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Analysis of teachers' and students' attitudes toward Iranian senior high school textbook series

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Abstract

The English Book series are the EFL textbooks that have been prescribed by the Ministry of Education for the public senior high schools. The researchers of the current study embarked on the evaluation of the series through examining teachers' and students' perspectives in this regard. Employing Litz's questionnaires, attitudes of both Iranian learners and teachers from both genders were obtained; the two questionnaires used in the study incorporated seven categories including Practical Consideration, Layout and Design, Activities, Skills, Language type, Subject and Content, and Summary. Some 1128 participants from the Senior high school learners and 74 teachers took part in the study. A detailed analysis of the textbooks of the series was made using descriptive statistics, namely median and mode accompanied with standardized skewness value. The findings of the study revealed that there were positive attitudes toward the textbooks price and accessibility; however, other criterial parameters, i.e., the resources, vocabulary lists, the series language type, and the treatment of cultural issues were viewed as partially appropriate or, in the majority of the cases, in need of improvement.

Keywords: Textbook evaluation, English language teaching, English book series, curriculum study.

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1. Introduction

As the English Book series, currently taught at Iranian senior high schools, deals with a vast population of learners, it is necessary for the books to be evaluated continuously; they have been deprecated for satisfying neither the teachers' nor the learners' expectations (Jahangard, 2007). Therefore, the current study sought to provide an empirical data-based scrutiny of how the relevant stakeholders evaluate the textbook series in question.

The literature on design, development, selection and evaluation of textbooks is currently proliferating. Nation and Macalister (2010) considered evaluation as a means of questioning and developing ideas. It has to do with measuring factors related to learners, teachers, and parties involved in the teaching-learning process; it has been classified into three types, namely Pre-use, Whilst-use and Post-use (Tomlinson, 2003). As Harmer (2001) suggested this process could be done in three steps, namely recording the students' written works, teachers' discussion and investigation of the students' attitudes. However, prior to these scholars, Ellis (1997) had proposed a binary two-layered framework for evaluation including standards determination to be followed by textbook selection and adaptation, and retrospective evaluation that is based on attitudes of either teachers or students.

Different means for evaluation have been proposed of which checklists and questionnaires are most frequently used. McGrath (2002) proposed characteristics of a good checklist as practicality, comprehensiveness, appropriateness and being advantageous for learning process. Cunningsworth (1995) also suggested that evaluation checklists should tap factors including objectives, evaluation type and its purpose. To address the theoretical and practical problems in textbook designs, Sheldon (1988) suggested seventeen criteria for evaluation including rationality, availability, user definition, layout and design, accessibility, linkage, selection and sequencing, physical characteristics, appropriateness, authenticity, cultural bias, educational validity, practice and revision, flexibility, guidance, and cost. Hutchinson and Waters (1987) also suggested four main criteria for objective and subjective analysis of the materials including audience, aims, content, and methodology. Arguing in favor of application of a more systemic approach to evaluation, Williams (1983) proposed consideration of pedagogical, linguistic, general and technical perspectives in assessing the effectiveness of materials. Bruder (1978) also considered investigation of additional factors including level, objective, style, language, age, time, convictions, and competency from the viewpoints of teachers and students as necessary for evaluation.

Different studies also exist on ELT materials which have investigated the English Book series at issue in the present research (See Ghorbani, 2011; Guilani, Yasin & Hua, 2011; Rahimi & Hassani, 2011; Jahangard, 2007; Rahimpour & Hashemi, 2011; Riazi & Mosalanejad, 2010; Soori, Kafipour & Soury, 2011; Talebnejad & Namdar, 2011). However, approximately most of the studies so far have zoomed at the content of the book and are by and large based on the subjective perceptions and judgments of the researchers. This subjectivity could have been contaminated by the personal experiences and educational perspectives of the researchers, and consequently, could have been culminated into biased jurisdictions about the true practical and theoretical value of the text book series. In the present study, utmost effort was made to reflect the judgments of the actual text book users, i.e., the learners and teachers, against a series of criteria which are recognized as axial and fundamental for an effective text book.

The present study can be classified as 'in-use' according to Cunningsworth (1995) and Ellis (1997), as 'whilst-use' (Tomlinson, 2003), 'complementary in-depth and aiming at the investigation of inefficiencies (Cunningsworth, 1995). Also it can be regarded as 'prospective' because it is mainly based on the attitudes of teachers and students (Ellis, 1997). In order to achieve 'systematicity' in evaluation (Williams, 1983), an attempt was made to address the following criteria which were found most common across different checklists, namely, Practical Considerations, Layout and Design, Activities, Skills, Language Type, Subject and Content, and Summary.

Taking advantage of a well-designed and validated instrument, Litz's (2005) questionnaire, this study aimed to answer the following research question:

What are the EFL learners' and teachers' attitudes toward the English Book series?

2.1. Materials and Methods

This part deals with the nature of the sample group, subjects of the study, research instruments and data analysis procedure.

2.1.1. Participants

The participants were both teachers and students from both gender groups selected from Iranian junior and senior high schools. The number of the participants are provided in Table 1 below:

Table 1. Distribution of the Participants

Gender	Number of Students			Number of Teachers
	Grade 1	Grade 2	Grade 3	
Male	148	173	137	35
Female	248	191	231	39
Total	396	364	368	78

2.1.2. Instrumentation

2.1.2.1. Textbooks

The Iranian senior high school EFL series which are currently used at the state schools were the subject of the evaluation. The textbook series are as follow: English Book 1 (Birjandi, Soheili, Noruzi, & Mahmudi, 2010), English Book 2 (Birjandi, Noruzi, & Mahmudi, 2010), and English Book 3 (Birjandi, Noruzi & Mahmudi, 2010) which are taught to first, second and third graders, respectively.

2.1.2.2. Questionnaire

Litz's (2005) teacher's and student's questionnaires (Appendix A) were employed to study the participants' attitudes through their responses to the constituent statements on a ten-point Likert scale. The questionnaires addressed seven categories of criteria including: (A) practical considerations, (B) layout and design, (C) activities, (D) skills, (E) language type, (F) subject and content, (G) Summary. Internal consistency reliability index for the teacher's questionnaire was 0.94 which was calculated from a pilot study with 15 teachers; as for students' questionnaire, the reliability estimate equaled 0.91 with 24 students.

2.1.2. Data Collection Procedure

To conduct the study, Litz's (2005) student's and teacher's Textbook Evaluation Questionnaires were handed out to the participants in various high schools in Qom province. The ratings on the questionnaires were considered as indication of the participants' attitudes toward both of the textbook series.

2.1.2..1. Data Analysis Procedure

Data on the questionnaires were analyzed and summarized using descriptive statistics to find general tendencies and the probable patterns in the scores. The mean and mode of each statement were calculated to answer the research questions; furthermore comparison of the standardized skewness values against .05 level of significant which provided more information considering the participants' ratings were analyzed.

3. Results

3.1. Part (A)

3.1.1. The Students' Attitudes

3.1.1.1. Practical Considerations

Based on the statistical analysis of the students' responses to 1# 'the textbook price', and 2# 'the textbook availability', the standardized skewness values for 1# and 2# were (-6.24, -5.48, respectively, for the 1st grader males), (-3.9, -8.57, respectively, for the 1st grader females), (-7.2, -8.4, respectively, for 2nd grader males), (-8.4, -7.64, respectively, for 2nd grader females), (-3.29, -6.29, respectively, for 3 rd grader males), (-2.59, -6.61, respectively, for 3rd grader females) which were significant at $P < .01$.

This means that the textbooks could satisfy the learners' expectations regarding price (Mean=7.85, Mode=10), (Mean=6.99, Mode=10) for both males and females in the 1st grade, respectively; Likewise, (Mean=7.95, Mode=10), (Mean=6.54, Mode=10) for the 2nd grader males and females, respectively; Also, (Mean=7.29, Mode=10), (Mean=6.58, Mode=10) for males and females in the 3rd grade, respectively.

Furthermore, the textbooks were conceived as accessible (Mean=7.70, Mode=10), (Mean=7.96, Mode=10) for the 1st grader males and females, respectively; in a similar vein, (Mean=8.37, Mode=10), (Mean=7.95, Mode=10) for the 2nd grader males and females, respectively; Likewise, (Mean=7.92, Mode=10), (Mean=7.64, Mode=10) for the 3rd grader males and females, respectively

3.1.1.2. Layout and Design

Analysis of the students' responses to 3# , i.e., 'whether the design and layout is appropriate and clear' and 4# , i.e., 'whether the textbook is organized effectively' are as follows: the standardized skewness values regarding 3# and 4# were (1.02, -0.2, respectively, for the 1st grader males), (1.8, 0.27, respectively, for the 1st grader females), (1.91, 0.84, respectively, for 2nd grader males), (3.78, 1.22, respectively, for 2nd grader females), (2.89, 1.7, respectively, for 3rd grader males), (1.02, -0.78, respectively, for 3rd grader females).

The only significant values were related to 3# for the 3rd grade males and 2nd grade females.

Therefore, it can be concluded that layout and design of the textbook series were conceived as appropriate (Mean=4.26, Mode=2) (Mean=3.98, Mode=1), 2nd grader females and 3rd grader males, respectively.

3.1.1.3. Activities

Analysis of the students' attitudes toward the Activities has been provided below:

The standardized skewness values regarding 5# , i.e., 'whether the textbook provides a balance of the activities' , 6# , i.e., 'whether the activities encourage sufficient communicative and meaningful practice, 9# 'whether the activities promote creative, original and independent

responses' were (-0.05, 0.58, 7.3, 0.95, 0.61, respectively, for the 1st grader males), (1.16, 0.45, 3.47, 0.2, 1.83, respectively, for the 1st grader females), (0.59, 0.15, 6.24, 1.95, 1.34, respectively, for the 2nd grader males), (2.24, 2.49, 4.78, 3.15, 2.92, respectively, for the 2nd grader females), (1.38, 1, 5.42, 2.31, 2.97, respectively, for the 3rd grader males), (-0.16, -1.31, 3.78, 1.11, 2.13, respectively, for the 3rd grader females).

Regarding the 1st grade learners, the values suggested that they were highly uninterested in the textbook series incorporation of individual, pair and group work activity types (Mean=2.71, Mode=1), (Mean=4.53, Mode=2) for males and females, respectively.

Regarding the 2nd graders it was found that they viewed the textbook series as inefficient considering incorporation of individual, pair and group work activity types (Mean=2.98, Mode=1), (Mean=4.70, Mode=1), males and females, respectively.

As for the females, the activities were conceived as unbalanced considering free and controlled orientations, i.e., they were mainly focused on accuracy rather than fluency (Mean=4.72, Mode=5); furthermore, the activities were not believed to require meaningful engagement of learners (Mean=4.70, Mode=1). The females further viewed the textbook series context as unnatural (Mean=4.45, Mode=1); they also believed the activities were not stimulators of creative, original and independent responses (Mean=4.22, Mode=1).

The 3rd graders held significantly negative attitudes toward textbook series as regards the incorporation of different individual, pair and group work activity types (Mean=2.79, Mode=1), (Mean=4.30, Mode=1), males and females, respectively. Furthermore, the activities were not believed to elicit creative, original and independent responses (Mean=3.49, Mode=1), (Mean=4.65, Mode=2), males and females, respectively.

In addition, the males conceived the context of situation through which the grammatical points and vocabulary items were presented as unnatural and context-reduced (Mean=3.91, Mode=1).

3.1.1.4. Skills

The students' attitudes regarding 10# 'the materials include and focus on the skills that I need to practice', 11# 'the materials provide an appropriate balance of the four language skills', and 12# 'the textbook pays attention to sub-skills- i.e., listening for gist, note-taking, skimming for information, etc.' have been analyzed below.

The standardized skewness values for 10# to 12# were (0.34, 1.6, 2.37, respectively, for the 1st grader males), (0.61, -0.37, 2.01, respectively, for the 1st grader females), (0.46, 3.05, 3.22, respectively, for 2nd grader males), (3.67, 3.55, 4.46, respectively, for 2nd grader females), (2.58, 4.1, 4.12, respectively, for 3rd grader males), (2.61, 1.6, 2.4, respectively, for 3rd grader females).

It could be concluded that within the 1st grader group, the learners were highly discontented with the textbook in terms of attention to sub-skills (Mean=3.56, Mode=4), (Mean=4.71, Mode=2), males and females, respectively.

Considering the 2nd grade learners, the findings suggest that attention to language skills was viewed as unbalanced across the series (Mean=3.74, Mode=1), (Mean=4.18, Mode=1), males and females, respectively.

Furthermore, practice of sub-skills was conceived as inefficient (Mean=3.56, Mode=1), (Mean=3.82, Mode=1), males and females, respectively. Likewise, the females viewed the covered language skills as inappropriate for themselves (Mean=4.18, Mode=1).

The 3rd grader group viewed the covered language skills as inappropriate (Mean=3.83, Mode=1), (Mean=4.60, Mode=1), males and females, respectively. Treatment of sub-skills was also viewed as mostly overlooked (Mean=3.21, Mode=1), (Mean=4.46, Mode=1), males and

females, respectively. The males further conceived attention to different language skills as unbalanced (Mean=3.06, Mode=1).

3.1.1.5. Language Type

The standardized skewness values regarding 13# 'the language used in the textbook is inauthentic- i.e., like real-life English', 14# ' the language used is at the right level for my current language ability', 15# 'the progression of grammar points and vocabulary items is appropriate' 16# 'the grammar points were presented with easy examples and explanations', 17# 'the language functions exemplify English that I will likely to use in the future' , and finally 18# 'the language represents a diverse range of registers and accents' which tapped the learners' attitudes toward 'language type' were (3.73, 0.83, 0.46, -0.89, -0.27, 6.91, respectively, for the 1st grader males), (0.48, -0.41, -0.92, -1.48, -1.54, 3.13, respectively, for the 1st grader females), (3.76, 1.41, 1.36, -0.43, -0.3, 3.18, respectively, for 2nd grader males), (6.43, 2.84, 3.37, 1.19, 1.32, 5.73, respectively, for 2nd grader females), (4.38, 1.54, 2.42, -0.09, 2.61, 6.31, respectively, for 3rd grader males), (2.77, 1.3, -0.45, -0.82, 1.04, 4.95, respectively, for 3rd grader females).

It could be claimed that content of the series was considered as inauthentic by all of the participants with the exception of the 1st grader females. The findings are as follow: (Mean=3.38, Mode=1, for the 1st grader males), (Mean=3.70, Mode=1, in the 2nd grader female group), (Mean=3.61, Mode=1, in the 2grader male group).

Likewise in the 3rd grade, the findings were: (Mean=3.23, Mode=1, males), (Mean=4.53, Mode=1, females), meaning that the materials were conceived as inefficient considering practice of accents and registers: (Mean=2.49, Mode=1, 1st grader males),(Mean=4.14, Mode=1, 1st grader males). Likewise, for the 2nd graders (Mean=3.04, Mode=1, males), (Mean=3.23, Mode=1, females). For the 3rd grade group the findings were: (Mean=2.47, Mode=1, males), (Mean=3.77, Mode=1, females).

Also, the 2nd grader females and 3rd grader males viewed progression of vocabulary points and grammatical items as inappropriate: (Mean = 4.31, Mode=1), (Mean = 4.33, Mode = 1), females and males, respectively.

Language level of the materials was conceived as inappropriate by 2nd grader females (Mean = 4.33, Mode = 1), and practice of language functions were viewed as inefficient by 3rd grade males (Mean = 4.28, Mode = 3).

3.1.1.6. Subject and Content

The students' attitudes regarding 19# ' the subject and content of the textbook are relevant to my needs as an English language learner', 20# 'the subject and content of the textbook are realistic', 21# 'the subject and the content of the textbook are interesting, motivating, and challenging', 22# 'there is sufficient variety in the subject and content of the textbook', and finally 23# 'the materials are not culturally biased and they do not portray any negative stereotypes' have been provided below. The standardized skewness values regarding 19# to 23# were (1.8, 0.38, 2.75, 0.91, -5.78, respectively, for the 1st grader males), (0.33, 0.67, 4.21, 1.9, -2.09, respectively, for the 1st grader females), (2.2, 1.25, 3.61, 1.05, -2.84, respectively, for 2nd grader males), (4.14, 2.95, 5.59, 4.46, -1.1, respectively, for 2nd grader females), (4.91, 2.48, 5.74, 2.04, -3.09, respectively, for 3rd grader males), (2.54, 2.16, 5.09, 2.64, -2.64, respectively, for 3rd grader females).

The results indicated that subject and content of the materials were considered as uninteresting, unchallenging and demotivating (Mean=3.62, Mode=1), (Mean=3.95, Mode=1) for the 1st grader males and females, respectively; Likewise, (Mean=3.65, Mode=1), (Mean=3.40, Mode=1) for males and females in the 2nd grade group, respectively; In a similar vein, (Mean=2.94, Mode=1),(Mean=3.64, Mode=1) for the 3rd grader males and females, respectively.

Furthermore, the materials were viewed as devoid of negative stereotypes and cultural biases by all participants except for the 2nd grader females (Mean=7.51, Mode=10),and the 1st grader males, (Mean=6.21, Mode=10). Likewise, for the 3rd grader males and females, (Mean=6.82, Mode=10),(Mean=6.47, Mode=10)respectively.

Furthermore, the 2nd and 3rd graders conceived subject and content of the materials as irrelevant to their needs (Mean=4.42, Mode=1), (Mean=3.89, Mode=1) for males and females in the 2nd grade, respectively; (Mean=3.29, Mode=1), (Mean=4.34, Mode=1) for the 3rd grader males and females, respectively.

Also, the 2nd grader females considered the series content as unrealistic (Mean=4.25, Mode=1). Likewise, the 3rd graders (Mean=4.35, Mode=2), (Mean=4.74, Mode=4) for males and females, respectively.

Additionally, it is worthy of mention that 'variety of subject and content' was conceived as inadequate by the 2nd grader females (Mean=3.86, Mode=1), and by the male 3rd graders (Mean=4.14, Mode=1), and female 3rd graders (Mean=4.57, Mode=3).

3.1.1.7. Views on Conclusion

In the foregoing lines the standardized skewness values regarding 24# 'the textbook raises my interest in further language study', and 25# 'I would choose to study this textbook again' have been provided.

The results revealed that all the values for 24# and 25# (2.74, 8.08, respectively, for the 1st grader males), (2.23, 5.78, respectively, for the 1st grader females), (3.54, 7.02, respectively, for 2nd grader males), (4.21, 7.93, respectively, for 2nd grader females), (5.73, 8.73, respectively, for 3rd grader males), (3.88, 6.56, respectively, for 3rd grader females) were significant.

Therefore, it could be concluded that the students viewed the textbook series as inadequate in motivating them to follow up their English studies (Mean=3.90, Mode=1), (Mean=4.76, Mode=1), 1st grader males and females, respectively.

Likewise, (Mean=3.79, Mode=1); (Mean=3.92, Mode=1), the 2nd grader males and females, respectively; similarly, (Mean=2.88, Mode=1); (Mean=4.13, Mode=1) for the 3rd grader males and females, respectively.

Furthermore, they did not feel any loyalty toward the materials nor would they select the textbook series for English practice had they any opportunity to embark on such a selection from among other available ELT textbooks (Mean=2.43, Mode=1), (Mean=3.59, Mode=1), 1st grader males and females, respectively; likewise, (Mean=2.72, Mode=1), (Mean=3.02, Mode=1) , 2nd grader males and females, respectively. Also, (Mean=1.98, Mode=1), (Mean=3.13, Mode=1), 3rd grader males and females, respectively.

3.2. Part (B)

3.2.1. The Teachers' Attitudes

3.2.1.1. Practical Considerations

Considering Practical considerations, analysis of the teachers' ratings on 1# 'the textbook price', 2# 'its accessibility', 3# 'recentness of publication', 4# 'accessibility of teacher's and student's guide as well as the audio-visual aids', and 5# 'compatibility of textbook methodological view with those of the teachers' have been provided below.

The standardized skewness values regarding 1# to 5# were (- 3.45, - 5.56, 6.52, 2.59, - 0.58, respectively, for males), (- 4.5, - 4.6, 3.07, 1.58, 2.09, respectively, for females) which were significant with the exception of 5# in the male and 4# in the female group. Therefore, it could be claimed that the teachers viewed the textbook series price as reasonable (Mean=8.20, Mode=9), (Mean=8.79, Mode=10), males and females, respectively. Furthermore, they

viewed the textbooks as easily accessible (Mean=8.40, Mode=10), (Mean=8.66, Mode=9), males and females, respectively.

Also, the textbooks were viewed as outdated considering publication time (Mean=2.11, Mode=1), (Mean=1.61, Mode=1), males and females, respectively.

Furthermore, the males conceived the provided aids and resources as inadequate (Mean=3.77, Mode=1). Moreover, the females conceived their methodological views toward language and methodology as incompatible with those of the textbooks (Mean=4.17, Mode=2).

3.2.1.2. Layout and Design

The teachers' responses regarding 6# 'appropriateness of table of contents', 7# 'clarity of layout and design', 8# 'effectiveness of organization', 9# 'adequacy of vocabulary lists and glossaries', 10# 'adequacy of review sections and exercises', 11# 'efficiency of suggested tests and quizzes', 12# 'accessibility of guides for efficient use of the materials', and 13# 'clarity of objectives to both teacher and learner's' have been analyzed below.

The standardized skewness values for 6# to 13# were (1.24, 2.36, 1.93, - 0.78, 1.95, 3.12, 4.81, 2.38, respectively, for males), and (3.6, 3.01, 0.12, - .97, 1.17, 3.41, 3.25, 1.9, respectively, for females). The values suggested that the participants conceived the series layout and design as inappropriate and unclear (Mean=3.37, Mode=2), (Mean=3.02, Mode=1) for males and females, respectively. Furthermore, they viewed the presented quizzes as inadequate (Mean=3.17, Mode=1), (Mean=3.20, Mode=1) for males and females, respectively. Also, the suggested guidelines for better use of the materials were viewed as inefficient (Mean=2.62, Mode=1), (Mean=3.48, Mode=1) for males and females, respectively. Moreover, the males viewed the objectives as vague to stakeholders (Mean=3.65, Mode=3). Females viewed the overview of textbook series content as inappropriate (Mean=2.87, Mode=2).

3.2.1.3. Activities

In the foregoing lines, analysis of the teachers' attitudes regarding 14# 'balance of controlled and free activities that focus on both fluency and accuracy', 15# 'communicativeness and meaningfulness of the activities', 16# ' incorporation of different individual, pair and group work activity types', 17# 'contextualization of grammatical points and vocabulary items', 18# 'promotion of creative original and independent responses through the activities', 19# 'how the activities led to internalization of newly introduced language', and 20# ' whether the activities could be modified or supplemented easily' has been provided.

The standardized skewness values for 14# to 20# were (1.42, 2.67, 4.03, 1.82, 2.84, 1.75, 1.06, respectively, for males), and (2.37, 4.46, 4.71, 3.02, 3.98, 1.66, 0.46, respectively, for females).

The results indicated that the activities were viewed as unable to encourage communicative and meaningful practice (Mean=3.37, Mode=1), (Mean=2.61, Mode=1) for males and females, respectively.

The materials were believed to be inadequate considering incorporation of pair and group practices (Mean=2.94, Mode=1), (Mean=2.66, Mode=1) for males and females, respectively. They were also conceived as unable to elicit creative, original and independent responses from learners (Mean=3.37, Mode=2); (Mean=2.33, Mode=1) for males and females, respectively.

Furthermore, females conceived the activities as unbalanced consisting of mostly controlled exercises that emphasized accuracy over fluency (Mean=2.92, Mode=1). In the same vein, they conceived of the context through which vocabulary points and grammatical items were introduced as inappropriate and unrealistic (Mean=3.12, Mode =2).

3.2.1.4. Skills

The results for analysis of the teachers' attitudes on 21# 'appropriateness of the practiced skills for the learners' needs', 22# 'balance of the four language skills', 23# 'attention to sub-skills', 24# 'attention to natural pronunciation', and 25# 'integration of skills practice' have been provided below:

The standardized skewness values regarding 21# to 25# (0.41, 3.16, 3.24, 2.49, 4.17, respectively, for males), (2.73, 2.6, 2.78, 3.38, 4.35, respectively, for females) were significant with the exception of 21# for males.

The results revealed that the teachers viewed balance of practiced language skills as inappropriate (Mean=3.28, Mode=1), (Mean=4.46, Mode=1) for males and females, respectively.

Furthermore, attention to sub-skills was viewed as inefficient (Mean=3.31, Mode=1), (Mean=3.35, Mode=1) for males and females, respectively.

Also, practice of natural pronunciation was conceived as mostly overlooked (Mean=3.88, Mode=3), (Mean=2.10, Mode=1) for males and females, respectively.

Furthermore, the language skills practice was viewed as mostly disintegrated across the series (Mean=2.94, Mode=1), (Mean=2.64, Mode=1) for males and females, respectively.

In addition, females considered the focused skills as inappropriate for themselves considering their needs (Mean=3.12, Mode=2).

3.2.1.5. Language Type

The analysis of the teachers' ratings on 26# 'authenticity of content', 27# 'appropriateness of language level for students', 28#' progression of vocabulary points and grammatical items', 29# 'efficiency of examples and explanations', 30# 'inclusion of appropriate language functions', and 31# 'representation of different accents, and registers' has been provided below:

The standardized skewness values regarding 26# to 31# (4.72, 0.18, - 0.39, - 0.89, - 0.82, 6.11, respectively, for males), (4.29, 0.54, 0.48, - 1.85, 1.02, 8.16, respectively, for females) were all non-significant with the exception of 26# and 31#.

It could be claimed that language of the series was conceived as inauthentic (Mean=2.68, Mode=1), (Mean=2.48, Mode=1) for males and females, respectively.

Furthermore, the materials were viewed as inadequate considering representation of a diverse range of registers and accents (Mean=2.37, Mode=1), (Mean=1.94, Mode=1) for males and females, respectively.

3.2.1.6. Subject and Content

The results for analysis of the teachers' ratings on 32# 'relevance of the subjects and content to the students' needs', 33# 'how realistic the subjects and content were', 34# 'whether they were interesting, challenging and motivating', 35# 'if there were sufficient variety of subjects and content', and finally 36# 'how biased the materials were regarding presentation of cultural information and representation of stereotypes' have been provided below:

The standardized skewness values regarding 32# to 36# were (1.67, - 0.5, 2.81, 1.73, - 3.91, respectively, for males), (2.83, - 0.08, 3.71, 3.88, - 4.35, respectively, for females).

The values revealed that subject and content of the textbook series were viewed as uninteresting, unchallenging and demotivating (Mean=3.62, Mode=3), (Mean=2.46, Mode=1) for males and females, respectively.

Furthermore, the materials were viewed as unbiased considering cultural issues, and devoid of negative stereotypes (Mean=7.82, Mode=9), (Mean=8.15, Mode=8) for males and females, respectively.

Also, females viewed the series as irrelevant to students' needs (Mean=2.61, Mode=1) and inappropriate in the variety of subjects and content (Mean=2.48, Mode =1).

3.2.1.7. Views on Conclusion

The standardized skewness values regarding 37# 'appropriateness of the materials for the predetermined language learning aims', 38# ' their suitability for homogeneous, co-educated classes', 39# 'their efficiency to raise the learners' interests in further English study', and 40# 'the loyalty that the teachers felt toward the materials were analyzed at this part, have been provided below:

The values for 37# to 40# were (1.91, - 1.43, 3.65, 3.55, respectively, for males), (3.93, - 1.12, 5.29, 5.91, respectively, for females).

The related figures revealed that the series were believed to be mostly inefficient in encouragement of learners for furtherance of their future English studies (Mean=2.91, Mode=1), (Mean=2.23, Mode=1) for males and females, respectively.

Furthermore, loyalty toward the textbook series was also low (Mean=2.42, Mode=1); (Mean=1.92, Mode=1) for males and females, respectively.

Also, the females held significantly negative attitudes toward appropriateness of textbook series for language learning aims (Mean=2.58, Mode=1).

4. Discussion

4.1. Practical Considerations

The price of each one of the individual books in the series seemed quite viable, though considering the total textbooks that a student have to buy in an educational year plus the stationery and other resources seem to impose a cumbersome burden on the shoulders of many economically unprivileged families.

Regarding the accessibility, the textbooks were easily accessible, but only at the beginning of the educational year. If a learner loses his/her textbook, finding another extra copy will not be an easy job. The problem becomes more serious in villages and suburbs.

As for publication time, they have been released about one decade ago. In the Iranian national curriculum, 4th edition, it reads that it is the Ministry of Education's responsibility to revise the textbooks and publish new ones every 10 years. Although minor changes have been made to the textbooks once in a while, there are a multitude of necessary changes which are kept in limbo.

Provision of in-service programs, holding workshops and handing out teacher guide-pamphlets have been some of remedies the Ministry of Education has invoked to rectify some of the problems in the textbooks. However, due to a host of complicated and interwoven intricacies in EFL teaching in Iran, most of these efforts appear to be of no feasible effect as an act of reform or remedy.

The teachers in their endeavor to present the lessons could make use of audio and video files that accompany the textbooks. The audio-visual accessory aids include dialogues and patterns as well as the new words and reading comprehension texts in the *English Book* series. However, making use of these complementary audio-visual aids is contingent upon whether the required equipment such as cassette or CD players and computers are available or not. Unfortunately, most public schools partly or completely are lacking in such equipment or even if available, in

many cases, they are out of order or in need of serious fixing and maintenance services, which altogether, make the audio-visual practice deemed to failure.

4.2. Layout and Design

In the *English Book* series, table of contents included the title of each lesson, accompanied with grammatical structures that are to be taught; actually, the series lack a detailed overview of functions, structures and vocabulary items.

The series have a clear layout and design with appropriate orthographic features; however, their black and white texture decreases their aesthetic appeal.

Regarding the new vocabulary, all the new words in each lesson have been provided at the end of the corresponding unit in a word list, with no meaning clarification, neither in the target language nor in the learners' mother tongue. Moreover, their pronunciations which could have been added to the word list are totally lacking, and need to be supplemented in late revisions.

Considering review sections and exercises in the *English Book* series an ostensible shortcoming is evident, where review section are less frequent in number and are limited only to the beginning and end of the textbooks. The inadequate provision of opportunities for learners to renew their acquired knowledge of English language throughout the series, need to be ameliorated by the inclusion of more review sections in the materials in the future revisions.

There are some evaluation quizzes and testing suggestions in the series corresponding websites whose volume and quality need to be improved, particularly in comparison with other parallel rival booklets, workbooks, and audio-visual resources which are extensively released by private publishers.

As far as the objectives are concerned, they are almost vague and opaque to both teachers and learners; the explanations on how the series should be used are almost absent in the introductions to the textbooks and they are left open to interpretation and controversy, culminating into a state of indeterminacy and chaos, so that every teacher or learner have his/her own interpretation and therefore practice in pursuing them.

4.3. Activities

Ach lesson of the textbooks in the series begins with a new words section through which some of the new vocabulary items are introduced within the context of some sentences followed by a few comprehension checking questions.

New vocabulary items are practiced by such exercises as gap-fillings and rearrangement of words into related clusters and categories. However, there are some problems with explanation and use of vocabulary items that follow: First, lack of correspondence between the senses of the words introduced in the new words section and the meanings of the the very same words in the reading part. Second, contextualization of new vocabulary items is poor and insufficient so that the intended meaning are very difficult to infer or guess at by the learners. Third, too many lexical items are left intact in the new words sections and are transposed to the reading comprehension part and in some cases to the exercises without any prior explanations.

The reading texts through which vocabulary items and grammatical structures are introduced build up the next major section of each of the lessons. The reading passages are uniformly followed by a variety of comprehension questions in the format of Wh-, yes/no, true/false, and multiple-choice questions. However, it is worth mentioning that strict adherence to this type of artificial discourse might down-play the real life role of reading to answering comprehension questions and providing responses which can distance the classroom practice from actual real-life communication (Belanoff, 1987, as cited in Ediger, 2006).

The grammatical structures are practiced through drills and a large portion of the books is allocated to these types of exercises. They range from repetition, substitution, to transformation

ones whose primary aim mainly is to provide learners with oral practice of the intended grammatical points and are considered as one of the cornerstone exercises mostly associated with the audio-lingual method in language teaching whose aim is helping students to over-learn patterns through habit formation (Larsen-Freeman, 2000; Richards & Rodgers, 2001). Interestingly, they are often skipped by language teachers for different reasons, such as the backwash effect imposed by the so called standard language tests administered by the officials of the Ministry of Education, the teachers' lack of interest, time consuming nature of such drills, to name a few.

Above all, the co-operative learning principles which suggest the elicitation of creative, original and independent responses have almost been ignored. Furthermore, the following principles of communicative language teaching as stated in Celce-Murcia (2001), Larsen-Freeman (2000), and Richards and Rodgers (2001), have been mostly overlooked across the series:

1. Adoption of active roles by learners
2. Practice of a variety of social interactions
3. Error tolerance

Seemingly, the authors of the series have paid little heed to the above mentioned principles to make the class activities, which are mainly mapped and directed by the textbooks, more communicative in nature.

4.4. Skills

Seemingly, the authors have adopted an audio-lingual approach in teaching language skills that emphasized the importance of oral skills, and have applied the fixed order of listening, speaking, reading and writing which are characterized as most salient features of the method (Bygate, 2001; Larsen-Freeman, 2000; Richards & Rodgers, 2001).

Development of the learners' aural-oral skills has been the major goal of the series because the bulk of each lesson has been devoted to dialogue practices and oral drills. Actually, no explicit explanations or guidelines on how to approach the skills are offered in the series, and hence, it has been totally left to teachers to decide how to proceed in treating them.

Listening is viewed as mere recognition and discrimination of sounds, rather than comprehension of what is listened to; actually, higher level mental processes involved in comprehension are mostly overlooked.

Speaking skill has been merely considered as a medium for providing language input learned through learners' engagement in different drills and substitution exercises focused on repetition of grammatical structures and patterns.

As for writing, it has been relegated to the students' written responses to *Write It Down* sections where they are supposed to combine two discrete phrases into a complete sentence or to answer questions according to the information provided in the form of pictures or to complete a phrase according to the reading passages. Hence, 'writing' in its prima facial core meaning which is assumed to include creation of a coherent text whose primary aim is to communicate meaning is totally absent.

Considering pronunciation, only the segmental features of the English language have been practiced in the series; the suprasegmental features, i.e., stress and intonation have been mostly overlooked. Phones have been introduced through a series of words with a particular sound in common. As the teacher pronounces them or plays the audio file, the students listen to the words, and pay attention to the particular sound segment.

4.5. Language Type

The new vocabulary items are presented within the context of the sentences in the new words sections at the beginning of each lesson, in the reading texts, and in rare cases, through the activities and exercises. Though, all of the new words have been listed at the end of each lesson and at the end of the series, their Persian translations or English explanations and pronunciations are absent in the series.

In some cases there are inconsistencies between the sense of the word in the new words section and the senses they are used for in the readings or the exercise. Furthermore, poor contextualization of vocabulary items is persistently recurring across the series.

A thorough scrutiny of the textbook series evidently shows that the authors have had a structural view point in mind in designing the syllabus. According to McDonough (2002), in structural syllabuses the structures are integrated into a program of skills introduction as in audio-lingualism; even the dialogues and reading texts reinforce the particular grammatical point represented in each lesson despite the negligible role of grammar in comprehension comparing to vocabulary knowledge. As research on second language acquisition indicates, there is a strong relationship between reading comprehension and vocabulary knowledge (Carver, 2003; Droop & Verhoeven, 2003; Qian, 2002). Although, there is a strong relationship between grammatical knowledge and reading (Alderson, 1993; Enright, Bridgeman, Cline, Eignor, Lee & Powers, 2002), it is only in the advanced levels of reading proficiency that grammatical knowledge is called upon (Singer, 1981). Although the arrangement of structures in a structural syllabus has long been a controversial issue, the dialogues and reading texts included in the series have been sequenced based on structural complexity. It is worthy of notice that even functions that are quite infrequent in the textbooks under question, have been selected and organized based on structural complexity as the criterial measure.

Holmes (1992) considers register as language variation within an accent. It was a term from systemic linguistics that referred to a broad field of activity as official letters, technical articles, and medical reports which explained the relation between text and context in terms of three different concepts, namely field, tenor, and mode (Johns, 2003; Hyland, 2006). As is evident nowhere in the series, have the representation and practice of different registers been the authors' direct concern.

4.6. Subject and Content

A wide variety of reading texts ranging from factual to anecdotal ones have been included in the series. However, most of them are stale and shabby because they have not been updated since the last decade. It is urgently suggested that the authors include more up-to-date, interesting, and challenging texts , preferably those extracted from the scripts of well-known movies, video games, sports whose aims are not only providing linguistic input for the learners, but also promoting and promulgating righteousness, kindness, moral and good social ethical codes in the later revisions. As Jahangard (2007) suggests, our responsibility as teachers does not boil down to a mere transmission of grammatical and vocabulary knowledge, rather, we are obliged to prepare the next generation to build up a more ideal society and teach them to conduct a more virtuous life.

5. Conclusion

The current study sought to evaluate Iranian senior high school EFL series using Litz's teacher's and student's textbook evaluation questionnaires. To meet this end, Iranian ELT teachers and learners were asked to rate the questionnaires. Based on the results it can be claimed that the series at issue are in moderate to urgent need of revision in terms of layout and design, the activities included, the way skills are treated, the language type, and finally the subject and content.

According to Jahangard, Soodmand-Afshar & Rahimi (2012), "Any text- book- if developed scientifically in such a way that the most agreed-upon principles and the most rigorous and

recent findings from the related fields of study such as applied linguistics and psychology are taken into account in the selection, grading, and sequencing of the materials content- can hopefully enhance and accelerate L2 learning". Therefore, it is high time that the authors revise and review the textbook series and if possible develop new up-to-date series taking into account the knowledge that the emerging field of textbook evaluation has provided for them.

Furthermore, there may exist some implications and insights for materials developers and designers in increasing their awareness of the students' and teachers' needs, how they have been treated, and how to develop relatively more efficient textbooks. However, a word of caution is necessary in that the results might not be of robust and valid generalizability to private schools where teachers are allowed to teach other different textbooks and supplementary materials than the ones that are conventionally prescribed by the Ministry of Education for public schools.

Furthermore, it should be mentioned that some differences among the learners' attitudes toward the textbooks in the series partly might have been due to the individual differences among the learners of different grades involved in the study. Hence, it is not possible to decide whether, e.g., the English book 1 and 2 were rated differentially regarding a specific criterion in the questionnaire as a consequence of the individual differences among high school first and second graders or the actual differences among the textbooks in question. To address the problem, further longitudinal research is needed where the same learner rate the related textbook in the series during the period when each one of the textbooks are presented, namely first grade, second grade, and third grade high school English classes. Assuming a longitudinal orientation, it is likely that more revealing results about the actual probable differences among the textbooks would be obtained, though still the developmental processes in the learners would continue to contaminate the results; Also a more innovative option in line with a more humanized curriculum available for researchers is to ask the participants to devise their own units, develop activities, and prepare audio-visual files for use in classes.

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Appendix A

STUDENT TEXTBOOK EVALUATION FORM

*** **PLEASE NOTE:** **1 = HIGHLY DISAGREE** **10 = HIGHLY AGREE** ***

A/ Practical Considerations:

1. The price of the textbook is reasonable.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

2. The textbook is easily accessible.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

B/ Layout and Design:

3. The layout and design is appropriate and clear.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

4. The textbook is organised effectively.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

C/ Activities:

5. The textbook provides a balance of activities (Ex. There is an even distribution of free vs. controlled exercises and tasks that focus on both fluent and accurate production).

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

6. The activities encourage sufficient communicative and meaningful practice.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

7. The activities incorporate individual, pair and group work.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

8. The grammar points and vocabulary items are introduced in motivating and realistic contexts.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

9. The activities promote creative, original and independent responses.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

D/ Skills:

10. The materials include and focus on the skills that I need to practice.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

11. The materials provide an appropriate balance of the four language skills.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

12. The textbook pays attention to sub-skills - i.e. listening for gist, note-taking, skimming for information, etc.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

E/ Language Type:

13. The language used in the textbook is authentic - i.e. like real-life English.
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

14. The language used is at the right level for my current English ability.
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

15. The progression of grammar points and vocabulary items is appropriate.
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

16. The grammar points were presented with brief and easy examples and explanations.
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

17. The language functions exemplify English that I will be likely to use in the future.
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

18. The language represents a diverse range of registers and accents.
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

F/ Subject and Content:

19. The subject and content of the textbook is relevant to my needs as an English language learner.
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

20. The subject and content of the textbook is generally realistic.
1 2 3 4 5 . 6 7 8 9 10

21. The subject and content of the materials is interesting, challenging and motivating.
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

22. There is sufficient variety in the subject and content of the textbook.
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

23. The materials are not culturally biased and they do not portray any negative stereotypes.
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

G/ Overall Consensus:

24. The textbook raises my interest in further English language study.
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

25. I would choose to study this textbook again.
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

10. The materials include and focus on the skills that I need to practice.
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

11. The materials provide an appropriate balance of the four language skills.
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

12. The textbook pays attention to sub-skills - i.e. listening for gist, note-taking, skimming for information, etc.
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

TEACHER TEXTBOOK EVALUATION FORM

*** **PLEASE NOTE:** **1 = HIGHLY DISAGREE** **10 = HIGHLY AGREE** ***

A/ Practical Considerations:

1. The price of the textbook is reasonable.
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

2. The textbook is easily accessible.
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

3. The textbook is a recent publication.
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

4. A teacher's guide, workbook, and audio-tapes accompany the textbook.
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

5. The author's views on language and methodology are comparable to mine (Note: Refer to the 'blurb' on the back of the textbook).
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

B/ Layout and Design:

6. The textbook includes a detailed overview of the functions, structures and vocabulary that will be taught in each unit.
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

7. The layout and design is appropriate and clear.
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

8. The textbook is organised effectively.
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

9. An adequate vocabulary list or glossary is included.
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

10. Adequate review sections and exercises are included.
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

11. An adequate set of evaluation quizzes or testing suggestions is included.
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

12. The teacher's book contains guidance about how the textbook can be used to the utmost advantage.
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

13. The materials objectives are apparent to both the teacher and student.
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

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C/ Activities:

14. The textbook provides a balance of activities (Ex. There is an even distribution of free vs. controlled exercises and tasks that focus on both fluent and accurate production).
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

15. The activities encourage sufficient communicative and meaningful practice.
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

16. The activities incorporate individual, pair and group work.
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

17. The grammar points and vocabulary items are introduced in motivating and realistic contexts.
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

18. The activities promote creative, original and independent responses.
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

19. The tasks are conducive to the internalisation of newly introduced language.
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

20. The textbook's activities can be modified or supplemented easily.
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

D/ Skills:

21. The materials include and focus on the skills that I/my students need to practice.
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

22. The materials provide an appropriate balance of the four language skills.
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

23. The textbook pays attention to sub-skills - i.e. listening for gist, note-taking, skimming for information, etc.
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

24. The textbook highlights and practices natural pronunciation (i.e.- stress and intonation).
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

25. The practice of individual skills is integrated into the practice of other skills.
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

E/ Language Type:

26. The language used in the textbook is authentic - i.e. like real-life English.
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

27. The language used is at the right level for my (students') current English ability.
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

28. The progression of grammar points and vocabulary items is appropriate.
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

29. The grammar points are presented with brief and easy examples and explanations.
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

30. The language functions exemplify English that I/my students will be likely to use.
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

31. The language represents a diverse range of registers and accents.
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

F/ Subject and Content:

32. The subject and content of the textbook is relevant to my (students') needs as an English language learner(s).
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

33. The subject and content of the textbook is generally realistic.
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

34. The subject and content of the textbook is interesting, challenging and motivating.
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

35. There is sufficient variety in the subject and content of the textbook.
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

36. The materials are not culturally biased and they do not portray any negative stereotypes.
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

G/ Conclusion:

37. The textbook is appropriate for the language-learning aims of my institution.
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

38. The textbook is suitable for small-medium, homogeneous, co-ed. Classes of university students.
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

39. The textbook raises my (students') interest in further English language study.
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

40. I would choose to study/teach this textbook again.
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10