Textbook Evaluation**

Textbooks play an important role in the teaching-learning environment. They are the basic sources to transmit knowledge to the learners. The main function of textbooks is to facilitate to learners the process of gaining knowledge in a very organized way. Hutchinson and Torres (1994: 55) assert:

The textbook has a positive part to play in teaching and learning of English. They state that textbooks provide the necessary input into classroom lessons through different activities, readings and explanations. Thus, they will always survive on the grounds that they meet certain needs.

Thus, it can be said that the basic role of textbooks is to support both teachers and learners. It is important to evaluate those textbooks to see if they meet the learners' needs and interests or not. As Cuning Worth (1995) states there are several reasons behind conducting a textbook evaluation. One reason is the necessity to bring new textbooks and course books that go with the learners' and teachers' wants. Another reason is to determine the advantages and disadvantages of a given textbook that has been already used. Moreover, conducting a textbook evaluation offers teachers the opportunity to see which materials are worth to be used and which materials to eliminate.

Furthermore, Hutchinson states that materials evaluation help teachers to select the appropriate teaching materials as they help them to use the suitable language and styles which feet their learners' levels and needs (Hutchinson, 1987). Thus, materials evaluation play a great role in developing teachers and training them to make the teaching-learning process more efficient as they help them to plan their lessons and to know which way leading to good instruction. Accordingly, a textbook evaluation deals with making decisions about the effectiveness of a given textbook on its users, that is, learners and teachers.

## **1.3. What is Instruction?**

Instruction is the transfer of knowledge from one person to another. According to R.Consalvo (1969:230) :*"instruction is a process which brings about a change in the learner. In other words, the pupil should be different after the instructional process from what he was*

*before it.*” From this statement, it appears that instruction is the transmission of knowledge from teacher to pupils in order to improve and develop their skills and abilities. In the same context Bennars (1994:67) says: “*instruction is any process by which an individual gains knowledge or insight, or develops attitudes or skills.*” This means that instruction is a systematic process through which learners evolve.

Instruction is a process that needs careful preparation and concentration. Its main goal is to facilitate learning for learners and help them to attain their wants and interests. According to R. Mohan (2007: 79): “*instruction is the imparting of knowledge, developing of skills and attitudes, and meeting of special needs in various ways ranging from structured to individualized activities, including instructional support activities which aid and enrich the teaching-learning process.*” Said differently, instruction is the process of facilitating to learners the acquisition of knowledge and helping them to develop their competencies and to be in a continuous progress.

Moreover, Macdonald defines instruction as “*the total stimulus setting within which systematic stimuli and desired responses occur*” (Macdonald cited in Eisner, 1984: 118). That is, instruction specifies the intended performance and reaction of the learner. Macdonald’s definition reflects the principles of behaviourism of “stimulus-response”. Thus, the definition does not really specify the effective role of learners in instruction.

#### **1.4. What is an Instructional Objective?**

According to Dick and Carey (1990) “*an instructional objective is a detailed description of what students will be able to do when they complete a unit of instruction*”. That is, instructional objectives describe what is expected to be learned by the end of the school year. In this context, Glaser (1962: 66) says:

Instructional objective is to identify the end product of instruction in terms of observable performance. The way to determine whether or not a student has learned something is to observe the outcome of his behavior. The outcome has been conventionally referred to as behavioral objectives. It is more precise to refer to these end

products of instruction as terminal performances. In most schools these are verbal performances or motor skills.

In more precise terms, instructional objectives are statements of students' performances and behaviors; they serve as a means for making the instruction more effective. Hence, designing clear instructional objectives is important since they tell students what is expected of them to do as they help teachers to determine the appropriate materials and the suitable ways to test their learners as well.

Mager (1984) asserts that instructional objectives describe the intended performance of both learners and teachers during the teaching-learning process. Therefore, instructional objectives are essential elements within the educational syllabus; they describe what is to be taught and what is expected from the learner in terms of competence and behavior i.e they specify what the teacher should do in the class and how the learners should react.

In addition, Keith (2004: 111) says: "*instructional objectives describe the intended outcome of your instruction rather than a description or summary of your content*". This means that stress is on the output and not on the content. So, it is important to have well written instructional objectives within syllabus design phase since they tell exactly what is supposed to be learned; they are helpful to both teachers and learners as they facilitate the proceeding of the lesson.

In other words, Cooper (1999) asserts that education becomes more accurate and realistic when teachers are aware of what the learners need to know and to learn. That is, when teachers know exactly what their learners have to do and perform, then, the learning process becomes easier and more effective. Also instructional objectives help teachers in selecting the most appropriate activities and teaching materials. Instructional objectives state exactly what is to be taught and what is not worth to be done in the class i.e they help teachers to get ideas of what is to be done during the teaching process as they help them to know how they should behave towards their learners (ibid).

Moreover, “*an instructional objective is a statement that will describe what the learner will be able to do after completing the instruction*” (Kibler et al, 1974). This shows that instructional objectives are descriptions of the expected behaviors of the learners at the end of a designed syllabus in terms of competence. According to Mager (1962), instructional objectives are: “*What the students should be able to do at the end of a learning period that they could not do beforehand.*” Therefore, instructional objectives provide teachers with clues about the main goals of the syllabus. In other words, they show them ways to follow throughout the teaching-learning process and what students are supposed to know or be able to do once the unit or the lesson is accomplished.

Tumposky (1984: 295-310) claims that there are four most common justifications for the use of instructional objectives in education:

- ✓ *Goal clarification.* The idea is that instructional objectives tell teachers what exactly to do and help them to know their wants.
- ✓ *Facilitation of instruction.* That is, instructional objectives permit teachers to select the needed teaching materials as they help them to plan for their lessons.
- ✓ *Facilitation of evaluation.* This means that instructional objectives provide teachers with information about what has been worked and what has not been worked during the teaching-learning process and how to handle this.
- ✓ *Creation of a public record.* That is to say, students as well as the public ( their parents for instance) have to know what is expected of them to do and perform after having attended a given program or course (Tumposky, 1984: 295-310).

## **1.5. Types of Instructional Objectives**

### **a. Content Objectives**

According to Rohwer and Wandberg (2005): “*Content objectives define the essential targeted knowledge and skill of the discipline.*” Therefore, content objectives specify what students will know. In the same context, Daniel Bergman (2013: 47-48) says: “*Content*

*objectives describe what content the students will learn."* This means that a content objective as its name indicates is concerned with the content that learners should learn and assimilate.

Students may study different disciplines such as math, science, social studies...etc. That is to say, students are expected to learn various contents. For instance, in a chemistry class where English language is used the learners are expected to learn chemistry content using the English language. Short, D.J.M.Vogt and j-Echevarria (2011) suggest several examples of content objectives in science. They say:

First, in the earth/space science the content objective is that students will be able to identify four types of plate boundaries. Second, in biology, the content objective is that students will prepare a wet mount slide of onion skin cells. Students will observe cells and draw diagrams of those seen in the microscope. Third, in physics the content objective is that students will be able to provide examples of energy transformations in their daily lives. Four, in chemistry the content objective is that students will be able to calculate the number of protons, electrons, and neutrons in an element, given its atomic number and atomic mass. (Short, D.J.M.Vogt and j-Echevarria, 2011: 48)

That is, students can fail if they do not know what to learn; they will be lost. Therefore, having clear content objectives guides and leads students to success. These objectives should be stated in clear and simple language and presented to students to see and read them at the beginning of each lesson and then reviewed at the end of the lesson to determine whether the objectives were met. In short, content objectives are the "what" of the lesson or what the students are expected to learn in terms of information or declarative knowledge.

## **b. Behavioral Objectives**

Behavioral objectives are considered as necessary components of the instructional process. Behavioral objectives describe what the students will show and how will they perform after having attended a lesson; it is something observable. According to Earl and David P. Butts (1968: 33): "*a behavioral objective is a goal for, or a desired outcome of learning which is expressed in terms of observable behavior of the learner.*" In the light

of this statement, we can say that behavioral objectives help identifying the students' competencies and performances. Through behavioral objectives the teacher can make a distinction between clever and weak learners. In addition, Bloom (1956) says that behavioral objectives are: "*Explicit formulations of ways in which students are expected to be changed by the educative process.*"

Therefore, behavioral objectives state what skills students will perform after having an instruction and whether the learners are in progress or do they remain constant. Behavioral objectives describe the degree of students' achievement; that is to say, the extent to which the students have understood and assimilated the objective. Here are some examples of behavioral objectives included in *At the Crossroads* textbook.

- Behavioral Objective 1: Students will be able to respond orally and in writing to a tale.(unit two :once upon a time:47).
- Behavioral Objective 2: Students will be able to express likes and dislikes about literary works.

Thus, behavioral objectives describe what the learners will be able to show during the learning process. In other words, they describe the specific acts that the students should be able to perform while learning. In order to say that an objective has been attained it should be reflected in an observable act (behavioral objective). A behavioral objective is concerned with the "how" i.e how students will act and react when learning takes place.

## **1.6. Characteristics of Instructional Objectives**

Mager (1997) describes useful instructional objectives as having three characteristics:

**Condition.** An objective always states the important conditions (if any) under which the performance is to occur. This could include tools, assistance or assumptions. **Performance.** An objective always says what a learner is specifically expected to be able to do and may also describe the product or the result of the doing. **Criterion.** Wherever possible, an objective describes the criterion of acceptable performance by describing how well the learner must perform in order to be considered acceptable.

In other words, a useful instructional objective is first stated in behavioral or performance terms that describe what the learners will be able to do. That is, it is concerned with what the learners will be to show during learning; they should show their competencies that should be

observable by the teacher. Second, it describes the important conditions under which the learners will demonstrate their competencies i.e the conditions should be appropriate, the teacher should provide learners with a good atmosphere for learning and that through selecting suitable materials and methods. Third, the objective should determine how well it must be performed. That is, the learners should be tested and then evaluated to see how well they have performed the behavior (Mager, 1984). Therefore, instructional objectives are built around three components; “*performance*”, “*conditions*” and “*criterion*”.

Instructional objectives are essential elements within education; they help teachers to be precise about what to do so that the learners will know what they are going to learn in a given lesson. Robert Gagné asserts: “*effective teachers learn to categorize their instructional objectives and then develop the teaching and learning activities that will help students do the kind of thinking required for that kind of learning*” (Gagnè, 1985). That is, teachers must organize the instructional objectives to teach their students through a set of activities that permit the students to use their mind. A concrete example, teaching the students who to “apologize”, then asking them to show their understanding of the point through meaningful activities.

Kennedy *et al* (2006) provide the following characteristics of instructional objectives:

- The IO must be in form of a full sentence that will summarize what the learners have to know and be able to perform at the end of the lesson.
- The IO must always begin with an action verb which will describe the content to be taught and learned at the end of the lesson.
- The IO must not be ambiguous. That is, when designing an IO terms such as “know”, “understand”, “learn” and “to be aware of” should not be used.
- The IO must be measurable, observable, attainable, and teachable. This means that it should include a clear description of the learning outcome.

- The IO must be balanced. It should not be too general as it should not be too specific so that it can be understood and attained by the end of the lesson.
- The IO must be accurate and appropriate.
- The IO should be realistic. It must be achieved at the end of the lesson.
- The IO must function as a support for teachers so that making the program more accurate and more effective.

### **1.7. The Importance of Instructional Objectives**

Instructional objectives can be helpful during the teaching-learning process, as well as when assessing students progress. In this respect, Acito (2002: 99) claims:

Instructional objectives are an essential step in designing instruction of any kind since they describe exactly what learners will be able to do, the objectives help define the scope of an instructional project, and guide project teams through the development of instructional content. Assessment activities or tests should also be developed directly from instructional objectives to ensure that those activities are properly focused on what learners meant to take away. Instructional objectives also play an important role after the instruction has been designed. They communicate the goals of the instruction to instructors and learners, allowing them to focus their attention and energy accordingly.

This statement shows that instructional objectives specify exactly what is supposed to be learned; they are helpful to both teachers and learners throughout the learning and evaluation (assessment) process. They represent a kind of map that facilitates the teaching/learning process. Thus, stating clear instructional objectives is very important.

Moreover, Pintrich and Schunk (2002) claim that instructional objectives serve as a guide for both teachers and learners. That is, when teachers introduce for their learners the instructional objectives that should be attained at the end of the educational program, the learners then become more aware of what is expected of them to do and perform during the learning process.

Instructional objectives also help teachers to be selective. Instructional objectives tell the learners what they should focus on and where they need help and support from their teachers

or their classmates. In addition, when learners know already what to do and what to learn they become less anxious and more optimistic about their success (ibid).

## **1.8. Functions of Instructional Objectives**

According to Brookhart (2009) instructional objectives have the following functions:

- Instructional Objectives state what learners should be able to do.
- The focus of instruction is on the instructional objectives.
- Function as a guide for learners and teachers.
- Instructional objectives and evaluation are interrelated. (Cited in Brumfield, Teresa and Sarah, Carrigan, 2011).

Furthermore, Mager (1984: 11) says that the goal of instructional objectives is first, to contribute in the selection of the content to be taught. Second, they help in determining the effectiveness or failure of the instruction. Third, they permit learners to be aware of what is expected of them to do. Therefore, instructional objectives facilitate to teachers the selection of activities, tests and exams. They can also help parents to know what their children are supposed to learn and on what they will be assessed.

## **1.9. Instructional Objectives and Tasks**

Richards and his colleagues (1986: 289) define what a task is or, what a pedagogical task is as: “... *an activity or action which is carried out as a result of processing or understanding language. For example, drawing a map while listening to a tape, listening to an instruction and performing a command may be referred to as a task.*” According to the authors, tasks denote what the students perform in terms of activities. In addition, Nunan (2004) defines a task as follows:

A piece of classroom work that involves learners in comprehending, manipulating, producing or interacting in the target language while

their attention is focused on mobilizing their grammatical knowledge in order to express meaning and in which the intention is to convey meaning rather than to manipulate form. The task should also have a sense of completeness, being able to stand alone as a communicative act in its own right with a beginning, middle and an end.

This view explains that tasks permit learners to learn specific knowledge and how to use it in practice. By doing a task, a student has a chance to input and output the language as it permits them to communicate meaning in the target language. Through tasks and activities, the learners according to Tanner and Green (1998:127) may feel themselves as being as essential components of the class. Thus, such tasks may serve to increase the learners' motivation, improve their competency, and stimulate learning.

In relation to instructional objectives, designing the appropriate tasks is the mission that instructional designers should take into account. The textbook under evaluation has a task-based structure. This means that, it is organized into tasks which are structured to fit specific language learning outcomes. Every task consists of specific instructional objectives. Each task involves at least one instructional objective.

In this respect, the learning process is based on the instructional objectives that guide the learners to focus on what they need to learn. Thus, it can be said that each instructional objective is reflected in a given task.

### **1.10. Instructional Objectives and Assessment**

Assessment is an important part of an effective teaching and learning. It allows improvements to be recognized and helps both teachers and learners to reflect and develop their performance and their skills. Douglas Brown (2003: 4) asserts that:

Assessment entails any judgment vis-à-vis the students' performance be it little or much. Such assessment can be carried out by the teacher or the students in case of self and peer assessments'. Moreover, Brown insists that assessment always goes hand in hand with teaching. In other words, teaching and assessment are interrelated. In brief, assessments are the gathering of information about the students' ability to perform learning tasks.

This means that, assessment is the information that the teacher gathers about the students' performance. There are different types of assessment among them formative and summative

assessment. According to Cizek summative assessment is the process of evaluating learners' competencies after having attended a unit, lesson or a semester. It is generally assigned to determine the students' success or failure (Cizek, 2010: 3). In other words, summative assessment is used to evaluate student learning and achievement especially at the end of an instructional period such as BEM and Bacculaureate exams in Algeria.

As regards formative assessment, it is defined by Carrie and Bell (1999: 32) as: *“The process used by teachers and students to recognize and respond to student learning in order to enhance learning during learning.”* (Quoted in William, 2010:23). This statement shows that formative assessment occurs while the teaching-learning process takes place and through it teachers check their students' comprehension. In short, instructional objectives are related to assessment because they help learners to identify what they should focus on during the learning process so they can prepare their exams or tests in an effective way. In brief, instructional objectives are reflected both through formative and summative assessment.

### **1.11. The Mastery Learning Approach**

Mastery learning starts with clear instructional objectives in terms of performance. Then, the students are taught the necessary knowledge through the instructional objectives. It is the phase of concretizing the instructional objectives. Next, the teacher assesses the students' learning of the instructional objectives through formative assessment. The students who show mastery are provided with extra activities called “enrichment activities” and the students who do not show mastery are retaught the instructional objectives and then reassessed. Once the majority of the students master the instructional objectives of the present unit, they can move on to the next one (Aouine MD, 2011: 49).

It is said that: *“mastery learning is a philosophically based approach to the design of class- room environments that is currently creating controversy in the educational research and development community. Critics of mastery learning assert that mastery approaches to*

*instruction are rigid, mechanistic, training strategies.*” (Groff, 1974). Cronbach (1972) adds that: *“they can only give students the simple skills required to survive in a closed society”*. In the same context (L. S. Bowen, 1975) says: *“they do not appreciate the complexities of school learning”*. (Levin, 1974 & Scriven, 1975) maintain that mastery learning approaches are: *“flexible, humanistic, educational strategies”*; *“that they can provide students with the complex skills needed to prosper in an increasingly open society.”* Moreover, (H. M. Levin, 1975) asserts: *“they do take into account the realities of classroom life”* (Block & Anderson, 1975).

This shows that mastery learning is an instructional strategy which assumes that students must achieve a high level of mastery before moving to learn new instructions and earning new knowledge.

According to Richards and Schmidt (2002: 321):

Mastery learning is an individualized and diagnostic approach to teaching in which students proceed with studying and testing at their own rate in order to achieve prescribed level of success. Mastery learning is based on the idea that all students can master a subject given sufficient time. For example in an ESL reading program, students might be assigned graded reading passage to read in their own time. Test questions after each passage allow the learners to discover what level of comprehension they reached, and re-read the passage if necessary. They must reach a specific comprehension level before they move on to the next passage.

This means that mastery learning encourages success among students. It is based on clear instruction that is joined with formative assessment taking into account the time element.

In addition, it must be noted that under the mastery learning approach and in relation to our investigation, the instructional objectives should meet two basic principles. The first is *“Achievability Principle”*, that is the teacher should not teach concepts that exceed the learners’ abilities (Laska, 1985: 228). The second principle is *“Time Flexible Principle”* which means that the time devoted for the teaching of the designed instructional objectives should be sufficient (ibid). For example, with relation to the first principle; that is, *“achievability principle”* we can say that it is not possible to teach learners in the first year in the Middle School how to criticize Faulkner’s or Dickens’s works. In addition, in relation to

the second principle; that is, “*time flexible principle*”, we can say that it is not possible to teach ten instructional objectives in one hour.

### **a. Achievability Principle**

The achievability principle means that the learning objective should be easy and clear in order to be attainable by the learners i.e. it should not go beyond the learners’ levels. The instructional objective should meet three main characteristics. First, the student must have an innate capacity to acquire the objective. Second, we must consider the conditions under which the objective is taught. Third, the instructional objective is related to assessment because it can help learners to identify what they should focus on during the learning process (Laska, 1985: 228)

As a means of illustration, if the teacher introduces an English text about the Second World War to first year learners at the middle school they will not be able to grasp it because it goes beyond their level and their abilities.

### **b. Time Flexible Principle**

In explaining this principle, Laska affirms that:

Flexible-time principle is that the teacher should be able to devote the necessary time and effort to the teaching activity. If the teacher is to help all motivated students learn what they are expected to learn, there are three things that the teacher should be willing and have the opportunity to do. First, the teacher should teach and re-teach students as often as is required until the desired learning outcome is attained. Second, the teacher should assess and re-assess students as often as necessary until the accomplishment of the desired learning outcome has been demonstrated. Third, the teacher should allow students as much time as they require to achieve the intended learning outcome(1985: 228).

That is, teachers should teach within time limits as they must re-teach and re-assess their learners in case they do not show comprehension. Said differently, time plays an important role in the teaching learning process. Learners must be provided with the needed amounts of

time in order to succeed in their learning and the teacher should never move on to other units before being sure that all the students in the classroom have fully mastered the previous content even if the allotted time is not sufficient. The most important thing is that learners have well mastered what is supposed to be mastered. In the same context, Arlin (1984) says that students' failure is due to the insufficient amounts of time.

In addition Carroll states: "*the differences in aptitude among students are due to the amount of time spent in learning the material.*" Carroll defines aptitude as "*a measure of learning rate i.e. as a measure of the amount of time the student would require to learn a given level under ideal instructional conditions.*" (Carroll cited in Block & Anderson, 1975: 02). That is to say, learners vary in their learning styles, nearly all learn well when provided with the necessary time and appropriate learning conditions. That is, if teachers provide the learners with the needed time and with appropriate learning conditions, all of them will certainly attain a high level of learning. When the allotted amounts of time are sufficient teachers can, then, teach, re-teach, assess and re-assess their learners.

## **Conclusion**

This chapter has dealt with the review of the literature in which we have shed light on the definitions of instruction, instructional objectives and its principles. In addition, it has provided an overview of the two basic principles of mastery learning approach "*time flexible principle*" and "*achievability principle*". In the next chapter, we are going to deal with the research design and methodology used throughout this dissertation.

## **Chapter Two: Research Design and Methodology**

### **Introduction**

This chapter constitutes of the research techniques and the procedures of data collection and analysis used to investigate issues related to instructional objectives in the textbook *At the Crossroads*. This chapter is divided into two parts. The first one is '*the Procedures of Data Collection*'. It is a description of the research methods used throughout this investigation, the research tools used for data collection. That is, a description of the Algerian secondary school English textbook *At the Crossroads*. The second part is the '*Procedures of Data Analysis*'. It explains the theoretical framework adopted in this study and the research methods used for data analysis.

The descriptive statistical method is used so as to deal with the quantitative data. Content analysis is used for the analysis of the qualitative data. In addition, the rule of three is used to deal with the number of instructional objectives distributed on each unit.

### **2.1. Procedures of Data Collection**

The data are collected relying on the evaluation of *At the Crossroads*. It deals with the evaluation of one hundred and twenty two instructional objectives (122) implemented in five instructional units.

#### **2.1.1. Research Methods**

Throughout this study, the mixed research method is used. This method as its name indicates is a mixture of both the quantitative and the qualitative research methods for the purpose of gathering a large amount of data and providing deeper understanding of the research topic investigated. The quantitative data helped us to deal with all the units and to

calculate the number of the instructional objectives and the number of tasks contained in each unit of the textbook. The qualitative research method helped us to collect information directly through the analysis and the interpretation of *At the Crossroads* in terms of its instructional objectives

### **2.1.2. Description of the textbook *At the Crossroads***

*At the Crossroads* is an Algerian EFL textbook. It is designed to teach English for first year at the Algerian secondary schools by the National Committee of the Ministry of Education in 2005. This textbook is based on two basic approaches: Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) and Competency Based Approach to Language Teaching (CBALT) which are interrelated and complementary. CLT stresses the learners' ability to use language for communication while CBALT, which is a Learner Centered Approach, focuses on the learners' learning competencies and their use in real-life situations.

#### **➤ Structure and Organization of *At the Crossroads***

*At the Crossroads* includes five units; every unit involves different language points and different skills. Moreover, each unit consists of four sequences and three sections. The sections are: "Stop and Consider", "Check Your Progress" and the "Project Workshop" section.

All the units have the same organization, the first sequence of each unit is named "**Listening and Speaking**" which aims to develop the learners' two receptive and productive skills receptively (listening & speaking) as it aims to develop the learners' pronunciation and intonation. This sequence covers the expression of preferences, purposes and the use of adjectives and adverbs.

The second sequence is called "**Reading and Writing**" which aims to make the learner able to read and write appropriately and accurately through describing places, people, the use

of prepositions, tenses, adverbs, pronouns...etc. Thus, it aims to develop the productive skill “writing” and the receptive one “reading” .

The third sequence is “**Developing Skills**” which reviews the two previous sequences of each unit ; it offers learners more practice. The four and the last sequence is called “**Consolidation and Extension**” which gives learners the opportunity to work alone and develop their autonomy. As mentioned above, each unit contains three different sections. The first section of each unit is called “**Stop and Consider**”. It provides the learners with different activities and tasks. The second section is “**Project Workshop**”. It gives the learners the opportunity to write something or to design a work or a project concerning what they have learned, it may be done individually, in pairs or in groups. The last section is “**Check your Progress**” which permits the teacher and the learner to check if there is any progress or not.

### **2.1.3. Data Analysis Methods**

This part deals with the procedures of data analysis. It deals with the analysis of both the quantitative and the qualitative data under investigation. So, the mixed research method is used. To analyze the quantitative data, the descriptive statistical method is used so as to deal with statistics and percentages. It is also used to describe the instructional objectives and tasks implemented in each unit. For the qualitative data, we used Content Analysis in order to analyze and interpret the textbook *At the Crossroads* in terms of its instructional objectives.

#### **➤ The Theoretical Framework**

The theoretical framework used in this study is developed by Benjamin S. Bloom in 1968. It is about the instructional objectives within education. It focuses on the mastery learning approach and on its two basic principles which are: “Achievability Principle” and “Time Flexible Principle”. On the one hand, “Achievability Principle” assumes that the instructional

objectives should not go beyond the learners' abilities and competencies. On the other hand, "Time flexible principle" asserts that learners should be provided with sufficient amounts of time to learn and master the instructional objectives.

#### **2.1.4. Descriptive Statistical Method**

We selected the Descriptive Statistical Method to deal with the quantitative data, that is, the number of the instructional objectives, the number of the units and tasks included in the *At the Crossroads*. To deal with this, the rule of three is used so as to get numerical data. The rule of three is applied as follows:  $X = \frac{Z \times 100}{Y}$

X is the calculated percentage, Z is the number of the instructional objectives or the number of tasks, and Y is the whole number of the instructional objectives and tasks.

#### **2.1.5. Content Analysis**

For the analysis of the qualitative data, Content Analysis (CA) is used. Content Analysis is defined as: "any technique for making inferences systematically and objectively identifying special characteristics of messages" (Holisti, 1968 : 608). That is, CA is an objective technique to analyze and interpret texts and messages. We use CA throughout our investigation because it is the procedure that allows the objective interpretation of written or spoken information. So, in this inquiry, CA is used for the interpretation of the content of the textbook *At the Crossroads* in terms of its instructional objectives.

### **Conclusion**

This chapter has dealt with the methodological design of our research. It has presented the methods used for data collection. Moreover, it has provided a description of the textbook under investigation. Then, it has dealt with the methods used for data analysis that take into

account the descriptive statistical method to deal with the number of the instructional objectives and tasks. Content Analysis for the interpretation of the results obtained throughout the investigation.

## **Chapter Three: Presentation of the Results**

### **Introduction**

This chapter deals with the presentation of the results obtained from our investigation. It is about the presentation of *At the Crossroads* tasks and instructional objectives in relation to the two principles mentioned so far; “*Achievability principle*” and “*time flexible principle*”. As mentioned in the previous chapter, the statistical method is used so as to calculate the number of the instructional objectives contained in each unit and each task. This part of the study highlights the analysis of one hundred and twenty two instructional objectives (122) included in five units. Each unit consists of more than thirty tasks. It would be important to say that twenty (20) hours are devoted for each unit (Mentioned in the textbook, page: 08).

### **3.1. Presentation of the Results**

The current investigation takes into consideration the five units of *At the Crossroads*. Each unit contains a set of tasks. To present the findings, tables and pie-charts are used and are highlighted through percentages and numbers. *At the Crossroads* involves one hundred and twenty two (122) instructional objectives and three hundred and sixty nine (369) tasks.

### **3.2. The Instructional Objectives in *At the Crossroads***

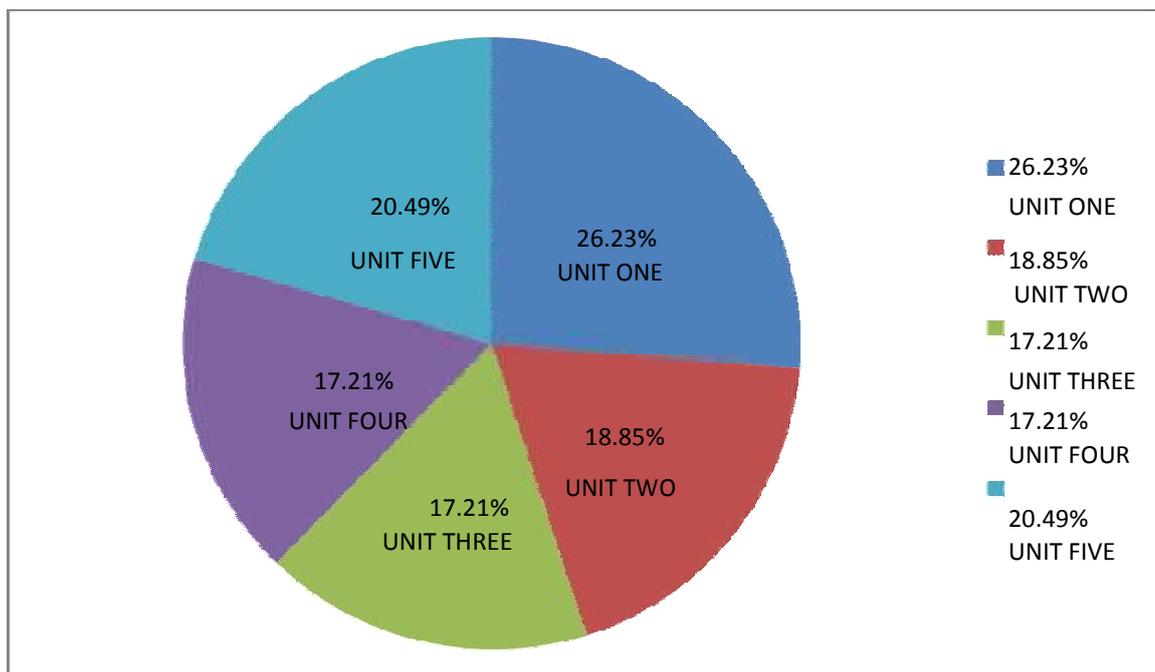
*At the Crossroads* consists of five units which are: “*Getting Through*”, “*Once Upon a Time*”, “*Our Findings Show*”, “*Eureka !*”, “*Back to Nature*”. Each unit of this textbook involves four sequences and three sections called: “*Stop and Consider*”, “*Project Workshop*” and “*Check your Progress*”. The five units involve a certain number of tasks and a certain number of instructional objectives that should be taught in twenty hours per unit.

The Units	Presentation of the Units' Objectives	Number of the	The Allotted Time to Teach the Objectives
<b>Unit One:</b> <b><i>“Getting Through”</i></b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-listen to, respond to, and give instruction using sequencers</li> <li>-Express preferences and purpose</li> <li>-Use the comparative forms of adjectives and adverbs</li> <li>-Write an e-mail</li> <li>-Describe a place and people’s regular activities</li> <li>-Express obligation and necessity</li> <li>-Use modals “Have to”, “Must”, “Had to”</li> <li>- Use reflexive pronouns</li> </ul> <p><b>(For the total number of the objectives see appendices).</b></p>	<b>32</b>	<b>20h</b>
<b>Unit Two:</b> <b><i>“Once Upon A Time”</i></b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Express likes and dislikes about literary works</li> <li>-Read and interpret a literary portrait.</li> <li>-Describe people’s physical appearance and personality features.</li> <li>-Describe people’s physical appearance and personality features.</li> <li>-Use ‘ besides’ and ‘beside’.</li> <li>-Use relative pronouns ‘who’, ‘whom’ and “which”</li> <li>-Recognize and pronounce inflected endings ( verb + ed)</li> <li>-Use the past continuous and the past simple+ “when” and “While”</li> </ul> <p><b>(For the total number of the objectives see appendices).</b></p>	<b>23</b>	<b>20h</b>
<b>Unit Three:</b> <b><i>“Our Findings Show”</i></b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Listen and respond to an interview</li> <li>-Pronounce the sound /h/ in unstressed syllables.</li> <li>-Use direct speech and reported speech.</li> <li>-Read and interpret a newspaper article.</li> <li>-To transform direct into reported speech.</li> <li>-Use adverbs of manner</li> <li>-Summarize what people say: orders, requests, greeting</li> <li>- Conduct an interview</li> </ul> <p><b>(For the total number of the objectives see appendices).</b></p>	<b>21</b>	<b>20h</b>

<b>Unit Four: “EUREKA!”</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Listen and respond to a presentation of an invention</li> <li>-Write a short paragraph about an invention</li> <li>-Express concession using ‘however’, ‘although’, etc.</li> <li>-Read a newspaper article from an opinion page</li> <li>-Use definite and indefinite articles</li> <li>-Express result using so+ adjectives+that</li> <li>-Speak about inventions, discoveries and developments in technology</li> <li>-Describe an object: shape, color, ...etc</li> </ul> <p><b>(For the total number of the objectives see appendices).</b></p>	<b>21</b>	<b>20h</b>
<b>Unit Five: “Back to Nature”</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Listen and respond to a radio interview.</li> <li>-Express feelings, opinions and suppositions.</li> <li>-Recognize and mark intonation in complex sentences</li> <li>-Read and respond to a newspaper article about pollution</li> <li>-Deduce the meaning of words from the context.</li> <li>-Conduct a meeting</li> <li>-Express condition using “if”</li> <li>-Write an advertisement</li> </ul> <p><b>(For the total number of the objectives see appendices).</b></p>	<b>25</b>	<b>20h</b>

**Table 01: The distribution of the Instructional Objectives of At the Crossroads per Units and Time.**

*At the Crossroads* involves one hundred and twenty two (122) instructional objectives. All the units involve almost the same number of objectives. Unit one which is “*Getting Through*” encompasses (32) instructional objectives which represent 26.23% of the total number. Unit two “*Once Upon a Time*” involves twenty three (23) instructional objectives which correspond to 18.85%. Unit three “*Our Findings Show*” and unit four “*Eureka*” involve the same number which is twenty one (21) instructional objectives which correspond to 17.21%. The last unit which is “*Back to Nature*” involves twenty five (25) instructional objectives which represent 20.49% of the whole number which is one hundred and twenty two (122) instructional objectives.



**Diagram 01: The Distribution of the Instructional Objectives per Units in *At The Crossroads***

### 3.3. The Amount of Tasks in *At the Crossroads*

Units	N° of tasks
Unit 01: Getting Through	85
Unit 02: Once Upon a Time	74
Unit 03: Our Findings Show	66
Unit 04: Eureka!	79
Unit 05: Back to Nature	65
<b>Total</b>	<b>369</b>

**Table 02: The Amount of Tasks per Units**

*At the Crossroads* involves three hundred and sixty nine tasks. The table a presents the results obtained through our investigation on the distribution of the various tasks and activities included in the five units of the textbook. The table shows that each unit with a different number of tasks which varies between sixty to eighty five tasks. Unit one and unit four involve the great number of tasks, however, the remained units involve almost the same number of tasks which is seen between sixty five and seventy four tasks. The difference among each unit is around ten to fourteen tasks.

Thus, unit one which contains eighty five tasks correspond to 23.03% of the whole units. Unit two and four which involve seventy four and seventy nine tasks correspond respectively to 20% and 21% for each unit. Unit three and five with sixty five and sixty six tasks represent 17.5% of the totality. It can be said that unit three and five include less tasks than unit one, two and four.

## **Conclusion**

This chapter has presented the findings of our study of the instructional objectives of *At the Crossroads*. The corpus under analysis covers five units, one hundred and forty four instructional objectives and three hundred and sixty nine tasks. This inquiry takes into consideration the number of the instructional objectives in relation to the two principles of mastery learning approach. The results reveal that *At the Crossroads* includes a very large number of instructional objectives that should be taught in the period of twenty hours devoted for each unit. The coming chapter which is “Discussion of the Findings” deals with the interpretation of the results.

## **Chapter Four: Discussion of the Findings**

### **Introduction**

In order to answer the research questions of our study, this chapter is devoted to the discussion of the findings obtained from the evaluation of the instructional objectives of *At the Crossroads*. This chapter is divided into two sections. The first section considers if the instructional objectives of the textbook are attainable; that is, they can be assimilated by the learners. Then, the second section deals with the analysis of the instructional objectives in relation to “time flexible principle” i.e. if the instructional objectives can be taught and assimilated within time limits.

#### **4.1. The Analysis of the Instructional Objectives of *At the Crossroads* in relation to “*the Achievability Principle*”**

In this section, we are going to consider if the instructional objectives of *At the Crossroads* are attainable with the view that the learners are able to understand and assimilate the instructional objectives. Said differently, our objective in this section is to determine whether the instructional objectives of the textbook do not go beyond the students’ learning abilities. Thus, in doing this analysis it is essential to refer to “*the achievability principle*” which aims to determine if the content of *At the Crossroads* is learnable and attainable by first year learners at the secondary school. Our investigation reveals that *At the Crossroads* involves a total of one hundred and twenty two (122) instructional objectives that learners are asked to achieve at the end of the academic year. So, in order to determine and to check if the instructional objectives are attainable, the analysis of the tasks having relation with the objectives is necessary.

From our analysis of both the instructional objectives and the tasks included in the first unit “*Getting Through*”, we found that its instructional objectives are of great importance as they are not too complicated i.e. they do not require big efforts and high levels of comprehension from the learners. In other words, the instructional objectives of the unit fit the students’ learning abilities.

Among the objectives, we can mention: “*use of place*”: “*in*”, “*to*”, “*on*” ...ect (*At the Crossroads*: 15). As we notice, the objective is not really difficult to assimilate; it is rather very easy to learn. That is, even if the students may hesitate which preposition is the most appropriate, however, the objective can be learned. Hence, the instructional objectives are learnable as they are interesting.

Other instructional objectives that are implemented in the textbook unit “*Getting Through*” we find “*Express preferences and purpose*”, “*Use the comparative forms of adjectives and adverbs*”, “*Write an e-mail*”, “*Describe a place and people’s regular activities*”, “*Express obligation and necessity*”, “*Use modals “Have to”, “Must”, “Had to”, and “Use reflexive pronouns*”. Such instructional objectives, if they are discussed in relation to “*the achievability principle*”, we can say that they do not go beyond the students learning capacities; that is, they are attainable and learnable.

In addition, the instructional objective “*Use modals “Have to”, “Must”, “Had to”*”, included in the first unit “*Getting Through*”, corresponds to task 3 page 19. The instruction of the task is the following:

***Take turns to show your partner how to create an e-mail account. Use the instructions above and the modals must, need to and have to emphasize what must be done at each step of the process. (At the Crossroads: 19)***

Learners are asked to express obligation by using different modals such as “*must*”, “*have to*” and “*need to*”. As we remark, the instructional objective reflected through the task is not

really difficult, it is rather challenging. It can be learned by the majority of learners if not all of them.

In this unit, the project workshop aims to enable learners to develop their writing skills and to work cooperatively. For example, the project is “*Make a job application form and write a letter of application*”. (*At the Crossroads: 39*)”. In this way slow learners can benefit from the quick ones and this may facilitate the attainment of the objective. Hence, it can be said that this unit deals with very interesting and realistic instructional objectives that do not go beyond the learners’ abilities. These objectives play a crucial role in developing and improving the learners’ capacities and skills which they will make use of in their daily lives.

So, we can say that the majority of pupils can attain the objectives of this first unit. However, the only constraint is that it includes too many instructional objectives that need a lot of practice and large amounts of time to be well assimilated by all the learners. The focus of learning should not be on the accomplishment of the designed instructional objectives but it should be on the learners’ understanding and assimilation. In other words, the quality of instruction should be the priority and not the covering of items.

The instructional objectives of the second unit “*Once Upon a Time*” are considered as the basis on which the coming years will be built on. The objectives are presented in a simple language and very organized way so that they can all be achieved by the learners. Indeed, from our analysis of the instructional objectives of this second unit, we can say that they are all challenging and useful. For example, learning the language used by Charles Dickens and Chinua Achebe (*At the Crossroads: 57*) is a very challenging objective; it requires reflexion and concentration. In addition, it is related to learning culture.

Moreover, it is important to consider other instructional objectives implemented in the second unit of the textbook. Thus, we have for example:

- Express likes and dislikes about literary works
- Read and interpret a literary portrait.
- Describe people's physical appearance and personality features. -Describe people's physical appearance and personality features. -Use 'besides' and 'beside'.
- Use relative pronouns 'who', 'whom' and "which"
- Recognize and pronounce inflected endings ( verb + ed) (At the Crossroads: 47)

The analysis of these instructional objectives indicates that they respect the “achievability principle”. In other words, the instructional objectives do not require the students to do unattainable things. Instead, the objectives relate to learnable and attainable items. However, this does not mean that the objectives can be learned by all the students with the same easiness, because there should be differences in the students' learning styles. We find, for example, one student learns more quickly than another student, or one student understands more easily than another one.

As regards the instructional objectives of the third unit, it is clear that they do not go beyond the students' learning abilities and as a result the criterion “achievability principle” is met and taken into account by the textbook designers. The following example of the third unit illustrates the teaching of “*marking stress in compound nouns and shift stress from noun to adjectives*” (At the Crossroads: 80). This objective can be challenging, because stress is related to pronunciation which is not really practiced in the Algerian Secondary School. However, the objective can be learned by the students, especially if it is practiced through time. The objective is implemented in the following task:

***Task 02 page 80: Listen and underline the stressed part of your compound words. Example newspaper. (At the Crossroads: 80)***

To better show that the instructional objectives of the third unit of *At the Crossroads* meet “the achievability principle” and that they can be learned by the students, having a glance at the following objectives of the unit is necessary:

*Listen and respond to an interview*

*-Pronounce the sound /h/ in unstressed syllables.*

*-Use direct speech and reported speech.*

*-Read and interpret a newspaper article. -*

*To transform direct into reported speech.*

*-Use adverbs of manner*

*-Summarize what people say: orders, requests, greeting (**At the Crossroads: 77**)*

Generally, we can say that the instructional objectives of this third unit are useful, they are not complicated, and they can be understood and achieved by most pupils of first year of the secondary school.

The fourth unit of the textbook, which is “**Eureka!**” is about modern technologies and inventions such as: telephone, television...etc. We can notice that the objectives of “**Eureka**” are very interesting and very simple. They can be considered as being attainable and learnable. Also, they help learners to achieve a high level of learning.

In order to illustrate the point that the instructional objectives of the fourth unit are attainable, we need to consider the following objectives:

*-Write a short paragraph about an invention -*

*Express concession using ‘however’, ‘although’, etc.*

*-Read a newspaper article from an opinion page*

*-Use definite and indefinite articles*

*-Express result using *so+ adjectives+ that**

*-Speak about inventions, discoveries and developments in technology*

*-Describe an object: shape, color, ...etc (**At the Crossroads: 109**)*

We can say that the majority of the instructional objectives included in this unit are clear, concise and important but they are too many and each one of them needs many explanations and clarifications. Hence, in order to attain all these objectives twenty (20) hours will not be sufficient.

**“Back to nature”** is the last unit of *At the Crossroads*. It is about everything related to nature and earth. The instructional objectives of this unit are also interrelated with tasks.

For example, task 03 page 146 where the instruction is: **Match each cause of pollution with its corresponding effect in the table below. Use the link words and make the necessary changes in punctuation** (*At the Crossroads*: 146).

Cause	Connectors	Effect
a. Factories and vehicles release gases into the air.	.....; <b>as a result</b>	1. The UV rays are not filtered.
b. CFCs destroy the ozone layer.	.....; <b>as a consequence,</b>	2. The atmosphere is full of pollution.
c. The atmosphere is loaded with acids.	.....; <b>consequently,</b>	3. People suffer from skin cancer.
d. The UV rays reach the surface of the earth.	.....; <b>therefore,</b>	4. Acid rains destroy forests.
	.....; <b>thus,</b>	

This task aims to develop the instructional objective which has the purpose of *“using link words and expressing cause and effect”*. The learners are then asked to use the appropriate link words either *“as a result”*, *“as a consequence”*, *“consequently”*, *“therefore”* or *“thus”*. This task helps learners to differentiate between cause and effect.

In addition, from the instructional objectives of the unit five “*Back to nature*”:

*Listen and respond to a radio interview.*

*Express feelings, opinions and suppositions.*

*Recognize and mark intonation in complex sentences.*

*Read and respond to a newspaper article about pollution.*

*Deduce the meaning of words from the context. -Conduct a meeting.*

*Express condition using “if”.*

*Write an advertisement (At the Crossroads: 139).*

To sum up, we can assert that even if this unit develops new language and grammar points as it includes lots of words that are new for the learners such as “*blizzard*”, “*earthquake*”, “*hurricane*” ...etc, we cannot deny the fact that this unit represents meaningful instructional objectives that the majority of pupils either slower or faster can attain.

From all what has been said, we can say that *At the Crossroads* considers the instructional objective as an important component. So, it is necessary to make learners familiar with them and help them to meet their needs. *At the Crossroads* includes instructional objectives and tasks that go with learners’ abilities and level. All of the instructional objectives of *At the Crossroads* are attainable and teachable. They do not go beyond the learners’ capacities even if some of them are very challenging. Accordingly, the “*Achievability principle*” is then respected. Nevertheless, the only obstacle is that they are too many and it is impossible to attain all of them in the allotted time which is twenty (20) hours per unit.

## **4.2. The Analysis of the Instructional Objectives in Relation to “*Time Flexible Principle*”**

In this section, we are going to see whether the instructional objectives of *At the Crossroads* can be taught and learned within time limits. This is to be done in relation to the number of the objectives of each unit and the number of the tasks and the allotted time to teach the objectives.

The findings obtained from our inquiry show that *At the Crossroads* includes too many instructional objectives that should be taught in the period of only twenty hours (20) per unit. Thus, it becomes clear that it is not possible to teach, to assess, to re-teach and to reassess those objectives within the allotted time

Laska (1985) says: "*the teacher should teach towards an attainable instructional objective i.e one that can be attained by a motivated student. In other words, the focus is on what can be learned and not on what can be covered*". That is to say, it is much better to teach one or two instructional objectives that ensure the learners' understanding and comprehension rather than teaching too many objectives and language points that learners cannot well understand and assimilate in the intended time. For example, when learners are asked to finish a task using the right tenses (past simple, present simple, past continuous, present continuous, past perfect, present perfect) in only five minutes, they will not be able to handle this during this small period of time. That is, they need time to remember the rules of each tense and how and where to use them.

Accordingly, learners need time to understand a given content. All the same, teachers need time to teach and to re-teach, to assess and to reassess especially when some learners have difficulties to understand. In most cases, the lesson could not be understood at one hundred percent from the first time it was introduced. So, time is an important aspect in the syllabus design phase i.e when designing any educational program, the amounts of time devoted for teaching that program should be taken into consideration.

Moreover, as we notice the tasks of the units seek to develop the various language points and the different skills (reading, writing, listening and speaking) which is an advantage of the textbook. However, this may take long time.

Consequently, according to “*time flexible principle*” which assumes that teachers at each time should teach, re-teach, assess and then re-assess their learners, we can simply say that the objectives of the unit “***Getting Through***” are teachable and realistic. Therefore, the devoted amounts of time do not go with the number of the instructional objectives. That is to say, it is not possible to deal with the four steps (to teach, re-teach, assess and re-assess) and to deal with all the objectives and tasks of “***Getting Through***” in only twenty hours (20h).

Moreover, in the second unit named “***Once Upon a Time***”, the pupils should first understand and know what the present simple tense is as they should induce the rules of that tense from the provided examples. The next objective is the use of the past simple tense and its rules. Learning tenses is quite complex. Hence, each unit should be designed according to the time that it takes and needs.

Hence, it would be important to say that pupils at this stage i.e. at their first year at the secondary school should master well the rules of each tense before moving to learn more complex tenses in the coming units and years. In order to achieve this, sufficient amounts of time are necessary. As Carroll says: “*the differences in aptitude among students are due to the amount of time spent in learning the material*” (Carroll cited in Block and Aderson, 1975: 02). That is, learners are not the same in terms of performance and skills. Hence, each learner should be provided with the necessary time he/she needs.

In addition, Unit Two of the textbook has the project workshop section where the learner is asked to do a certain project. For instance, the project workshop section aims to write a book review, a writers’ sketch book, a family history project or a story book. We selected an example that illustrates this section and the project is to write a book review.

## ***Writing a Book Review***

### ***Task One: Select your book***

***Check what books of fiction are available in your school library and decide which one you will read for your review. It does not matter whether the books are in English or not. What is important is that all of the group members like the author and her or his book(s).***

### ***Task Two: Allocate the tasks among yourselves.***

***The review will consist of the following parts. Allocate them, but all of you must read the book.***

- A. A short biography of the author.***
- B. A short reminder of the context in which the author wrote his book.***
- C. A short summary of the book.***
- D. A short portrayal of the characters, especially that of the hero or heroine.***
- E. A short description of the setting (place and time).***
- F. A short appreciation (why you like the story and what lessons it teaches you).***

### ***PROJECT ROUND-UP***

- Correct your book review. Exchange drafts with the other groups for further error checking.***
- Write a new version of your book review and hand it to your teacher (At the Crossroads: 69).***

This kind of work permits the learners to exchange ideas with one another and to establish communication and interaction among them i.e. collective learning facilitates the assimilation of the lesson. However, it requires time to deal with. It involves several and different language points that take a lot of time. This means that “the Time Flexible Principle” is not taken into account.

Among the instructional objectives of unit three “***Our Findings Show***”: “to transform direct into reported speech” (see page 77). As we know, speech transformations need a lot of concentration and reflexion. So, time has an important effect in dealing with this objective. In this respect, Arlin (1984) says that: “*most of the mastery critics appear to assume relatively stable individual differences and a trade-off of time for achievement. Traditionally schools*

*have held time constant, so these individual differences are reflected in achievement variability. But if achievement can be held constant at mastery levels, critics argue that these individual differences would then be reflected in time variability''*

From Arlin's statement, we can say that it is very important to take into consideration the learner's different levels while teaching. Each pupil should be provided with sufficient time and sufficient explanations and instructions so as to assimilate the given content effectively. For this reason, while using the textbook *At the Crossroads* variations in the teaching methods and styles are recommended. Due to the fact that the textbook *At the Crossroads* includes many instructional objectives and tasks and the allotted time devoted to teach these objectives and tasks is too limited, teachers may feel lost about what to teach, what to neglect, and which materials and techniques to use.

As we notice the objectives of unit four "**EUREKA!**" are somehow new for pupils (see page 109). Thus, it is not easy for them to grasp all these points in the period of twenty (20) hours, specially, when some pupils have certain difficulties to understand. That is, they do not understand these new points from the first time. They should be provided with a lot of practice and time so as to fully master the intended points.

From the objectives of the fifth unit "**Back to Nature**" (see page 139), it appears that pupils at their first year in the secondary school, mainly, slow learners will not be able to assimilate all its objectives in a small period of time because most of the objectives have not been introduced to the students in the previous years in the middle school. That is, when learners are given new concepts they need time to assimilate them. If the teacher moves directly to the next step of the unit before ensuring the learners' mastery of the previous one it becomes evident that the learners will not progress.

In other words, learners will not be able to understand the coming lesson since they have not understood the previous one. All the same, teachers cannot proceed in their teaching since

learners are not showing comprehension and interest. For this reason, it is required to seek for the quality of the product to be taught and not to move forward and go fast just for the sake of ending the designed syllabus. Time plays a great role in the teaching-learning process; if learners are not provided with the needed amounts of time they can never progress in their learning and then failure takes place.

Following the mastery learning approach, insufficient amounts of time are among the most known constraints faced by both learners and teachers. It is not feasible to move to other units or sections before being sure that all the students in the class have fully mastered the content even if the program will not be finished at the end of the year. The most important thing is that learners show comprehension. Hence, we can say that the textbook *At the Crossroads* includes too many instructional objectives that are of high quality and all of them do not go beyond the learners' abilities but the designed amounts of time (20 hours per Unit) are not appropriate. In short, the "Time Flexible Principle" is not respected.

## **Conclusion**

This chapter has dealt with the analysis of the instructional objectives of *At the Crossroads* in relation to "time-flexible principle" and "achievability principle". So the analysis of one hundred and twenty two (122) instructional objectives and three hundred and sixty nine (369) tasks show that the instructional objectives of *At the Crossroads* are learnable and attainable. However, the amounts of time devoted to teach those objectives cannot be sufficient i.e. this textbook consists of too many instructional objectives and tasks that could not be all reached in the period of twenty hours for each unit. Accordingly, the first and the fourth hypotheses of our study stating respectively that: **H1-*The instructional objectives of At the Crossroads are attainable*** and **H4- *No, it is not possible to teach and assess all the instructional objectives of At the Crossroads within time limits*** are confirmed. On the other hand, **H2-*Some objectives could not be attained by the learners*** and **H3- *Yes, it is possible to teach and***

*assess all the instructional objectives of At the Crossroads within time limits* are disconfirmed.

Learners, generally, need large amounts of time to fully master the content introduced to them. In relation to time flexible principle, the results obtained confirm that the textbook *At the Crossroads* does not reflect this principle. It is overloaded with too many objectives and tasks that cannot be realized within twenty hours devoted for each instructional unit. This does not mean that the instructional objectives of this textbook are not realistic; they are very interesting, however, they are too many. So to handle this, reducing the number of the instructional objectives and tasks of each unit and extending the amounts of time so that teachers can vary their methods and styles would be very effective as it will help both learners and teachers to satisfy their needs and interests.

## General Conclusion

This dissertation dealt with the evaluation of the Algerian English secondary school textbook named *At the Crossroads* in terms of its instructional objectives. To conduct this study we relied on Bloom's Mastery Learning Approach (1968), mainly on two basic principles of this approach which are: "*Time Flexible Principle*" and "*Achievability Principle*". That is we aimed to determine whether the instructional objectives of *At the Crossroads* meet these two principles. In other words, the study sought to discover if the instructional objectives are all attainable and whether they can all be reached within time limitations.

To deal with this issue, we suggested some related hypotheses. First, we supposed that the instructional objectives of *At the Crossroads* are attainable. Second, we added that it is possible to teach all the units and to meet all the instructional objectives in the expected time which is twenty hours per unit. On the other hand, we have suggested that some of the objectives are not attainable and it is not possible to teach all of them within time limits.

To investigate our issue, we adopted the mixed research method combining two related methods namely quantitative and qualitative methods. The former is concerned with data collection and the latter deals with data analysis. Our corpus accounts for more than one hundred instructional objectives and more than three hundred tasks extracted from *At the Crossroads*. This research method helped us to collect data about the research topic through calculating the number of the tasks and the instructional objectives included in this textbook. The descriptive statistical method was used for gathering numerical data using the rule of three.

For the qualitative data or data analysis, we analyzed and interpreted the results through relying on the two basic criterion of mastery learning approach. Indeed content analysis helped us to deal with this.

Following the mastery learning approach, the instructional objectives of *At the Crossroads* are attainable by the pupils i.e. they do not go beyond the learners' capacities.

However, the designed amounts of time are not sufficient i.e they do not cover all the objectives. Hence, the first and the fourth hypotheses stating respectively **H1-*The instructional objectives of At the Crossroads are attainable*** and **H4- *No, it is not possible to teach and assess all the instructional objectives of At the Crossroads within time limits*** are confirmed and the second hypothesis: **H2-*Some objectives could not be attained by the learners*** and the third hypothesis **H3- *Yes, it is possible to teach and assess all the instructional objectives of At the Crossroads within time limits*** are disconfirmed.

Hence, we can notice that the objectives and the tasks are so interesting and can be reached. However, they are too many. That is to say, it is not possible to teach all the units and to meet all the instructional objectives in the expected time. This means that the teacher cannot teach, re-teach, assess and re-assess all the objectives in twenty hours per unit. Consequently, the number of the instructional objectives must be reduced and the focus should be more on what students can master before moving on to the next step during the teaching-learning process.

We hope that our study will open doors for further research in the field of language teaching and learning, especially in relation to the issue we investigated. Also, we hope that our research will add things to the existing literature about the two principles investigated; that is "*Time Flexible Principle*" and "*Achievability Principle*".

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To deal with this issue, we suggested some related hypotheses. First, we supposed that the instructional objectives of *At the Crossroads* are attainable. Second, we added that it is possible to teach all the units and to meet all the instructional objectives in the expected time which is twenty hours per unit. On the other hand, we have supposed that some of the objectives are not attainable and it is not possible to teach all of them within time limits.

This dissertation was carried out to attain two main objectives. At first, it intended to shed light on whether the instructional objectives of *At the Crossroads* are learnable and attainable. Then, it sought to see if it is possible to teach all the units and to meet all the instructional objectives in the expected time.

To examine our issue, we adopted the mixed research method combining two related methods namely quantitative and qualitative methods. The former is concerned with data collection and the latter deals with data analysis. Our corpus accounts for more than one hundred instructional objectives and more than three hundred tasks extracted from *At the Crossroads*. This research method helped us to collect data about the research topic through calculating the number of the tasks and the instructional objectives included in this textbook.

The corpus covers the five units involved in the textbook. The descriptive statistical method was used for gathering numerical data using the rule of three.

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To sum up, through this study the instructional objectives of the *At the Crossroads* are evaluated in relation to the two principles we have mentioned above. That is, "Time Flexible Principle" and "Achievability Principle". Hence, we can notice that the objectives and the tasks are so interesting and can be reached. However, they are too many. That is to say, it is not possible to teach all the units and to meet all the instructional objectives in the expected time. This means that the teacher cannot teach, re-teach, assess and re-assess all the objectives in twenty hours per unit. Consequently, the number of the instructional objectives must be reduced and the focus should be more on what students can master before moving on to the next step during the teaching-learning process.

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