

# A Study of Iranian High School English Textbooks Based on the Standard Criteria

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**Abstract**—This study was an attempt to evaluate Iranian high school English textbooks in terms of vocabulary, grammatical structures and compatibility between reading comprehension texts and grammar exercises. Readability formula and experts' judgment were used to ensure that high school textbooks, English American headway and English American file books were at the same level of difficulty. The findings revealed that, there were a significant lack of compatibility between the grammatical structures and reading comprehension passages in each lesson and also between high school textbooks and English American headway and English American file books in terms of the order of presentation and content.

**Index Terms**—high school textbooks, readability formula, material evaluation, expert's judgment

## I. INTRODUCTION

### *Textbooks*

Textbooks have a crucial role in both teaching and learning process. In other words, there are many opinions among teachers and learners in relation to the main role of textbooks. Hutchinson and Torres (1994) in their article asked the reason that why teachers and learners use textbooks. The result for the learner showed that a learner saw the textbooks as a guide that aids the learners to organize their learning in both outside and inside the classrooms. In other words textbooks help learners to find their way in a durable process.

The result for the teachers showed that the teachers consider textbooks as a classroom directorship instrument for communication that exists between teacher and students. Based on teacher perceptions, a textbook retains time give orientation to the teachers program. Not only it gives direction to the class but also gives confidence and security to the teachers.

In the EFL classroom, materials are an inseparable part of the curriculum. They are the most noticeable characteristic of a teacher's approach, and can aid greatly to a sequence's syllabus. O'Neill (1982) provides 4 rationalizations for the use of textbooks. Firstly, a large percentage of a textbooks material can be proper for students needs, even if not precisely planned for them. Secondly, textbooks let students think about future, or recharge themselves with past lessons. They eliminate the factor of disbelief in student's expectations. Thirdly, textbooks have the concrete feature of presenting material which is well-organized in reasonable form. Finally, and I consider most importantly, well organized textbooks permit for managing and alteration by the teacher, as well as enabling students to construct unstructured dealings in the classrooms.

According to O'Neill, "Since language is a device for creating what people need and want to say naturally, a great deal must rely on natural, inventive dealings in the classroom." O'Neill (1982, p, 111). Textbooks should be reachable to a series of students, irrespective of their learning ends, along with being flexible to the multiplicity of teachers and teaching approaches.

Textbooks are chief properties for teachers in supporting students to learn every matter including English. They are the underpinning of school training and the major spring of information for teachers. In Iran, in practice textbooks function as the root for much of the language input learners obtain and the language practice that occur in the classroom. For the EFL learners, the textbook becomes the main source of exchange they have with the language away from the input provided by the teacher. Hutchinson and Torres (1994) propose that the textbook is an almost worldwide constituent of English language teaching and no teaching-learning situation, it seems, is comprehensive until it has its appropriate textbook.

Bearing in mind the manifold roles of textbooks in ELT, Cunningsworth (1995) implied a textbook as a supply in donating the material successively a source for learners to practice and carry out the activities. Still do they offer the learners with a reference source on grammar as well as vocabulary and pronunciation. to keep abreast, textbooks function as a syllabus and a self-study source for learners. Therefore they employ a support for the amateur teachers

who have in confidence yet to achieve. Thus, it can be uttered that the fundamental role of textbooks is to be at the service of teachers and learners but not their boss.

## II. RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1. Are Iranian textbooks in line with the standard text books in terms of the compatibility of passages and the structures taught in each unit as opposed to standards textbooks?
2. Are structures used in Iranian high school textbooks in line with the norms common in standard grammar textbooks?

## III. METHOD

### A. Instrument

#### Textbooks

The textbooks used in this study were of three types. The first group consisted of 4 textbooks corresponding to four levels of high school. The second group was American English File series and American English Headway series. As we know there are lots of textbooks available in the market such as: top notch series, interchange series and etc, but these two series serve as a compatible criterion for comparing the presentation pattern of the structure in high school books. The third group was Modern English used as a standard against which the two other groups were evaluated. To ensure that these textbooks are at the same level of difficulty as those of high school two measures were taken. In the first place, the Flesch Reading Ease Readability Formula was run on both high school textbooks passages and those of the target textbooks. In doing so reading three passages of each text book were chosen as the basis of the comparison. The scale through which readers and texts are graded is as below:

- 90-100: very easy
- 80-89: easy
- 70-79: fairly easy
- 60-69: standard
- 50-59: fairly difficult
- 30-49: difficult
- 0-29: very confusing

Table 3.2 below shows the details of the readability formula results.

TABLE 3.2.  
THE RESULT OF READABILITY EASE FORMULA

Texts \ Textbooks	American Headway 1	American File 1	High school 1
Text 1(beginning)	65	70	68
Text2 (middle)	66	64	71
Text 3 (end)	68	63	69
	American Headway 2	American File 2	High school 2
Text 1( beginning )	67	62	69
Text2( middle )	65	69	63
Text 3(end )	66	66	65
	American Headway 3	American File 3	High school 3
Text 1(beginning)	59	57	61
Text2 (middle)	57	58	65
Text 3 (end)	55	58	59
	American Headway 4	American File 4	Pre-university
Text 1(beginning)	52	56	56
Text2 (middle)	49	53	55
Text 3 (end)	54	55	47

As it is clear from Table 3.2, the readability index of each level of high school passages matched those of American Headway and American File on average.

In the second place, 5 teachers with 5 years experience of teaching the mentioned textbooks were asked to judge the difficulty level of the chosen text and to check the match between the texts in terms of level of difficulty. They all agreed that more or less texts are of the same level of difficulty.

High school textbooks were compared in terms of the order in which the structures were presented and also the ways through which learners were exposed to the structures. This comparison was done by the researcher through a meticulous and planned procedure. There is also an intra comparison regarding the establishing a match between the structures presented in the passages in high school books and the structures presented in the grammar sections of the same books. Moreover the same comparison was done to check the match between the structures taught in each unit and the passage American Headway and American File.

### B. The Procedure for the Main Study

Regarding the first question, the researcher tried to investigate the correspondence between the grammatical structures used in the passages and those in the grammar section of the same books. In so doing the number of the grammatical structures used in the text was used as a criterion for estimating the percentage of the correspondence.

The second question required the researcher to compare the order of the presentation of grammar in high school textbooks and that of American headway and American file series. For this purpose, each level of high school was matched with one level of the mentioned textbooks, and the whole presentation pattern of grammar was compared with that of Modern English. The comparison was based on the order of presentation in case of difficulty and the way grammar was presented. Table 2 shows the order and details of the correspondence of the textbooks.

TABLE3.3.  
ORDER AND DETAILS OF TEXTBOOKS

textbooks	Criterion for comparison
High school level 1	English American file 1, American headway 1
High school level 2	English American file 2, American headway 2
High school level 3	English American file 3, American headway 3
Pre-university	English American file 4, American headway 4
All book	Modern English

#### IV. DATA ANALYSIS

##### A. *Compatibility between Structures Taught and the Structures Used in the Passages*

For addressing this question all high school books, American Headway and American File were analyzed and the agreement between the structures taught in each unit and the structured used in the same unit was checked and reported through percentage. For the ease of reporting the result of each analysis is shown in different tables. Table 4.2 shows the results of the analysis of the first book corresponding to the first level.

TABLE 4.3.  
ANALYSIS OF THE FIRST BOOK OF HIGH SCHOOL

lessons	Structure	Level of agreement
One	could, had to	10.7
Two	dummy subject, should	8%
Three	as+adj+as, comparison	5%
Four	comparison(irregular)	0%
Five	word order	46%
Six	tag questions	4%
Seven	that clause	5%
Eight	Passive	8%
Nine	present perfect	7%

Table 4.3 indicates that to what extent passages of the first book contain the structures taught in each unit. The highest level of agreement was observed in lesson five and the lowest levels of agreement were observed in lesson four. Generally the agreement between the structures and their application in the passages was really low. This indicates lack of contextualization of the grammar prior to students' being exposed to the structures. The text of unit four is presented in appendix as an example to show the complete mismatch between the texts and structure.

The same analysis was done to American Headway 1. Table 4.4 shows the results of the analysis.

TABLE 4.4.  
ANALYSIS OF AMERICAN HEADWAY 1

lessons	Structure	Level of agreement
One	Verb to be, possessive adj	59%
Two	Verb to be, negatives and short answers, possessive's	64%
Three	Present simple, questions and negatives	57%
Four	Present simple	74%
Five	There is/are How many... Prepositions of place Some and any This, that, these, those	43%
Six	Can/ can't Was/ were Could Was born	40%
Seven	Past simple regular verbs Irregular verbs Time expressions	52%
Eight	Past simple2 negative- ago Time expressions	63%
Nine	Count/ non count nouns I like...? I'd like....? A and some Much and many	53%
Ten	Present continuous Whose is it? Possessive pronouns	57%
Eleven	Going to Comparatives and superlatives	62%
Twelve	Present perfect Ever and never Yet and just Present perfect and past simple	43%

Table 4.4 indicates that to what extent passages of American Headway 1 contain the structures taught in each unit. The highest level of agreement was observed in lesson four and the lowest level of agreement was observed in lesson six. Generally the agreement between the structures and their application in the passages was reasonable.

The same analysis was done to American File 1. Table 4.5 shows the results of the analysis.

TABLE 4.5.  
ANALYSIS OF AMERICAN FILE 1

lessons	Structure	Level of agreement
One	Verb be +, pronouns: I, you, etc. Verb be – and? Possessive adj, my, your., etc. a/an, plurals, this/that/ these/ those	37%
Two	Simple present+ and _ Simple present? a/ an + jobs possessive s	34%
Three	Sdjectives Telling the time, simple present Adverbs of frequency Prepositions of time	54%
Four	Can/ can't Like+ (verb+ ing) Object pronouns: me, you, him, etc. Possessive pronouns: mine, yours, etc.	36%
Five	Simple past of be: was/ were Simple past regular verbs Simple past irregular verbs Simple past regular and irregular	67%
Six	There is/ there are There was/ the were Present continuous Simple present or present continuous?	49%
Seven	a/ an, some/ any how much/ how many? Quantifiers: a lot, not much, etc. Be going to(plans) Be going to ( predictions)	58%
Eight	Comparative adjectives Superlative adjectives Would like to/ like Adverbs	56%
Nine	Present perfect Present perfect or simple past	62%

According to Table 4.5 the highest levels of agreement belonged to lesson five. On the other hand the lowest level of agreement belonged to lesson two.

The same analysis was done to the second book of high school. Table 4.6 shows the results of the analysis.

TABLE 4.6.  
ANALYSIS OF THE SECOND BOOK OF HIGH SCHOOL

Lessons	Structure	Level of agreement
One	past perfect	3%
Two	possessive pronoun	4%
Three	relative clauses	14%
Four	verb+infinitive, noun as modifier	20%
Five	article, wh-questions	20%
Six	1 <sup>st</sup> conditional, reflexive	4.3%
Seven	2 <sup>nd</sup> conditional	0%

According to Table 4.6 the highest levels of agreement belonged to lesson four and five. On the other hand the lowest level of agreement belonged to lesson seven. It can be inferred that the second book is also suffering from lack of contextualization. The text of unit one is presented in appendix as an example to show the complete mismatch between the texts and structure.

The same analysis was done to American Headway 2. Table 4.7 shows the results of the analysis.

TABLE 4.7.  
ANALYSIS OF AMERICAN HEADWAY 2

lessons	Structure	Level of agreement
One	Tenses, present, past, future Questions, question words	52%
Two	Present tenses, Present simple Present continuous	44%
Three	Past tenses Past tenses Past continuous	56%
Four	Quantity Much and many Some and any A few, a little, a lot/ lots of Something, someone, somewhere Articles	64%
Five	Verb patterns Want/ hope to do Enjoy/ like doing Looking forward to doing 'd like to do Future intentions Going to, will, and present continuous for future	53%
Six	What... Like? Comparative and superlative adjectives As...as	46%
Seven	Present perfect and past simple For and since Tense review	62%
Eight	Have to Should, must	53%
Nine	Time clauses, first conditional	33%
Ten	Passives	57%
Eleven	Second conditional, might	62%
Twelve	Present perfect continuous, Present perfect simple versus continuous	48%

Table 4.7 indicates that the highest level of agreement belonged to lesson four and the lowest one belongs to lesson nine.

Table 4.8 shows the results of the analysis of the match between the structures and the passages of American file 2.

TABLE 4.8.  
ANALYSIS OF AMERICAN FILE 2

lessons	Structure	Level of agreement
One	Word order in question Present continuous Defining relative clauses	43%
Two	Simple past: regular and irregular verbs Questions with and without auxiliaries	35%
Three	Going to, past continuous (future arrangements) Review of tenses: present, past, and future	42%
Four	Present perfect Superlatives	36%
Five	Uses of infinitive Uses of the -ing form Have to, don't have to, must, must not, can't	39%
Six	If+ present; will+ base form If+ past; would+ base form (second conditional)	40%
Seven	Present perfect+ for and since Used to Passive	35%
Eight	Quantifiers, too, not enough	54%
Nine	Past perfect Reported speech	46%

According to Table 4.8 the highest levels of agreement belonged to lesson eight. On the other hand the lowest level of agreement belonged to lesson two and lesson seven.

Table 4.9 below indicates the results of the analysis of the third textbook of the high school.

TABLE 4.9.  
ANALYSIS OF THE THIRD BOOK OF THE HIGH SCHOOL

Lessons	Structure	level of agreement
One	noun clauses, be going to	4%
Two	be+adjective+for+onject+infinitive gerund	0%
Three	Phrasalverb adjective/verb+preposition	7.2%
Four	Verb+object+infinitive Reported speech	21%
Five	Present and past participle Verb+adjective	2.2%
Six	Passive	4%

As it is clear from Table 4.9 the problem of decontextualization and mismatch between structure and reading passage is still present in the third textbook. The highest level of agreement can be seen in lesson three which is 7.2 percent and the lowest level of agreement belonged to lesson two which is 0%. The text of unit two is presented in appendix as an example to show the complete mismatch between the texts and structure.

The same analysis was done to American Headway 3. Table 4.10 shows the results of the analysis.

TABLE 4.10.  
ANALYSIS OF AMERICAN HEADWAY 3

lessons	Structure	Level of agreement
One	Naming tenses Present, past, present perfect Auxiliary verbs Questions and negatives Short answers	42%
Two	Present tenses Simple and continuous Passive	54%
Three	Past tenses Past perfect	46%
Four	Advice, obligation, Modal and related verbs	44%
Five	Future forms Will, going to, and present continuous	53%
Six	Information questions	46%
Seven	Present perfect, Simple and continuous	52%
Eight	Verb + -ing Verb + infinitive	43%
Nine	Third conditionals Might have done / could have done Should have done	53%
Ten	Noun phrases Articles Possessives Reflexive pronouns and each other	47%
Eleven	Modals of probability Present Past Looks like / looks Expressing disbelief	52%
Twelve	Reported speech Reported thoughts Reported questions	58%

Table 4.10 indicates that the highest level of agreement belongs to lesson twelve and the lowest one belongs to lesson one.

Table 4.11 shows the results of the analysis of the match between the structures and the passages of American file 3.

TABLE 4.11.  
ANALYSIS OF AMERICAN FILE 3

lessons	Structure	Level of agreement
One	A) Present tenses: simple and continuous, action and non-action verbs B) past tenses: simple, continuous, perfect C) future forms: going to, present continuous, will	33%
Two	A) present perfect and simple past B) present perfect continuous C) comparatives and superlatives	38%
Three	A) must, have to, should ( obligation) B) must, may, might, can't (deduction) C) can, could, be able to (ability and possibility)	40%
Four	A) first conditional and future Time clause + when, until, etc.	32%
Five	A) quantifiers B) articles: a / an, the, no article C) gerunds and infinitives	40%
Six	A) Reported speech: statements, questions, and commands B) passive: be + past participle C) relative clauses: defining and non-defining	41%
Seven	A) third conditionals B) tag questions, indirect questions C) phrasal verbs	36%

According to Table 4.11 the highest levels of agreement belonged to lesson six. On the other hand the lowest level of agreement belonged to lesson four.

The results of the analysis of pre-university book are presented in Table 4.12 bellow.

TABLE 4.12.  
ANALYSIS OF PRE-UNIVERSITY BOOK

lessons	Structure	Level of agreement
One	conjunction of time	50%
Two	bare infinitive,	50%
Three	adjective phrase	2.5%
Four	modification of adjectives	2%
Five	expressing contrast(while, whereas)	8.8%
Six	expressing purpose	10%
Seven	expressing contrast(although)	6.2%
Eight	Modals(can, may, might, could)	2%

It can be inferred that in pre-university book the level of agreement seems higher, however the lack of match can still be observed. The first two units show a good deal of agreement which is 50 percent. Alternatively the lowest levels of agreement belong to lesson four and eight which is 2 percent.

Table 4.13 illustrates the analysis of the match between the reading passages and structures taught in American Headway 4.



TABLE 4.13.  
ANALYSIS OF AMERICAN HEADWAY 4

lessons	Structure	Level of agreement
One	The tense system Simple, continuous, perfect Active and passive Informal language	52%
Two	Present perfect Simple and continuous Being imprecise Fillers	34%
Three	Narrative tenses Past simple, past continuous, past perfect active and passive News and responses The use of like	44%
Four	Questions and negatives The question how come?	43%
Five	Future forms The word thing	55%
Six	Expressions of quantity Informal expressions of quantity	56%
Seven	Modals and related verbs 1 Declarative questions Questions expressing surprise	42%
Eight	Relative clauses Participles Adding a comment with which	55%
Nine	Expressing habit Be used to doing Intensifying compounds	56%
Ten	Modal auxiliary verbs 2 Expression with modal verbs	49%
Eleven	Hypothesizing Expressions with if	53%
Twelve	Articles a/an, the, one, zero article determiners demonstratives and determiners	57%

It can be said that according to Table 4.13 the highest level of agreement was observed in lesson twelve and the lowest level of agreement was observed in lesson two.

The same analysis was done to American File 4. Table 4.14 shows the results of the analysis.

TABLE 4.14.  
ANALYSIS OF AMERICAN FILE 4

lessons	Structure	Level of agreement
One	A) review: question information B) auxiliary verbs; the ... the ... + comparatives	36%
Two	A) adjectives as nouns, adjective order B) narrative tenses, past perfect continuous; so/ such ... that	37%
Three	A) passive (all forms), it is said that ... , he is thought to ... , etc. B) future perfect and future continuous	42%
Four	A) unreal conditionals B) past modals;	49%
Five	A) gerunds and infinitives B) used to, be used to, get used to	47%
Six	A) articles B) uncountable, plural, and collective nouns; have something done C) Quantifiers: all / every, etc.	31%
Seven	A) structures after wish B) clauses of contrast and purpose; whatever, whenever, etc. C) relative clauses	36%

The highest level of agreement can be seen in lesson four which is 42 percent and the lowest level of agreement belonged to six which is 31%.

#### *B. Compatibility of High School Textbooks with Standard Textbooks*

This compatibility was checked through comparing high school textbooks, American headway series and American files series against Modern English book to determine the concordance of each series with a standard English grammar book.

TABLE 4.15.  
RESULTS OF COMPARING HIGH SCHOOL TEXTBOOKS, AMERICAN FILES AND AMERICAN HEADWAYS WITH MODERN ENGLISH

Textbooks	Compatibility
High school text books	11.5%
American headway series	64.7%
English American file series	69.3%

Level of compatibility was defined as the degree to which the structures in each series are in line with those of Modern English in terms of order of presentation and inclusion of key grammatical points. As it can be seen American headway textbooks and English American files textbooks showed a higher level of compatibility than high school textbooks and this implies that American headway series and English American files are closer to standard English grammar books norms than high school textbooks.

In next step high school textbooks, American headway and English American files are compared in terms of order of presentation of structures and the way through which structures are presented.

This compatibility was checked through comparing high school textbooks and American Headway series as well as American File in terms of order of the presentation and the way through which structures are presented. Level of compatibility was defined as the degree to which the structures in each series are matched in terms of order of presentation and inclusion of key grammatical points.

### 1. Order of presentation

Regarding the above tables the grammatical volume of American file and American head way is more than high school books. In American files and American head way materials are supplied from simple to hard, but it is not true with high school books, furthermore all materials are unscrambled and do not follow a fair order.

### 2. Method of presentation

In American file and American head way all materials are presented in a contextualized way additionally there are formed focused exercises to practice grammatical points, however such materials are presented in a decontextualized way and there are no form focused exercises for follow up practices.

## V. CONCLUSION

Referring to the first question of this study (see tables from 4.3 to 4.14 ), it can be detected that American Head way and American file series outstandingly introduced grammatical structures in passages providing adequate context to raise students' consciousness. Such presentation of target point is highly recommended in order to activate related schemata. On the contrary, none of the high school series applied such a procedure. In other words, high school books did not use the passages in order to raise students' consciousness. To keep abreast, it needs declaring that such problems indicate pitfalls in practical grammar teaching and thus leads students to receive limited input for target structures.

Referring to the second question of this study, there are two approaches as how to grade target points: The structuralism view and the functional notional approach. The former signifies that structures must be organized in accordance to the level of difficulty and the latter states that first a specific situation is presented and then a suitable structure to that situation be taught.

In a performed study showed that on high school books, American head way and American file series presented structure in accordance to structural view owing to the fact that grammar is presented in simple to complex, However none of the high school books applied neither of those approaches due to the fact that no order of presentation was observed and grammatical points were presented in a random order. Another point to state is the amount of grammatical points which are presented in American files and American head way books noticeably but such thing was not true with high school books. Presenting adequate grammatical contexts brings about curiosity for learners which is one of the most significant factors in motivating them to learn structures properly. Based on performed research, it was found that American head way and file series focus on the target points in all sections of each lessons such as Readings, Listening exercises, Conversations, Self-study exercises and Grammar spots are adequately related. By contrasts no adequate context for grammar presentation is given in high school books leading to teaching grammar decontextualized and coming up with major weakness ;i.e, lack of to activate schemata which is an indispensable part of teaching grammar, which nonexistence of such a factor leads to an awkward and imperfect grammatical knowledge, further down side for high school books is that they have got no reliance on variety of exercises in different situations enjoying a variety of practical grammars which the reverse is true with American head way and file series.

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