English Unlimited Series (2010): A Resourceful Textbook and Its Impacts on Students, Teachers and Institutions

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English Unlimited Series (2010) by Alex Tilbury, Leslie Anne Hendra, David Rea, Theresa Clementson, Adrian Doff, Ben Goldstein, Maggie Baigent, Chris Cavey, Nick Robinson, JohannaStirling, and Sarah Ackroyd.

English Unlimited Series (2010) is a six-level course that prepares adult and young adult learners to communicate effectively in real life situations. The series is published by Cambridge University Press, and it aligns with six levels of the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR): A1, A2, B1, B1+, B2 and C1. Each of the six levels includes a package of five items. It is not necessary to purchase the entire package since eachitem has a separate price set by Cambridge University Press Representative in Egypt (Dar NahdetMasr). Each package includes*Course book with DVD-ROM and e-portfolio* for 100 L.E., *Self-Study Pack with DVD-ROM* for 99 L.E., *Teacher's Pack with DVD-ROM* for 186 L.E., *Class Audio CDS* for 180 L.E. and *Class ware DVD-ROM* for 600 L.E.[1] In an attempt to review and assess this series, two areas will be investigated: the components of the series and the impact of the series on students, teachers and institutions in the Egyptian context.

Regarding the components of the series, each level, as mentioned above, comprises a package of five items.The *Course book with DVD-ROM and e-portfolio*tackles the four language skills, together with vocabulary and grammar, in everyday language contexts. The *e-portfolio* attached to the *Course book* allows learners to upload reading, writing, listening and speaking files that may be submitted for assessment at the end of the course.

The *Self-Study Pack* includes a Workbook and a *DVD-ROM*. The Workbook provides students with a wide range of language and skills practice on each unit in the *Course book*together with the answer key and the *DVD-ROM* includes over 300 interactive activities for each unit.

The *Teacher's Pack* includes a Teacher's Book and a *DVD-ROM*. The Teacher's Book includes teacher's notes for each unit in the *Course book*. Answers to exercises in the *Course book* are clearly highlighted, and there are instructions for alternative exercises and suggestions that are applicable to multilingual classes, stronger classes or to large and small class sizes. The Teacher's *DVD-ROM* includes a set of photocopiable activities that offer extra grammar exercises, extra vocabulary exercises, extra readings, extra writing, role plays and games. The *DVD-ROM* also includes Writing Essential activities that help enhance students' handwriting, spelling and punctuation. A Progress Test on grammar and vocabulary is found on the *DVD-ROM* for each of the *Course book* units together with the answer key. Three Achievement Tests are also set to examine students' four language skills after each four or five units.

In order to facilitate things for the teacher in class, the series provides*Class Audio CDS*and *Class ware DVD-ROM*s. The Class Audio CDs include all the listening exercises that appear in the *Course book*, and the *Class ware DVD-ROM*s include all the videos found in the *Self Study Pack DVD-ROM*.

English Unlimited (2010) also has more supplementary materials on www.cambridge.org. The site offers a placement test on which students could be placed in one of the course six levels. There is also an English profile wordlist excel sheet covering the first five levels. The website also gives a synopsis about the authors and provides sample materials for trial.

The second area that will be investigated in this assessment is the impact of the series on students, teachers and institutions in the Egyptian educational context.Students in Egypt are taught language skills through a direct instruction technique. This technique is based on structured overview, explicit teaching, mastery lecture, drill and practice, didactic questions, demonstrations and guides for viewing ("*Instructional Approaches*", 1991).

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[1]Prices could have changed in the course of time.

This direct instruction technique has the teacher as the center of information and the classroom as the only place where English is practiced. *English Unlimited* (2010)follows an indirect instruction technique. This technique depends on interactive instruction strategies like role playing, brainstorming, peer practice, tutorial groups, reflective discussion and reading for meaning ("*Instructional Approaches*", 1991). It is also based on an independent learning strategy that extends the study time outside the classroom and provides a learning activity package in the *Self Study Pack*.

Most Egyptian students wish to complete their studies abroad, and some nation-states according to Cambridge ESOL Director, require a Cambridge ESOL Certificate in order to accept those candidates. Since *English Unlimited*aligns with six levels of the CEFR, it qualifies students to sit for KET, PET, FCE or CAE Cambridge ESOL exams and obtain an International Certificate.*English Unlimited* is preferred to other series that align with CEFR since it presents the four language skills together with grammar, vocabulary and across cultures activities in only one book for each level.

In spite of the fact that Egyptian students are good at face book and twitter, their computer skills are limited. They do not know how to write a word file, how to record an audio file or how to upload a file on an e-portfolio. *English Unlimited*helps enhance students' skills in technology through the accomplishment of the various activities on the *DVD-ROM* of the *Self Study Pack*.

For Egyptian teachers, especially novice ones, *English Unlimited* (2010) is beneficial. In most universities in Egypt, whether public or private, teachers are asked to enter classes and deliver successful lectures without being given any training and without knowing anything about the different teaching methods. Notes in the *Teacher's Pack* are comprehensive and reader friendly, and once teachers read and implement the suggested lesson plans, they learn a great deal about different teaching methodologies. Teachers are acquainted with a wide variety of activities, and in the course of time, they will be able to design their own materials and activities that suit their students' needs.Moreover, *English Unlimited* helpsmost novice teachers, whose experience is limited in technology, develop theircomputer skills since they are exposed to the *DVD-ROM*s that are essential components of the course.

For the institution, *English Unlimited* (2010) is a preliminary step in the introduction of a blended learning approach. The *DVD-ROM*s in the Series are used as supplements to, not replacements of, face-to-face classroom interaction. Meeting students on regular basis is of paramount importance to most Egyptian University Administrations, and it would be absolutely rejected if an instructor asked his/her supervisor to convert the course to an online course or even to have 50% of the course as face-to-face classroom interaction and the other 50% as an online synchronous or asynchronous learning. Therefore, *English Unlimited* could be used to introduce the idea of students learning outside the classroom in the same effective way as they do when they have face-to-face interaction with their teachers.

In conclusion, *English Unlimited*(2010) can be used as a textbook for all types of adult and young adult learners in public and private Egyptian institutions. It does not need to be supplemented by any kind of activities. It is very resourceful and self-comprehensive. Finally, *English Unlimited* (2010) has been nominated by the British Council for the 2012 ELTons in the category of Excellence in Course Innovation.

References

English Unlimited (2010). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Instructional Models, Strategies, Methods, And Skills In *Instructional Approaches: A Framework for Professional Practice*(Chapter 2) (1991). Retrieved from http://www.sasked.gov.sk.ca/docs/policy/approach/instrapp03.html#strategies