



Iranian Junior High School Teachers' Perceptions and Attitudes towards their Newly-Published English Textbooks: A Study on Communicative Approach

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ABSTRACT

Iranian students start learning English as a foreign language from Grade Seven in the first grade of junior high school to Grade Twelve in their formal educational system. However, their weak English production has encountered educational system with this serious question why students are not able to speak English despite a six-year instructional period at school. Since one of the effective factors in teaching a language is the textbook, this study focuses on the content of textbooks and teachers' attitudes toward the newly-published English textbooks. The study evaluates the quality of the Seventh Grade English language textbook, *Prospect 1*, for Iranian junior high school students, which was introduced first by the Ministry of Education in 2013. This research project evaluates the new textbook that is considered to be a fundamental shift in the English language schoolbooks in Iran. A questionnaire was used in this study to elicit the perspectives of 44 English language teachers. The questionnaire consisted of 40 items grouped under 7 main categories: *Practical Considerations, Layout and Design, Activities, Skills, language type, subject and content, and conclusion*. The data was subjected to analysis through descriptive statistics. The data were analyzed quantitatively. For the analysis of the responses to the questionnaires, Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS 19.0) was used, and necessary calculations were carried out. The data in the questionnaire were analyzed using mean scores and standard deviations. The findings were generally in favor of the textbook except for the skills. The findings also revealed despite usual teachers' resistance to new changes, they have positive views toward the newly-published book. Moreover, although teachers' satisfaction in *Conclusion, Layout and design, and Language Type* is rather high, it seems they need more attention in comparison with *Practical Consideration, Activities and Subject and Content*.

Key words: Curriculum; educational system; evaluation; junior high school; Prospect1 book

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1. BACKGROUND

Persian is the first mother language in Iran, and students learn English as a foreign language from the seventh level of their school studies. The idea of learning a foreign language was focused even after the 1979 Islamic Revolution by the chief leaders in order to preach Islamic thoughts. Moreover, they were aware of the role of English as an international language in the world. Then, pupils began learning English from Grade One in junior high school. Now, in the new educational system, they start learning English from Grade Seven. According to the Document of the Fundamental Transformation of Education (DFTE), cited in PeyravaniNia, &PeyravaniNia, (2014), providing foreign language training is accomplished within selected sectors (semi-prescription) curriculum, with respect to the consolidation and strengthening of the Iranian Islamic identity (DFTE). In order to achieve this goal, in teaching English, they investigated carefully the content of textbooks to adapt Islamic identity in Iran. At the same time, they tried to keep up with the developments of language teaching through changing textbooks.

The main reason to address the English textbooks issue originates from the significant relationship between English textbooks content and students' learning. Evaluating English textbooks in Iran has great effect on both the DFTE and the learners' success in future. Selecting appropriate textbooks will ensure decision makers that students will meet defined educational needs properly. Moreover, since most students begin to learn English formally in Grade Seven for the first time, English textbooks will play a chief role in their attitudes and motivation toward English. It seems necessary that it passes through close security along with physical features such as objectives, illustration, photos, level of difficulty, teach ability, methods of teaching, content, practice and testing. In addition, textbooks are considered as a common framework in language learning and teaching. Striking a balance between being a slave to the texts and providing organized, objective-oriented instruction is an essential part that needs to be done by trainers (Garinger, 2007).

Recently, both researchers and the Ministry of Education scholars tried to evaluate the English textbook used at school. Considering the fact that this is the first time the new textbook is being replaced with the old one, and the Ministry of Education policy in training English is experiencing its shift from audio-lingual method toward Communicative Approach shows the urgent need and high value of this evaluation. In addition, it can lead to subsequent revision of the textbooks, programs and even policies. And as mentioned before, since this is the first time students experience learning a foreign language, this stage is the building block of learning it for their future educational and professional careers.

2.LITERATURE REVIEW

Before the CA was manifested, English Language Teaching (ELT) was categorized into two eras: traditional methods era and pre-communicative ones, both were claiming to help students with speaking in the target language (Larsen-Freeman, 2004). Although some of these methods failed to achieve their goals, others could attain them to some extent. Grammar-translation method, the audio-lingual method and the direct method are considered as three concrete well-known examples of traditional methods. Although the ultimate goal of the previous teaching methods was to provide their learners with speaking in the target language, they failed to accomplish this vital purpose. Then, some educators and linguists started to criticize these methods with the same question of why most students are unable to speak in the target language and culture (Galloway, 1993). Some others, such as Widdowson (1989), address that learners require both language knowledge and the ability to use it in real-life conditions.

Therefore, the communicative approach (CA), which is also introduced as communicative language teaching by Richards and Rodgers(2006), has been designed "to provide learners with opportunities for communicating in the second language" (Ellis, 1997, p. 91). Hence, the gist of the CA is how, when, and where the learner is able to express himself. Then, what the learner communicates through the language, according to Yalden (1996), is not of the matter. In other words, what is most emphasized is "the communicative purpose(s) of the speech act" (Finocchiaro&Brumfit, 1983, p. 13). However, in order to prepare conditions for the learner to achieve their goals to communicate in the target language through communicative approach, a class in which students are placed the core or is learner-centered seems necessary.

So far, language teaching in Iran, particularly after the 1979 Revolution, has undergone various changes both in quantity and quality. Iranian students have experienced their foreign language first in Grade Six, the first grade in junior high school, until 1995. Then, The Ministry of education changed the language curriculum. They decided to start language teaching from Grade Seven, the second grade in junior high school. Recently, it changed again according to the Document of the Fundamental Transformation of Education (DFTE). Based on DFTE, language teaching begins from Grade Seven, or the first grade of junior high school.

Richards (2004) believes that a textbook should have an integrated multi-skills, contemporary real world topics, practical authentic conversational languages, grammar taught in communicative contexts, natural listening exercises with various accents, maximum opportunities for guided speaking practices, students-friendly and teacher-friendly design, fun to teach and use in the classroom. Therefore, by considering these features, this part gives a complete evaluation upon the targeted books.

Karimnia and SalehiZadeh (2007) investigated the problems of Persian learners of English in general and English language majors/graduates and the cause of their problems in particular. They stated that Iranian students have problems in all the language skills. Students learn English through formal instructions, i.e. inside the classroom where the teacher is a native Farsi-speaker. They also insisted that there is little opportunity for the students to learn English through instructions in the target language when they encounter a tourist.

Janfeshan and Nosrati (2014) studied the newly published English book '*prospect 1*, in its first year publication in fall 2013. They investigated the book according to Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) criteria. The book was evaluated



based on a checklist including contents, grammar focus, levels, methodology and materials. A group of 160 students from the junior school students of 2 schools in Kermanshah City (Iran) were selected randomly amongst 6 classes that *Prospect* book is taught to them in the first term of fall 2013. Their investigations in oral skills (listening and speaking) and written skills (reading and writing) revealed that students achieved better in oral skills than in written ones. In response to the question about the authenticity and attractiveness of the materials, 86 students expressed views about the issue. 47 of them voted it to be interesting and 14 was said it is boring. 25 other students said it is neither interesting nor boring. They, then, concluded the following items as advantages and disadvantages of the newly published book: *Prospect* has a good focus on oral and communicative skills. Grammar is taught through functions, and there is no direct point to grammatical issues. Problem solving approach of book allows students to think more and extract the new grammatical point. The book is categorized in good levels with appropriate activities. There are work book and audio CD along with the students' book and a good teachers' guide. Students are exposed to real world materials and everyday language functions. Regarding disadvantages of the book, they stated that there is no story line and no referring to back notions in upper units (but the reviews). Written activities are limited to workbook, and it is for the students to do it at home. Classroom activities include very few written activities so that 26 letters of alphabets are taught in 8 units (in about 8 months). Each language is closely mixed with the culture of that society. Unfortunately, in *Prospect* the culture of English language countries is ignored. Instead, Iranian culture is mixed with the language.

3.METHODS

3.1 Participants

The participants who took part in the present research process were all English teachers who teach English in Grade Seven in Shiraz. They include 44 males and females. They are majoring in English literature, translation and teaching. All of them are from Shiraz and with teaching experience ranged from 5 to 20 years in junior high school. All the participants' first language is Persian.

The sample group was picked out based upon convenience sampling procedure regarding the availability, practical considerations and eventually the experience of the instructors.

3.2 Instrumentation

In this study, a questionnaire was used in order to obtain the data. One of the key reasons for using a questionnaire was time restrictions. A questionnaire is one of the tools by which the fastest and quickest information can be obtained in a very short period of time. The questionnaire was in English and handed in along with its Persian equivalent so that the items could be understandable and free from ambiguity and vagueness. The questionnaire was first developed, piloted and administered by Litz (2005) including 40 items under seven main categories such as practical considerations, layout and design, activities, skills, language type, subject and content, and conclusion. It is a standard questionnaire adopting a communicative orientation as claimed by Litz. The researcher downloaded it from http://faculty.ksu.edu.sa/umerazim/Documents/Litz_thesis.pdf on 5 February 2014. A five-point Likert scale was used in which responses ranged from 'strongly agree' to 'strongly disagree'.

This type of scale was used to obtain information related to the participants' perspectives and their experiences. In a momentous manner, necessary data was gathered on the textbook features, students' scores and teachers' views with respect to ELT textbook *Prospect 1*.

The questionnaire covers these following titles and subtitles:

- A) **Practical Considerations** concerns the price, accessibility, recency of publication of the textbook and comparability of the author's views on language and methodology to the participants.
- B) **Layout and Design** includes participants' opinions on clarity, organization, vocabulary list, the teacher's book and the clarity of the materials objectives to both the teacher and student.
- C) **Activities** in which textbook is evaluated to see whether it provides a balance of activities, encourages sufficient communicative and meaningful practice, incorporates individual, pair and group work, promotes creative, original and independent responses, conducive to the internalization of newly-introduced language and can be modified or supplemented easily or not.
- D) **Skills**, in this section, natural pronunciation, and the integration of individual skills is investigated.
- E) **Language Type** refers to authenticity and level of the target language, range of registers and accents as well as appropriation of grammar points and vocabulary items.
- F) **Subject and Content** evaluates the relevancy of the subject and content of the textbook to students' needs. It also asks teachers whether the subject and content of the textbook is realistic, interesting, challenging, motivating and not culturally biased.
- G) **Conclusion** seeks the textbook appropriateness for the language-learning aims of learners; its suitability for different teachers in different contexts.

The questionnaire was obtained from Litz (2005). It consists of 40 items in seven parts: *Practical Considerations* includes 5 items from 1 to 5; *Layout and Design* covers 8 items from 6 to 13; *Activities* is evaluated by 7 items from 14 to 20; *Skills* consists of 5 items from 21 to 25; *Language Type* includes 6 items from 26 to 31; *Subject and Content* is evaluated by 5 items from 32 to 36; and *Conclusion* as the last part, is consisted of 4 items from 37 to 40.

Since the validity of a test is important, the researcher was completely certain that all the participants in the questionnaire had access to the textbook and were familiar with it so that they could complete the questionnaires easily. Before handing



out, the thesis adviser and some other experienced English teachers investigated the questionnaire in order to evaluate the questionnaire content. Finally, they ensured that it enjoyed a good level of content validity.

The internal consistency method was used in order to determine the reliability of this research questionnaire. In order to assess the reliability of the scale, Cronbach's alpha was used, and the results are shown in Table 1.

Table 1
Cronbach's Alpha values of Questionnaire Categories

Questionnaire sections	Alpha	Questionnaire sections	Alpha
Practical Considerations	0.70	Language Type	0.68
Layout and Design	0.85	Subject and Content	0.84
Activities	0.92	Conclusion	0.92
Skills	0.78		

3.3 Data Collection

During Data collection procedure, Litz (2005) questionnaire was administered to obtain the teachers' perspectives about the recently released book entitled *Prospect 1*. The questionnaire includes seven parts such as *Practical Considerations*, *Layout and Design*, *Activities*, *Skills*, *language type*, *subject and content*, and *conclusion* with 40 items for evaluating English textbooks. The questionnaire follows a five- point Likert scale in which responses ranged from 'strongly agree' to 'strongly disagree'. In this regard, the questionnaires were taken to 44 Iranian junior high schools on March 2014, and 44 English teachers completed the questionnaires.

The researcher consulted with the heads of Fars Educational Group, and the 44 participants in the questionnaire were chosen from all available schools. The research goals were explained to the participant; then, the teachers were asked to fill out and hand in the questionnaire in ten minutes.

4. RESULTS and DISCUSSIONS

4.1 The Results of Per-Statement Analysis (Research Questions # 1 & 2)

The computations basically include means of central tendency and dispersion of the seven items in the questionnaire including *Practical Considerations*, *Layout and Design*, *Activities*, *Skills*, *language type*, *subject and content*, and *conclusion*. It reveals the strong and weak points of the textbook *Prospect 1* regarding the teachers' attitudes in a detailed manner through related tables and graphs. In order to obtain the answers of the research questions, the frequencies and the percentages of teachers' perceptions related to the all 40 items have been shown in tables; then, regarding measures of descriptive statistics including central tendency and dispersion, the answers are analyzed.

4.1.1 Practical Considerations

In this section, teachers' attitudes and perceptions toward *Practical Considerations* are investigated. The results are indicated in Table 2, below.

Table 2
Frequencies and Percentages of Teachers' Perceptions of Practical Considerations

Items	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
1	F 4 P 9.1%	6 13.6%	8 18.2%	13 29.5%	13 29.5%
2	9 20.5%	4 9.1%	5 11.4%	13 29.5%	13 29.5%
3	6 13.6%	1 2.3%	8 18.2%	7 15.5%	22 50%
4	11 25%	11 25%	6 13.6%	10 22.7%	6 13.6%
5	9 20.5%	9 20.5%	12 27.3%	10 22.7%	4 9.1%

F=Frequency P=Percentage

is reasonable (Item 1) and the textbook is easily accessible (Item 2); on the contrary, 23% of the respondents either disagree or strongly disagree. According to Table 4.1, 60 percent of respondents believe that the price of the textbook ree with Statement 1, and 30% of the respondents did not agree with Statement 2. 18 percent related to the price and 11percent about the accessibility of the new textbook are neutral. The results also revealed that regarding Statement 3 (the recency of the textbook publication), more than 65% of the respondents highly agree it while less than 16% do not believe it. 18% have no particular idea. Regarding Statement 4 (the attachment of a teacher's guide, workbook, and audio-tapes to the



newly-published book), 50% of teachers disagree it, whereas 36.3% agree with the statement. Consequently, teachers do not agree with Item 4. Similarly, teachers disagree on Statement 5 (the author's views on language and methodology are similar to mine) where 41% do not believe in Item 5. 31.8% agree it; about 27% of the respondents could not make up their minds to choose 'agree' or 'disagree'. Then, the median and mode of Practical Considerations related to above statements are presented in Table 3.

Table 3
Descriptive Statistics of Teachers' Perceptions of Practical Considerations

Central Tendency	Numerical estimator	Dispersion Indicators	Numerical stimator
Mean	3.29	Std. Deviation	0.93
Median	3.40	skew	-0.539
Mode	3.20	kurtosis	-0.309

As indicated in Table 4.2, mean, median and mode of *Practical Considerations* from central tendency are 3.29, 3.40 and 3.20, respectively. The std. deviation, skewedness and kurtosis of dispersion indicators are respectively 0.93, -0.539 and -0.309 as well. In order to obtain these numbers in all seven categories, participants' views on *Strongly Disagree, Disagree, Neutral, Agree and Strongly Agree* were marked from one to five, respectively. Then, the SPSS was used to obtain mean, median, mode, the std. deviation, skewedness and kurtosis. Thus, regarding the place of central tendency and dispersion indicators, although the teachers' attitudes tend toward negative, it is normal. . In this case, teachers are satisfied with *Practical Considerations*, and their mean is more than three. Moreover, the low response rate of SD (less than 1) reveals that the distribution of teachers in terms of accountability is low. Figure 4.1 shows the responsiveness population from *strongly disagree to strongly agree*.

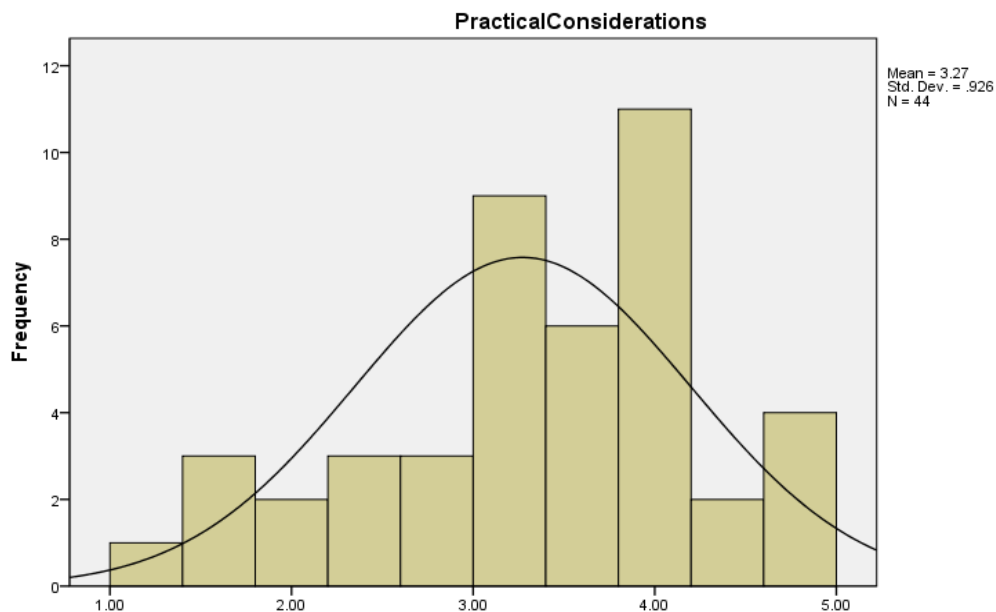


Figure 4.1 The Response Distribution of the Book Practical Considerations

As Figure 1 shows, the graph of the normal curve is partly due to the negative curvature. Most people are on the right side of the curve between *fully agree* and *disagree* items. Very few people, on the other hand, have chosen *disagree* and *strongly disagree*.

4.1.2 Layout and Design

In order to obtain teachers' attitudes and perceptions about *Layout and Design*, frequencies and percentages of which are shown in Table 4.



Table 4
Frequencies and Percentages of Teachers' Perceptions of Layout and Design

Items	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
1	F 10 P 22.4%	9 20.5%	8 18.2%	11 25%	8 18.2%
2	9 20.5%	6 13.6%	9 20.5%	15 34.1%	5 11.4%
3	6 13.6%	10 22.7%	8 18.2%	16 36.4%	3 6.8%
4	7 15.9%	6 13.6%	7 15.9%	14 31.8%	10 22.7%
5	11 25%	10 22.7%	6 13.6%	11 25%	6 13.6%
6	18 40.9%	7 15.9%	13 29.5%	4 9.1%	2 4.5%
7	11 25%	8 18.2%	6 13.6%	16 36.4%	3 6.8%
8	9 20.5%	9 20.5%	9 20.5%	13 29.5%	4 9.1%

Table 4 outlines the frequencies and percentages of each of the responses from the overall sample. It consists of eight statements, from 6 to 13. Regarding the Layout and Design, as the data reveals, 43.2% of participants agree Statement 6 which says "the textbook includes a detailed overview of the functions, structures and vocabulary that will be taught in each unit", which is the same as those who disagree this idea (43.2%). The percentage of neutral respondents is 13.6%. Statement 2 of this category refers to the appropriateness and clearness of the book *Layout and Design*, where 43% of participants agree, 34% of participants disagree, and the rest are indifferent. Next item concerns the effectiveness and organization of the textbook. 43% of teachers believe that the textbook is organized effectively, whereas 36% of the respondents disagree. The rest (18%) could not make their minds to 'agree' or 'disagree' the statement. Therefore, most teachers agree that the textbook is organized effectively. Concerning Statement Four, *an adequate vocabulary list or glossary is included*, the results revealed more than 43% of teachers believe that the textbook is organized effectively while less than 30% disagree it. 16% of respondents are neutral. Item Five evaluates the existence of adequate review sections and exercises in the textbook. Based on Table 4.3, although 38.2% of teachers disagree it, more than 52% of the respondents support the idea, and less than 14% have no idea about it. Consequently, most teachers believe the book includes an adequate vocabulary list or glossary. On the contrary, in Statement Six, negative ideas precede positive ones, where 57% of the respondent do not support the idea *the book includes an adequate set of evaluation quizzes or testing suggestions*. Only 13.6% agree the statement. About 30% have no special idea. Considering Item Seven *the teacher's book contains guidance about how the textbook can be used to the utmost advantage*, and the results obtained from Table 4.3, it was revealed that 43.2% showed their interest to the statement the same as disagreed people (43.2%). About 13% of respondents could not make their minds to 'agree' or 'disagree'. Statement Eight of category *layout and design* evaluates whether the materials objectives are apparent to both the teacher and student or not. As the Table 4.3 indicates, 41% of teachers disagree, 36% agree and 20.5% neither agree nor disagree the item. Then, teachers' perceptions are considered negative.

Below, descriptive statistics of teachers' perceptions of *Layout and Design* of the book is shown in Table 5.

Table 5
Descriptive Statistics of Teachers' Perceptions of Layout and Design

Central Tendency	Numerical estimator	Dispersion Indicators	Numerical estimator
mean	2.87	Std. Deviation	0.95
Median	2.93	skew	-0.175
mode	3.00*	kurtosis	-0.828

** Multiple modes exist. The smallest value is shown

Table 5 indicates that the mean, median, and the mode of *Layout and Design*, as related to Central Tendency, are respectively, 2.87, 2.93 and 3.00. The std. deviation, skewedness and kurtosis of *Layout and Design* are respectively 0.95, -0.175 and -0.828 as well. Consequently, teachers' attitudes tend toward negative and less than the population views, but since the rate is not noticeable, it is regarded normal. Moreover, the low response rate of SD (less than 1) reveals that the distribution of teachers in terms of accountability is low. Figure 4.2 shows the responsive population from *strongly disagree* to *strongly agree*.

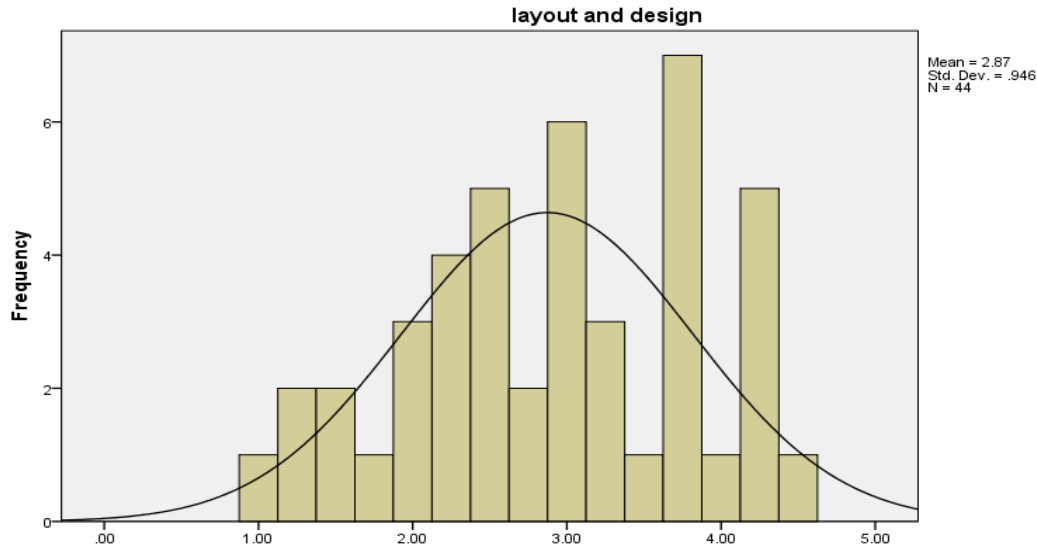


Figure 4.2 The Response Distribution of the Book Layout and Design

As Figure 2 shows, the graph of the normal curve is partly due to the negative curvature. Most people are in the middle of the curve between *agree* and *no idea*. Some have chosen *disagree* and *strongly disagree*.

4.1.3 Activities

Another category which is worth discussing is 'Activities', which was evaluated through seven statements in the questionnaire, namely, Statements 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19 and 20. Table 6 shows the frequencies and percentages of each of responses from teachers' perspectives pertaining activities.

Table 6

Frequencies and Percentages of Teachers' Perceptions of Activities

Items	Strongly Disagree	disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
1	F 9 P 20.5%	5 11.4%	12 27.3%	16 36.4%	2 4.5%
2	6 13.6%	8 18.2%	8 18.2%	21 47.7%	1 2.3%
3	6 13.6%	4 18.2%	6 13.6%	18 40.9%	10 22.7%
4	9 20.5%	10 22.7%	9 20.5%	14 31.8%	2 4.5%
5	6 13.6%	6 13.6%	16 36.4%	13 29.5%	3 6.8%
6	6 13.6%	7 15.9%	15 34.1%	11 25%	5 11.4%
7	5 11.4%	9 20.5%	16 36.4%	9 20.5%	5 11.4%

According to Table 4.5, 41% of respondents agree that the textbook provides a balance of activities (Item 1); on the contrary, 32% of the respondents disagree or strongly disagree with Statement 1. 27% of the respondents chose neutral.



The results also revealed that regarding Statement 2, *the activities encourage sufficient communicative and meaningful practice*, while more than 50% of the respondents highly agree it, less than 36.5% do not believe it. 18% are indifferent. Regarding Statement 4, *the activities incorporate individual, pair and group work*, 63% of teachers agree it, whereas 22.2% disagree the statement. Then, this is the most favorable statement in teachers' opinion. Teachers do not support the idea that the grammar points and vocabulary items have been introduced in motivating and realistic contexts, Statement 5. In other words, 43.4% of the respondents disagree the statement and 36% of them agree it. 20.5% have no idea, so they are considered neutral. Regarding Item 5, *the activities promote creative, original and independent responses*, 36.6% of the respondents believe in Item 5 while 27.2% disagree it. 36.4% of the respondents could not make up their minds to choose 'agree' or 'disagree'. The responses to Statements 6, *the tasks are conducive to the internalization of newly introduced language*, is very close to Item 5. The percentages of opponents and proponents of Statement Seven *the textbook's activities can be modified or supplemented easily*, is the same and equal to 31.9%, about 36% stayed neutral. Then, regarding neutral answers, teachers do not support this statement, just the same as two prior ones, Five and Six. The Mean, median and mode of Activities from central tendency related to above statements are presented in Table 7.

Table 7
Descriptive Statistics of Teachers' Perceptions of Activities

Central Tendency	Numerical estimator	Dispersion Indicators	Numerical estimator
mean	3.05	Std. Deviation	0.98
Median	3.29	Skew	-0.661
mode	3.43	Kurtosis	-0.416

Table 4.6 indicates that the mean, median, and mode of *Activities*, as related to central tendency, are 3.05, 3.29 and 3.43, respectively. The std. deviation, skewedness and kurtosis of *Activities* are respectively 0.98, -0.661 and -0.416 as well. According to this, teachers' attitudes tend toward negative, but since the rate is not noticeable, it is regarded normal. It means teachers are satisfied with activities and exercises of the textbook. Moreover, the low response rate of SD (less than 1) shows that the distribution of teachers in terms of accountability is low. Figure 4.3 shows the responsive population from *strongly disagree* to *strongly agree*.

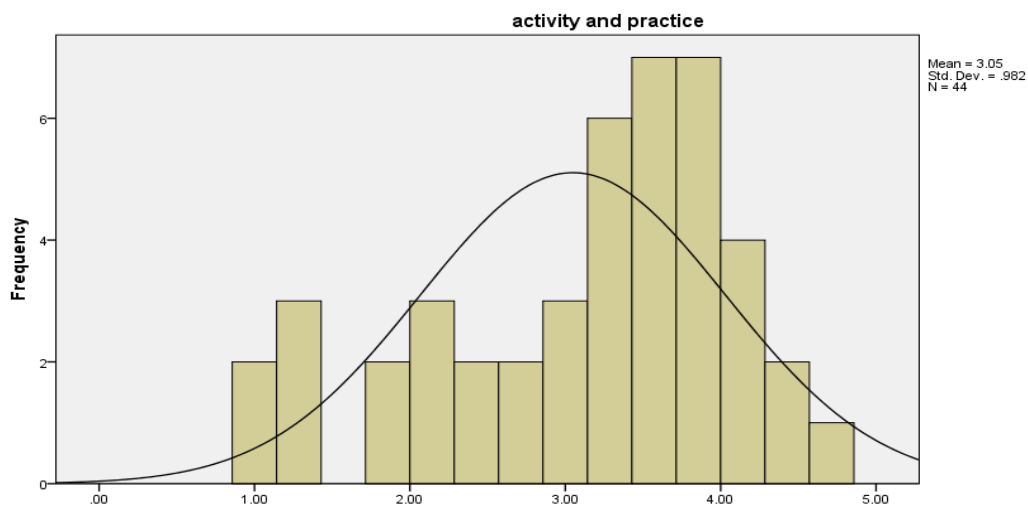


Figure 4.3 The Response Distribution of the Book Activities and Practice

As

Figure 3 shows, the graph of the normal curve is partly due to the negative curvature. Most people are on the right side of the curve between *fully agree* and *agree* items. Very few people, on the other hand, have chosen *disagree* and *strongly disagree*

4.1.4 Skills

The fourth category on the questionnaire is skills and contains five statements, Statements 21, 22, 23, 24, and 25. Table 8 shows the frequencies and percentages of each of responses from teachers' perspectives pertaining Skills.

Table 8



Frequencies and Percentages of Teachers' Perceptions of Skills

Items	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
1	F 5 P 11.4%	6 13.6%	12 27.3%	17 38.6%	4 9.1%
2	12 27.3%	8 18.2%	10 22.7%	14 31.8%	0 0%
3	5 11.4%	14 31.8%	13 29.5%	11 25%	1 2.3%
4	16 36.4%	8 18.2%	7 15.9%	13 29.5%	0 0%
5	6 13.6%	6 13.6%	16 36.4%	13 29.5%	3 6.8%

As Table 8 displays, 47.7% of teachers agree that the materials focus on the skills Statement 1. 25% do not support it, and 27% of respondent did not comment on it. Statement Two of this category evaluates whether the materials in the new textbook provide an appropriate balance of the four language skills or not. With respect to the fact that none of the respondents chose *strongly agree* while only 38% agree it, and the fact that 45.5% of participants *disagree* or *strongly disagree* the idea, in addition to 23% of neutral answers, the researcher came to the conclusion that teachers do not support the statement. This idea is also repeated for Statement Four (sub-skills), where regardless 30% of neutral answers, 27.3% and 43.2% of teachers agree and disagree the idea, respectively. Item 4 in this category represents Statement 24 in Litz' questionnaire which concerns natural pronunciation. According to the results, teachers do not support this idea as well. Only 30% of them have positive attitudes toward this item; in return 54.6% of respondents disagree it, and 16% of them could not decide whether they are agree or disagree.

Again, teachers disagree with the idea that the practice of individual skills is integrated into the practice of other skills, Statement 5. As Table 4.7 indicates, 38.2% of respondents disagree, 29.6% agree and 31.8% preferred to be neutral. The mean, median and mode of *Activities* from central tendency related to above statements are presented in Table 9

Table 9
Descriptive Statistics of Teachers' Perceptions of Skills

Central Tendency	Numerical estimator	Dispersion Indicators	Numerical estimator
mean	2.73	Std. Deviation	0.85
Median	2.80	skew	-0.291
mode	2.80*	kurtosis	-0.575

According to Table 9, mean, median and mode of *skills* from central tendency are 2.73, 2.80, and 2.80 respectively. The std. deviation, skewedness and kurtosis of dispersion indicators are respectively 0.85, -0.291 and -0.575 as well. Then, regarding the placement of central and dispersion indicators, teachers' attitudes is considered normal. Accordingly, teachers' perceptions about the skills of the new textbook are lower than the statistical society which reveals their noticeable disagreement with this item. Moreover, the low response rate of SD (less than 1) reveals that the distribution of teachers in terms of accountability is low; in other words, they have very close ideas in this section. Figure 4 shows the responsive population from *strongly disagree* to *strongly agree*.

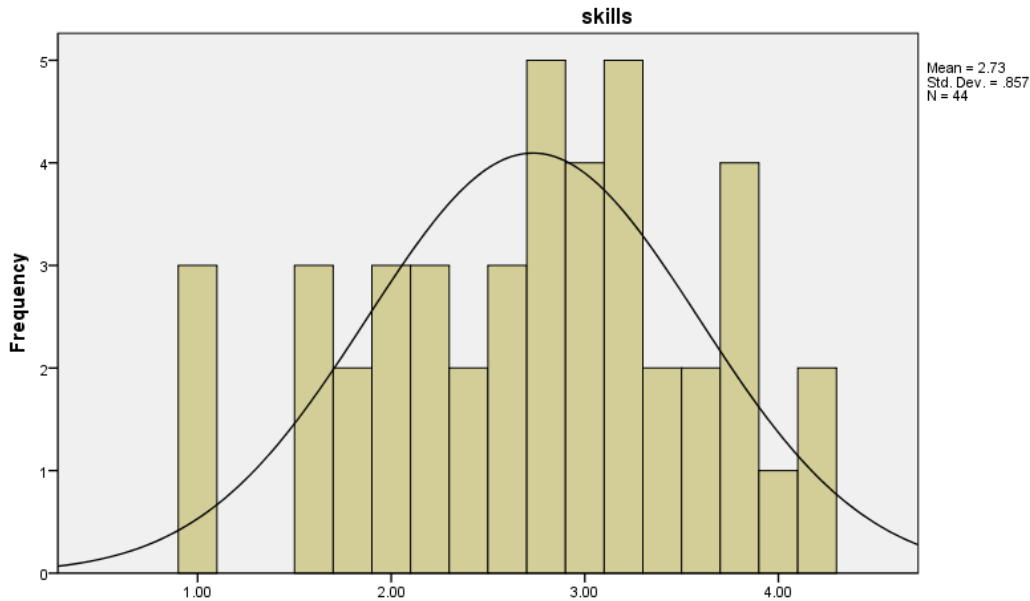


Figure 4.4 The Response Distribution of the Book Skills

As Figure 4 shows, the graph of the normal curve is partly due to the negative curvature. Teachers who have chosen *disagree* and *disagree* in the left side of the mean (2.73) are more than their counterparts in the right side of the mean. Consequently, the teachers are not satisfied with the *skills* used in the new textbook.

4.1.5 Language Type

Category 5 is concerned with *Language Type*. Table 10 outlines the frequencies and percentages of each of the responses from the overall sample. It consists of six statements, Statements 26 to 31.

Table 10
Frequencies and Percentages of Teachers' Perceptions of Language Type

Items	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
1	F 7 P 15.9%	8 18.2%	9 20.9%	10 22.7%	10 22.7%
2	12 27.3%	7 15.9%	10 22.7%	11 25%	4 9.1%
3	13 29.5%	12 27.3%	9 20.9%	8 18.2%	2 4.5%
4	14 31.8%	14 31.8%	9 20.9%	4 9.1%	3 6.8%
5	9 20.5%	8 18.2%	8 18.2%	12 27.3%	7 15.9%
6	12 27.3%	9 20.9%	10 22.7%	9 20.9%	4 9.1%

According to Table 10, 45.4% of respondents believe that the language used in the textbook is authentic - i.e. like real-life English (Item 1); on the contrary, 34.1% of the respondents disagree or strongly disagree with Statement 1, and 20% of the respondents could not decide whether they agree or disagree. Furthermore, the results show that 9.1% of the participants strongly agree and 25% agree on the statement that the language used is at the right level for students' current English ability. The results also show that 15.9% of the participants disagree and 27.3% strongly disagree with the statement. Then, most teachers do not support the idea. Regarding whether the progression of grammar points and



vocabulary items is appropriate, the results show that 34% of the participants' responses are in favor of the book as 4.5% of the participants strongly agree, 18.2% agree on the statement and , and the rest are neutral. This means that there is less agreement that the language used is at the right level for students' current English ability. On whether the grammar points are presented with brief and easy examples and explanations, there is again no complete agreement on the statement. Only 6.8% of the participants strongly agree and 9.1% of the participants agree it while more than 31.8% of the respondents strongly disagree and 31.8% of them disagree it. 20.9% are neutral. Regarding Statement 5, *the language functions exemplify English that I/my students will be likely to use*, 36.4% of teachers disagree it whereas 18.2% agree the statement and 27.3% are neutral. Consequently, teachers do not agree Item 5. Similarly, teachers disagree Statement 6 *the language represents a diverse range of registers and accents* where 47.8 % do not believe in Item 5. 29.6% agree it. About 22.7 % of the respondents could not make up their minds to choose 'agree' or 'disagree'. Mean, median and mode of language type from central tendency related to above statements are presented in Table 11.

Table 11
Descriptive Statistics of Teachers Perceptions of Language Type

Central Tendency	Numerical estimator	Dispersion Indicators	Numerical estimator
mean	2.73	Std. Deviation	1.05
Median	2.67	skew	0.338
mode	2.67	kurtosis	-0.365

The above table indicates that the mean, the median, and the mode of *Langue Type*, as a central tendency, are respectively, 2.37, 2.67 and 2.67. The std. deviation, skewedness and kurtosis of *Langue Type* are respectively 1.05, 0.338 and -0.365 as well. It means the teachers' attitudes tend toward negative but since the rate is not noticeable, it is regarded normal. In other words, teachers are rather satisfied with the *Language Type* of the textbook. Reversely, the high response rate of SD (more than 1) shows that the distribution of teachers in terms of accountability is noticeable. That is to say, they have different ideas about this question. Figure 4.5 shows the responsive population from *strongly disagree* to *strongly agree*.

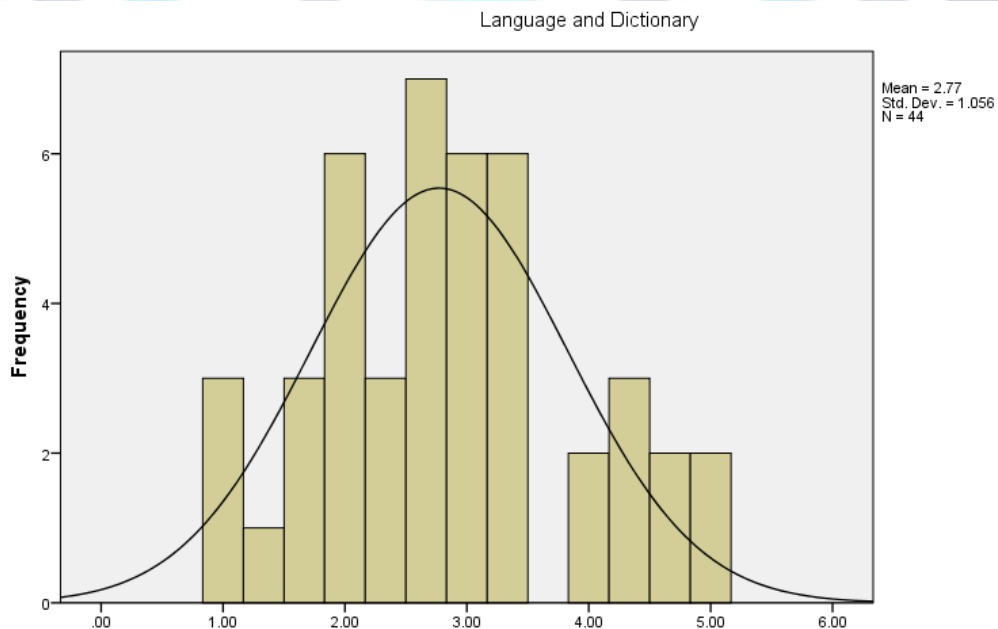


Figure 4.5 The Response Distribution of the Book Language and Dictionary

As Figure 5 shows, most people are in the middle of the curve between the items *agree* and *no idea*. Very few people have chosen *disagree* and *strongly disagree*.



4.1.6 Subject and Content

In this section, teachers' attitudes and perception toward *Subject and Content* is investigated. The results are indicated in Table 12, below.

Table 12
Frequencies and Percentages of Teachers' Perceptions of Subject and Content

Items	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
1	F 6 P 13.6%	13 29.5%	10 22.7%	6 13.6%	9 20.5%
2	5 11.4%	8 18.2%	10 22.7%	9 20.5%	12 27.3%
3	12 27.3%	4 9.1%	12 27.3%	10 22.7%	6 13.6%
4	6 13.6%	6 13.6%	15 34.1%	12 27.3%	5 11.4%
5	11 25%	11 25%	11 25%	7 15.9%	4 9.1%

Table 12 indicates the frequencies and percentages of each of the responses from the overall sample. It consists of five statements, Statements 32 to 36 of the questionnaire. Regarding the *Subject and Content*, as the data reveals, 34.1% of participants agree the statement one which says *the subject and content of the textbook is relevant to my (students) needs as an English language learner(s)*, which is less than the ones who disagree this idea (43.1%). The percentage of neutral respondents is 22.7%. the next item of this category refers to whether or not the subject and content of the textbook is generally realistic where 48% of participants agree, 30% of participants disagree, and the rest are neutral (23%). This shows teachers' agreement on this statement. Item 34 concerns whether or not the subject and content of the textbook is interesting, challenging and motivating. Accordingly, 27.3% of teachers strongly disagree, 9.1% disagree, 22.7% agree, and 13.6% strongly agree the statement. The rest (18%) could not make up their minds to 'agree' or 'disagree' it. Concerning Statement 35, *there is sufficient variety in the subject and content of the textbook*, the results revealed more than 38.7% of subjects support the idea while less than 27.2% disagree it. 34.1% of respondents are neutral. Item 36 evaluates if the materials are not culturally biased, and they do not portray any negative stereotypes. Based on the above table, although 50% of teachers disagree it; more than 25% of the respondents support the idea, and 25% have no idea about it. Consequently, most teachers believe the materials are culturally biased, and they portray any negative stereotypes. The mean, median and mode of *Subject and Content* from central tendency related to above statements are presented in Table 13.

Table 13
Descriptive Statistics of Teachers Perceptions of Subject and Content

Central Tendency	Numerical estimator	Dispersion Indicators	Numerical estimator
mean	2.99	Std. Deviation	1.08
Median	3.00	skew	-0.118
mode	3.60	kurtosis	-0.753

Table 13 indicates that the mean, median, and the mode of *Subject and Content*, are 2.99, 3.00 and 3.60, respectively. The std. deviation, skewedness and kurtosis of *Subject and Content* are 1.08, -0.118 and -0.116, respectively. Teachers' attitudes for *Subject and Content* tend to be normal. Hence, the response rate of teachers (more than 1) reveals that the



distribution of teachers in terms of accountability is not low, but since it is inconsiderable, it does not affect the mean. Figure 4.6 shows the responsive population from *strongly disagree to strongly agree*.

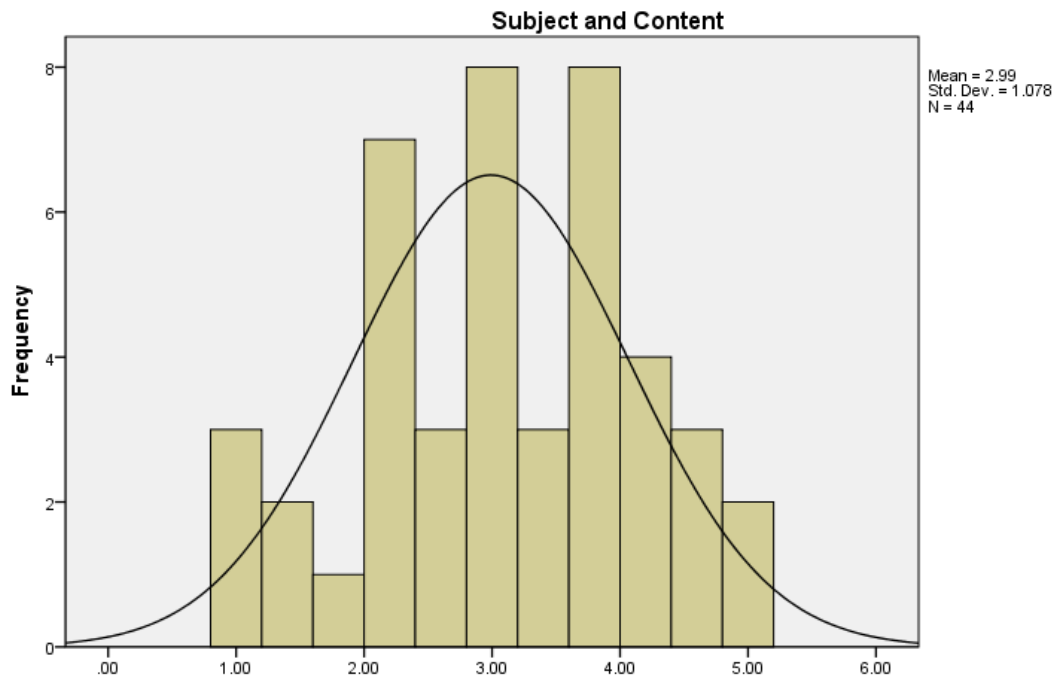


Figure 4.6 The Response Distribution of the Book Subject and Content

As Figure 6 shows, the distribution of the scores of the curve is normal; then, there is no difference between the population and the teachers' opinions.

4.1.7 Conclusion

In this section, teachers' attitudes and perception toward *Conclusion* is investigated. The results are indicated in Table 14, below.

Table 14
Frequencies and Percentages of Teachers' Perceptions of Conclusion

Items	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
1	F 8 P 15.2%	7 15.9%	13 29.5%	11 25.6%	5 11.4%
2	10 22.7%	6 13.6%	14 31.8%	9 20.5.8%	5 11.4%
3	10 22.7%	13 29.5%	4 9.1%	6 13.6%	11 25.6%
4	15 34.1%	3 6.8%	6 13.6%	14 31.8%	6 13.6%

According to Table 14, 36.4% of respondents agree that the textbook is appropriate for the language-learning aims; on the contrary, 34.1% of the respondents disagree or strongly disagree on Statement 1. 29.5% of the respondents chose neutral. The percentages of agreed and disagreed people are very close to each other. Regarding Statements 2, *the textbook is suitable for small-medium, homogeneous, co-educational classes of high school students*, the results revealed that while more than 31.8% of the respondents highly agree it, less than 36.3% do not believe it. 14% are neutral. Again, teachers' attitudes are close to each other. Regarding Statement Three of this category, *the textbook raises my (students') interest in further English language study*, 36.3% of teachers agree on it, whereas 52.5% disagree the statement. Most teachers do not support the idea that the textbook raises students' interests in future English language study. The last



statement of this category which is Statement 40 in Litz' questionnaire, teachers comment whether or not they prefer to teach this textbook again. 45.4% of the respondents agree the statement as 40.9% of which disagree it. 13.6% neither agreed nor disagreed the idea, so they were considered neutral. The mean, median and mode of *Conclusion* from central tendency related to above statements are presented in Table 15:

Table 15
Descriptive Statistics of Teachers Perceptions of Conclusion

Central Tendency	Numerical estimator	Dispersion Indicators	Numerical estimator
mean	2.93	Std. Deviation	1.27
Median	3.25	skew	-0.115
mode	1.75*	kurtosis	-0.357

According to Table 4.7, the central tendency measures are 2.93, 3.25 and 1.75. The std. deviation, skewedness and kurtosis of dispersion indicators are 1.27, -0.115 and -0.357, respectively. Then, regarding the placement of central and dispersion indicators, teachers' attitudes is considered normal. Accordingly, although the teachers' perception about the *Conclusion* of the new textbook seems lower than the statistical society, it is not noticeable. Moreover, the standard deviation (1.27), among other variables, reveals that all the teachers in terms of *conclusion* are not aligned; in other words, they do not have very close ideas in this section. Hence, considering mean, it is concluded that most teachers, in this case, are neither *agree* nor *disagree* on the issue. Figure 4.7 shows it better.

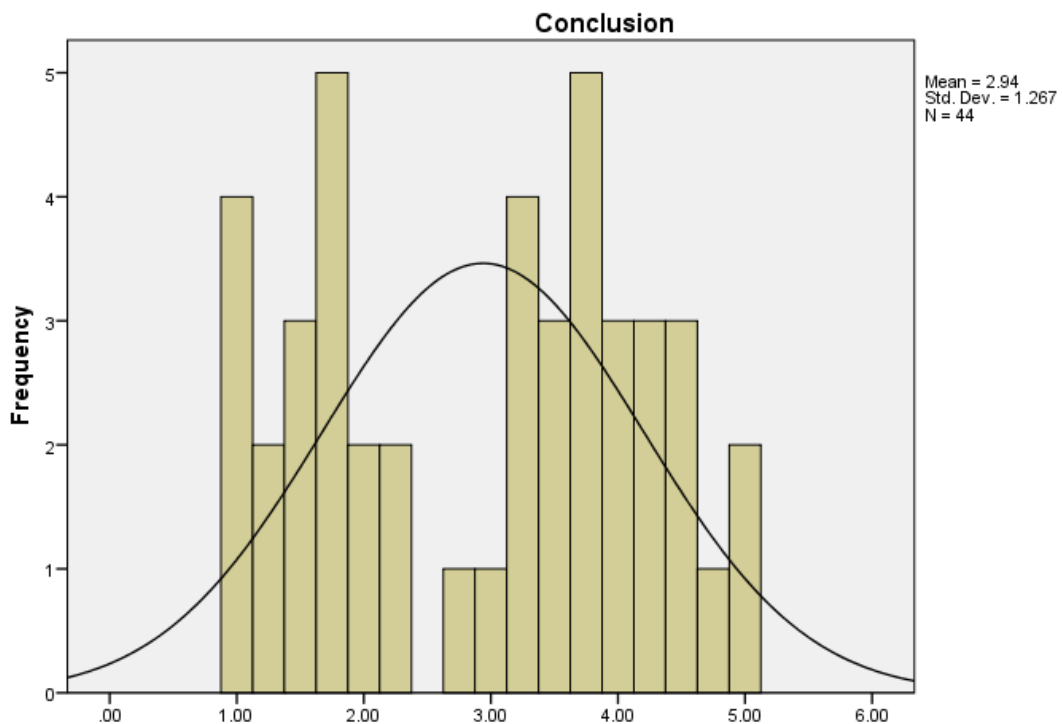


Figure 4.7 The Response Distribution of the Book Conclusion

The graph shows that the people who *agree* with *Conclusion* are the same as those who *disagree* with it. Table 15 compares all seven item means in a chart.

Accordingly, we can categorize teachers' attitudes from the most positive to the least one regarding the seven items in the following table:



Table 15
Comparison of Seven Items from the Highest to the Least

Item number	Item name	mean	Std. Deviation
1	Practical Considerations	3.27	.926
2	activity and practice	3.04	.982
3	subject and content	3.00	1.07
4	conclusion	2.93	1.26
5	layout and design	2.87	.946
6	Language and dictionary	2.77	1.05
7	skills	2.73	.857

As discussed above, *Practical consideration* takes the most attention of teachers while *Skills* does the least. Most views are around the mean (3). Then, categorizing these seven items according to their means, they can be rated as: Practical consideration, activities, subject and content, conclusion, layout and design, language type and skills, respectively.

As discussed before, this study investigates teachers' perceptions on Iranian junior high school new published book *Prospect 1*. The findings are in favor of the book. This agrees Litz (2005) in two ways First, both evaluate the newly-published book in areas such as layout and design, activities and tasks, skills and language type and content, and second they both investigate teachers' perceptions on the mentioned issues.

Regarding Karimnia and SalehiZadeh (2007) and the present study, both came to the conclusion that Iranian students have problems in all the language skills. Students learn English through formal instructions, i.e. inside the classroom where the teacher is a native Farsi speaker. Moreover, the lack of authenticity of materials leads to lexical, syntactic and phonological errors committed by Iranian English learners. Yet, Karimnia and SalehiZadeh mostly focused on university textbook while present research concerns the Grade Seven of junior high school book.

As shown before, teachers' attitudes do not support the newly-published book *Prospect 1* in areas such as materials and skills. This is the same as what Aytug (2007) received from his research. The results revealed that although most of the teachers indicated that the textbook includes information considering different people from different countries, it was pointed out by the majority of the teachers that the textbook was ineffective in terms of reflecting the representations of the target language culture (L2). This is in line with the researcher's points on using Persian names with English dialogues in *Prospect1*.

This study also supports Alamri (2008) as they both evaluate teachers' attitudes toward the content of a newly- published book. The results revealed that the book was favorable for teachers, but they were not satisfied with the teaching methods. In addition, it indicated the close means of the two groups except in the flexibility of the textbooks. Yet, while this study covers 40 items under seven categories, Alamri 's one consisted of 64 items under 12 main categories: the general appearance, design and illustration, accompanying materials, objectives, topic appropriateness, learning components, socio-cultural contexts, skills development, teach ability, flexibility, teaching methods, and practice and testing.

Regarding Dahmardeh (2009), both studies reveal lack of authenticity in collecting materials for both junior and secondary high school English books. Along with his findings as English language textbooks in Iranian secondary schools do not have a narrow curriculum, concentrating on form-based exercises, and lack of flexibility are disadvantages of mentioned books, and this study showed that *Prospect 1* focuses on communicative aspects of language.

In comparison to Dickinson (2010), in which *Let's Go 1* from the *Let's Go* series were evaluated in the areas such as general appearance, layout and design, methodology, activities, language skills, language content, topic content, teachability and flexibility and assessment, both studies come to the same conclusion that in early stages, the materials should be colorful and appear interesting and fun to young learners. The extra point pointed in Dickinson's research refers to the validity of the tests used for *Let's Go 1*, and the restriction which the grammatical/structural approach to presenting and practicing language make for creativity and independent learner responses.

Although this study evaluates *Prospect 1* materials from teachers' view point, it makes no comparison to any other original communicative-oriented text book. This is against Ghorbani's (2011) study in which Iranian high school textbooks and their weaknesses were compared to ELT textbooks in Japan and Malaysia in order to find how tests influence the use of prescribed textbooks. Suffering from a balance between listening, speaking, reading and writing, no contributing a real-



world writing, and having problem with the teaching methodology where it does not follow current worldwide theories and practices of language learning were Ghorbani's research findings.

Since English is taught as a foreign language in Iran, a particular methodology should be adapted. Betül Altay (2013) in her research entitled *strategies for textbook selection and evaluation* evaluated course books in terms of four main skills for EFL classrooms. She considered the layout and design, material organization, language proficiency, reading comprehension, writing, grammar and vocabulary, listening, oral skills and content in course books. The results of this study focuses revealed that a suitable course book will certainly make students successful in using a foreign language.

This study is in line with Janfeshan and Nosrati (2014) as they both evaluate *Prospect1* in the first year of publication (2014), and in the areas such as Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) criteria including *contents, grammar focus, levels, methodology and materials*. They differ in the number of categories evaluated, five categories for Janfeshan and Nosrati's and seven ones for this study; moreover, the participants of the former includes 120 students while in this study 44 teachers were the subjects. Their investigations in oral skills (listening and speaking) and written skills (reading and writing) revealed that students achieved better in oral skills than in written ones. However, this study shows that teachers are not satisfied with *skills*.

4.2 The Content of the Old and New English Textbooks (Research Question # 3)

The old English textbook written by Birjandi&Soheili (1991), was called *Right Path to English* and taught in Grade Seven for years until the year 2013 when the newly published book one, *prospect1* was published. It followed audio-lingual method and consisted of some units a sample of which has been shown in Appendix1.

Each unit begins with a dialogue in which the participants have Persian names, and takes place in an Iranian context. It is followed by several comprehension questions called *Understanding*. Right after the dialogue, another section entitled *Pattern* which focuses on grammar, is presented. In this section, English structure is taught through isolated pictures and sentences. *Oral Drills*, the next part, concentrates on fluency through boring repetition of distinct utterances and substituting words. In some cases, this section, despite its goals, contains a writing drill. In the writing section, students are expected to do some drills such as completion, matching and fill-in-the-blanks based on what they have learned in the pattern section. *Speak Out* refers to completing a dialogue drill according to what was presented as the dialogue before. *Read Aloud* concerns pronunciation through introducing phonetic symbols. Then, the *New Words and Expressions* section is introduced to the learner which contains the new words and expression of the whole unit. The last section of the unit is Basic Structure. It reminds teachers of grammatical points mentioned in the unit. A Reading section on comprehension of passage precedes the *New Words and Expressions*.

Prior studies have revealed that the old book has shortcomings as it lacks appropriate layout and physical characteristics; materials have not been recycled; not all skills have been considered equally; emphasis is on grammatical points which are practiced through speaking and listening (Golpour, 2012). In addition, recordings are artificial; no attention is paid on students' needs; and topics are out of date and boring. Also audio-visual materials, teachers' guide and communicative tasks are neglected. Therefore, all eighteen features except vocabulary lists, availability of glossary, and lots of grammatical points have not received enough attention.

The title of the newly-developed book is *Prospect 1* by AlaviMoqaddam, and was published in 2013. *Prospect1*. This book is different from the old one in some features: the book includes eight units regardless of *Welcome* and two *Reviews*. According to authors, this book is one of the six English schools book series that Iranian students study from Grade Seven. Each lesson starts with a *Conversation* which acts as an input. It is similar to the *Dialogue* in the old book as the characters and the scenes are all Persian, but students do not need to memorize it. *Two Practices* follow *Conversation* in which learners practice some functions with their teacher or classmates. *Sounds* and *Letters* aim at teaching English alphabet to students through introducing three alphabets per session. A dialogue follows this section as input again; there is no need for the students to memorize it. To practice *Listening* and *Reading*, a quiz is prepared in which students listen to the CD and then choose the right choice. In *Speaking* and *Writing* section, which is mostly a group work, students practice writing simple words. And the last section of each unit is *Your Conversation*, which learners do it in pair after completing it.

The textbook includes a *Photo Dictionary* which helps students find more words in each unit. It also includes a work book and a CD as supplements. As Janfeshan and Nosrati (2014) addressed, *Prospect* series aim the following points in teaching English: A) utilizing different educational activities during the learning process, B) Concentration on lingual experiences in learning, C) Utilizing comprehensible and meaningful materials in writing the book, D) Increasing the spirit of learning in co-educational environment, E) Appropriate corrective feedbacks to learners' errors, F) Considering the emotions and the role of affects in learning process, G) Aiming the communicational skills in learning, and H) Emphasizing on the meanings (prior to structure). The book has been claimed to be written in a Communicative framework.

Conclusion

Based on the analyses, responses in the questionnaire related to the newly- published book, *Prospect 1*, the following conclusions were drawn:

- A. In general, teachers agree with the shift from the old book toward the newly published book, *Prospect 1*.
- B. Although *Practical Considerations* including price, accessibility, and recency are the strong points of the newly-published book, *Skills* receive weak attention instead, and there is little balance and integration between four language skills and no consideration of pronunciation (i.e. Stress and intonation) are considered as disadvantages of it.



C. Teachers are satisfied with *Activities* which means the newly-published textbook provides a balance of activities, encourages sufficient communicative and meaningful practices. Activities can be modified or supplemented easily as incorporating individual, pair and group work.

D. Teachers are also satisfied with *Subject and Content* in areas as being relevant to students' needs as an English language learner, being generally realistic, interesting, challenging and motivating.

Although teachers' satisfaction in Conclusion, Layout and design, and Language Type is close to the mean, it seems they need more attention in comparison with Practical Consideration, Activities and Subject and Content

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