

An Exploration of High School Teachers' Evaluation of Seventh and Eighth Grade English Textbooks

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Abstract—The study was an attempt to evaluate the quality of the seventh and eighth grade English language textbooks for Iranian junior high school students which were presented at the elementary stage by the Ministry of Education in 2013 and 2014. This examination venture assessed two Prospect textbooks that were thought to be the establishment stone in the English language program in Iran. A study survey was utilized in this study to inspire the viewpoints of 80 English language teachers in Mahdishar, Shahmirzad, Semnan and Tehran, about the textbooks in question. The data were subjected to analysis through descriptive statistics. The discoveries of this examination study uncovered imperative focuses identified with the attributes of a decent course book. The discoveries were by and large for the course readings aside from the language skills in Prospect 1 and objectives in Prospect 2 and some other sub-items. The category that had the highest mean was the one on the content of the book in Prospect 1 and 2.

Index Terms—textbook evaluation, language skills, English language teaching, prospect 1&2

I. INTRODUCTION

The importance of textbooks in educational system is undeniable. According to Razmjoo (2007), textbooks play a crucial role in language contexts all over the world. In a few circumstances, textbooks serve as the premise for a significant part of the language information learners get and the language practice that happens in the classroom. They may give the premise to the substance of the lessons, the parity of abilities taught, and the sorts of language tasks students effectively use. In different circumstances, textbooks may serve basically to supplement the teacher's direction.

For learners, textbooks may give a major source of contact they have with the target language, barring the information given by the educator. On account of beginner instructors, textbooks may additionally be used as a type of instructor preparing that can give thoughts on the best way to arrange and teach lessons as well as formats that teachers can use. A significant part of the language teaching that occurs all through the world today could not occur without the broad utilization of business textbooks. Figuring out how to utilize and adjust textbooks is subsequently a critical piece of an educator's expert learning (Richards, 2001).

Ansary and Babaii (2006) maintain that there are conflicts for using a course reading. A course book is a structure which manages and times the program. As per learning it is not seen as key. As a rule, a course book can serve as a syllabus. A textbook gives moment indicating texts and learning tasks. For learners, no course book means no purpose. A learner without a course reading is out of focus and teacher subordinate, and maybe most decrying of all, for beginner teachers a textbook means security, direction, and backing.

Textbooks assume a significant part in language classrooms in a wide range of instructive foundations – state schools, universities, language schools – everywhere throughout the world. Jahangard (2007) assessed four EFL course books that have been utilized as a part of Iranian secondary schools by the Ministry of Education. He talked about the benefits and faults of the course readings with reference to 13 basic criteria derived from diverse materials evaluation checklists. The criteria were as follows: expressness of objectives, extraordinary vocabulary illumination and practice instructively and socially satisfactory ways to deal with the objective group, occasional audit and test areas, clear appealing format, print easy to examine, suitable visual materials, interesting subjects and errands, clear rules, clearly formed and reviewed substance, a lot of real language uses, great syntax presentation and exercises, characteristics in each of the four skills, and free learning circumstances. The eventual outcomes of the study demonstrated that book four had better features in comparison with the three different course books which required gigantic corrections and changes.

Course book evaluation includes different perspectives. On the one hand, it can be useful to obtain the opinions of teachers. On the other hand, it seems essential to get hold of the ideas of the analyst (whether the researcher or external evaluator) so that the claims of the writers are verified and situational and syllabus requirements are considered (Tomlinson, 2003). In line with Tomlinson (2003), at the present time, learners are at the center of the class, so the materials must be related to their needs. As a matter of fact, the materials must pay attention to students' long-term and short-term goals. In other words, they must teach them how to learn within classroom settings and outside the classroom. As Tomlinson (1998) mentions, the most significant role of the materials is to involve students in decision making about their own learning by making the materials more relevant and motivating and by involving them in generating their own materials to suit their level and interest.

As technology and communication move ahead, teachers must develop their skills and improve them. This will be done when teachers reflect on their practices (Schon, 1983; Richards, 2002) and they have a desire to learn. A textbook by itself is useless unless a teacher brings it to life. Designed for the teacher, materials must provide guidance on how to make students motivated (Tomlinson, 2003). Moreover, writers of textbooks take overall views about the nature of language, the nature of language learning and their educational philosophy. These views are achieved through the tasks and activities. In order to prove the claims held by the writers, analysts' opinions are sought (Tomlinson, 2003).

Through textbook evaluation, teachers can gain insights and confidence. They can have their logical reasons for choosing or not choosing a specific textbook. They can have a photo of drawbacks and benefits of textbooks and they fill and improve the gaps and the needs which exist in them. It is therefore very important for us to lead ELT text book assessment in order to guarantee that ELT course readings can adequately encourage the achievement of our training destinations, and meanwhile, be financially practical to training and learning. Wrong choice of textbooks would be at risk to antagonistically impact both preparing and learning. Finally resources would moreover be wasted (Mukundan, 2007; Sheldon, 1988).

Mahdavi and Abdolmanafi-Rokni (2015) compared Iranian EFL teachers' attitudes toward the authenticity of the newly published textbook 'Prospect 1' with the old one 'Right Path To English 1' taught at junior high schools in Iran. The results showed that the majority of the teachers had a more positive look at the authenticity of 'Prospect 1' than 'Right Path To English 1'. The results also revealed different attitudes of EFL teachers toward the authenticity of 'Prospect 1' and 'Right Path To English 1'.

Kamyabigol and Baghaeeyan (2014) were two among the researchers who evaluated Prospect 1 that had been used in Iranian high schools. The finding of the study revealed that the curriculum had been able to integrate the four language skills, increase student-student and student-teacher interaction, promote pair and group work. However, the dialogs and contexts lacked authenticity, recordings were artificial, new words were not reviewed in the following lesson, there was no phonetic transcription for new words. The teachers believed that although the book was a great progress comparing to its predecessors, it had some shortcomings.

Considering the abovementioned points and that course books do not meet the needs and wants of every class (Tomlinson, in press), this study can help to improve the viability of the utilization of the course reading by helping educators to comprehend what territories of the textbook need further modifications, or whatever degree adjustments of other new training materials are essential. The present study tries to consider teachers' ideas in its material evaluation. So, it can be said that this research is beneficial for textbook writers and educational systems in improving their educational standards.

Research Questions

The main aim of the present study was to consider the widely used textbooks of prospect 1 and 2 in Iran in order to evaluate them. Here are the research questions:

1. To what extent does Prospect 1 differ from Prospect 2 in terms of appearance?
2. To what extent does Prospect 1 differ from Prospect 2 in terms of content?
3. To what extent does Prospect 1 differ from Prospect 2 in terms of language skills?
4. To what extent does Prospect 1 differ from Prospect 2 in terms of language elements?
5. To what extent does Prospect 1 differ from Prospect 2 in terms of activities?
6. To what extent does Prospect 1 differ from Prospect 2 in terms of objectives?
7. To what extent does Prospect 1 differ from Prospect 2 in terms of supplementary materials?

II. METHODOLOGY

Participants

The participants of this study were 80 high school teachers in Mahdishar, Shahmirzad, Semnan and Tehran. Most of these teachers were from Tehran. The teachers' age ranged from 21 to 40, who were 50 females and 30 males. Most of them had language teaching experience from 10 to 15 years. All of the teachers had taught at high schools.

Instrumentation

The data collection instrument utilized in this study was a questionnaire prepared by the researchers. This questionnaire was made up of seven groups of items, each group consists of five or six items. It was adopted from two sources, from a checklist by Tomilson, et al. (2002) and from a course book assessment display by Al-Hajailan (2003). Toward the start of the survey, an arrangement of demographic inquiries was utilized trailed by 34 closed-ended

questions grouped and assembled under seven fundamental classes specifically, (a) physical appearance (b) content of the book, (c) language skills, (d) language elements, (e) activities, (f) supplementary materials, (g) objectives.

Procedure

After a pilot investigation of the survey by the analysts, the 34 item questionnaire about distinctive attributes of the secondary school English language textbooks was concluded. In this study quantitative data were obtained through teachers' questionnaires. First three cities were selected. Then the teachers in selected high schools participated in the study. A total of 80 teachers (females and males) participated in the study. Teachers were given the questionnaires, and they answered the questions on their own. Among teachers, the researchers gave the questionnaire to those who were available and ready to cooperate at the time of researchers' presence. They were requested to fill their own data, for example, training experience of the course book under study. Then, the teachers answered the questions. The questionnaires were gathered a couple of days afterwards so that the members would have enough time to consider completing the questionnaires. The data collection procedure was carried out in November 2014. After collecting the questionnaires, the researchers inserted the information in SPSS software program for further analysis.

Data Analysis

SPSS statistics was employed for the data analysis. The raw results obtained from the questionnaires were statically analyzed to provide the answers for the questions. Through descriptive statistics, means, standard deviation and percentages of each question were determined. SPSS statistics determined relative percentage of any single items in comparison with other items. In other words, the statistics showed the relative importance of every single evaluative item.

III. RESULTS

Results of Per-Statement

As tables 1 and 2 show, out of the 34 points in the survey, 29 items evoked an exceptionally positive reaction. This implies that positive reactions were given for more than 87% of the items in the review. This says nothing but good items about the course books since that educators are a decent record for assessing the said course books as they are the ones who are in immediate contact with the procedure of training and learning. Then again, in Prospect 1, the 6 announcements with most minimal means, under 3.01 and in Prospect 2, the 5 announcements with least means, under 3.12 are posted just below. This implies that these announcements specify those sought characteristics of the books that may not be available in the present course books from the perspective of the members. These are considered as the powerless purposes of the course book being referred to.

TABLE 1:
EXPLANATION WITH THE LOWEST MEANS (PROSPECT 1)

Statement	Mean
1. The illustrations are attractive.	2.28
2. The book has an appropriate glossary.	2.97
3. The objectives can be covered within the time allocated for the textbook.	2.52
4. The books try to provide adequate practice of all four skills	2.77
5. The textbook pays attention to writing activities	2.30
6. The book covers the main grammar items appropriate	3.01

TABLE 2:
EXPLANATION WITH THE LOWEST MEANS (PROSPECT 2)

Statement	Mean
1. The objectives can be covered within the time allocated for the textbook	2.47
2. The objectives of the materials suit the level of the learners.	2.82
3. The textbook pays attention to writing activities such as controlled and guided.	2.77
4. The book covers the main grammar items appropriate to this grade.	3.17
5. The posters and flash cards that accompany the book are suitable.	3.12

Despite the items said above, two different items were not bolstered by about a large number of the members. In Prospect 1, it is that whether or not the illustrations are varied and attractive. In Prospect 2, it is that whether or not the textbook pays attention to writing activities such as controlled and guided. In this way, these should be considered since a major rate of the members did not bolster them. As to standard deviation, it is clear that since there were just two decisions in the answers, it is very justifiable that the standard deviations did not diffuse excessively.

Results on Per-Category

The results revealed that in Prospect 1 and 2, all the classes of qualities characterized before in this exploration are fulfilled in the seventh and eighth grade English Language Textbook for Iranian students' secondary schools with the exception of the classification on language skills, since it was the main classification that had an arithmetic mean not exactly the normal (3.45).

The outcomes likewise uncovered that despite the fact that the criteria of the physical form, objectives, language skill, language elements and supplementary materials are satisfied in the Prospect 2 textbook but the results also revealed that although the criteria of the physical appearance, objectives, language skill, language elements and supplementary materials, with the exception of the class on objectives, since it was the main classification that had a calculation mean not exactly the normal (3.21).

TABLE 3:
CALCULATION MEANS AND STANDARD DEVIATIONS OF THE SEVEN CLASSES OF EVALUATIVE CRITERIA (PROSPECT 1)

Main classes	Number	Mean	Standard Deviation
1. physical form	80	3.696	0.726
2. content of the book	80	4.121	0.696
3. objectives	80	3.856	0.844
4. language skills	80	3.453	0.781
5. language elements	80	3.720	0.775
6. activities	80	3.958	0.730
7. supplementary materials	80	4.120	0.896

TABLE 4:
CALCULATION MEANS AND STANDARD DEVIATIONS OF THE SEVEN CLASSES OF EVALUATIVE CRITERIA (PROSPECT 2)

Main classes	Number	Mean	Standard Deviation
1. physical form	80	3.696	0.726
2. content of the book	80	4.021	0.716
3. objectives	80	3.216	0.788
4. language skills	80	3.883	0.886
5. language elements	80	3.807	0.890
6. activities	80	4.000	0.848
7. supplementary materials	80	3.813	1.19

IV. DISCUSSION & CONCLUSION

The findings of this study are in parallel with other researches and confirm the literature which is related to textbooks evaluation in Iranian high schools. Jahangard (2007) assessed four EFL course books that have been utilized as a part of the Iranian secondary schools by the Ministry of Education. He talked about the benefits and bad marks of the course books with reference to 13 normal criteria separated from distinctive materials assessment questionnaire. The aftereffects of the study demonstrated that book four would be advised to elements in examination with the three different course books (which needed huge revisions and modifications).

This finding can be closely related to Kamyabigol and Baghaeeyan (2014) who evaluated Prospect 1 taught in the Iranian high school. The study revealed that the curriculum had been able to integrate the four language skills, increase student-student and student-teacher interaction, promote pair and group work. However, the dialogue and contexts lacked authenticity, recordings were artificial, new words were not reviewed in next lessons, there was no phonetic transcription for new words. The teachers believed although the book was a great progress comparing to its predecessors, it had some shortcomings.

The seventh and eighth grade English language textbooks for Iranian junior high schools satisfy teachers' expectations regarding its physical appearance. The content of the books are relevant to learners' needs and allow the students to think critically. Materials of books are interesting and can be connected to real life. In Prospect 1, the objectives in the textbooks were clear and precise for the learners, but in Prospect 2, its lacks of the materials that suit the level of the learners. These books are based on communicative language teaching approach and pay more attention to all four skills especially listening and speaking skills.

Further, reading and writing are the skills less paid attention to. The workbooks are categorized in good levels with appropriate activities, objectives give helpful activities and exercises that can protect students do their open attempts, in real life. The teachers are also satisfied with the teacher's guide and workbook and audio CD represented with the students' book.

APPENDIX. TEACHER'S QUESTIONNAIRE

We would like to ask you to evaluate Prospect 1 & 2 English books you teach at high school. Please give your answers sincerely to ensure the success of this project. This questionnaire includes two separate parts, 1 and 2. Part 1 is for Prospect 1 and Part 2 is for Prospect 2. We would like you to tell us how much you agree or disagree with each statement by simply circling a number from 1 to 5. Thank you very much for your help.

Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree or disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
1	2	3	4	5

Gender: Male Female

Age: ----- city

Field of study

Degree AA BA MA PhD

Years of teaching experience at School...

5-10 years 10-15 years 15-20 years 20-30years

How many hours of in service classes have you passed?.....

Part 1: Prospect 1					part 2: Prospect 2					
1 Strongly disagree	2 Disagree	3 Neither agree or disagree	4 Agree	5 Strongly agree	Physical Appearance					
1 Strongly disagree	2 Disagree	3 Neither agree or disagree	4 Agree	5 Strongly agree	1 Strongly disagree	2 Disagree	3 Neither agree or disagree	4 Agree	5 Strongly agree	
1	2	3	4	5	1.Layout is clear and appropriate.	1	2	3	4	5
1	2	3	4	5	2.The illustrations are attractive.	1	2	3	4	5
1	2	3	4	5	3.The book has a complete and detailed table of contents.	1	2	3	4	5
1	2	3	4	5	4.Pictures are suitable to students' culture.	1	2	3	4	5
1	2	3	4	5	5.The book has an appropriate glossary.	1	2	3	4	5
Content of the Book										
1	2	3	4	5	6. Contents are interesting and motivating.	1	2	3	4	5
1	2	3	4	5	7. contents are relevant to learners' needs.	1	2	3	4	5
1	2	3	4	5	8. Materials can be connected to real life situations	1	2	3	4	5
1	2	3	4	5	9. Different social contexts are covered in the book (e.g., job, education).	1	2	3	4	5
1	2	3	4	5	10.The topics of the books are varied and cover different interests .	1	2	3	4	5
1	2	3	4	5	11. The topics allow students to think critically.	1	2	3	4	5
Objectives										
1	2	3	4	5	12. Generally, the book fulfills the general objectives of teaching English language for elementary stage.	1	2	3	4	5
1	2	3	4	5	13. The objectives in the textbook are clear and precise for the learners?	1	2	3	4	5
1	2	3	4	5	14. The objectives can be covered within the time allocated for the textbook.	1	2	3	4	5
1	2	3	4	5	15. The objectives of the materials correspond to the needs of the learners.	1	2	3	4	5
1	2	3	4	5	16. The objectives of the materials suit the level of the learners.	1	2	3	4	5
Language Skills										
1	2	3	4	5	17. The books try to provide adequate practice of all four skills.	1	2	3	4	5
1	2	3	4	5	18. Different steps for teaching skills are observed (pre, while, and post stages).	1	2	3	4	5
1	2	3	4	5	19. The textbook pays attention to writing activities such as controlled and guided.	1	2	3	4	5
1	2	3	4	5	20. The materials for listening are accompanied by activities which help comprehension.	1	2	3	4	5
1	2	3	4	5	21. There are sufficient materials to practice spoken English (e.g. dialogues, role-plays, etc.).	1	2	3	4	5
1	2	3	4	5	22.There is a range of interesting reading text that can engage students effectively.	1	2	3	4	5
Language Elements										
1	2	3	4	5	23.The book covers the main grammar items appropriate to this grade.	1	2	3	4	5
1	2	3	4	5	24. Language elements are ordered based on increasing difficulty level.	1	2	3	4	5
1	2	3	4	5	25 The book includes adequate materials for teaching vocabulary.	1	2	3	4	5
1	2	3	4	5	26. The book includes adequate materials for pronunciation work.	1	2	3	4	5
Activities										
1	2	3	4	5	27. There are a variety of activities in the workbooks.	1	2	3	4	5
1	2	3	4	5	28. objective provides communicative exercises and activities that help students carry out their communicative tasks in real life.	1	2	3	4	5
1	2	3	4	5	29. There are adjectives here instructions to explain how the exercises should be done.	1	2	3	4	5
1	2	3	4	5	30. There are reasonable and appropriate number of exercises.	1	2	3	4	5
1	2	3	4	5	31. Tasks encourage pair work, small group work and whole class work.	1	2	3	4	5
Supplementary Materials										
1	2	3	4	5	32. The CD-ROM that accompanies the book is suitable.	1	2	3	4	5
1	2	3	4	5	33. The posters and flash cards that accompany the book are suitable.	1	2	3	4	5
1	2	3	4	5	34.The teacher's book that accompanies the book is informative.	1	2	3	4	5

Thanks for your cooperation.

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