A comparative study of teachers' perspectives in city center of Fars and its remotest towns or villages toward high schools' Junior Secondary book *(Prospect 1)*

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ABSTRACT

Regarding the textbook evaluation a whole slew of studies are done and each of which is taken into account different aspects of the books. Since the book entitled *Prospectone* is a recently released one and there was no investigation about it the researcher decided to scrutinize it. The investigator administered a questionnaire and a semi-structured interview. The study was intended to investigate and compare the teachers' perspectives in center of Fars Province and in its remotest villages or towns such as Lamerd, Mohr, Galedar, Ashkanan and Alamarvdasht. A total population of 100 people participated in this research. To gather the data, Litz questionnaire was used. Regarding the obtained findings from the questionnaires and semi-structures interviews, it revealed that the teachers in remotest villages ran through more difficulties. And it is believed that most of their problems are due to the lack of background knowledge. The learners who attended grade7th had no background knowledge in English. As Krashen(1975) stated the input that the learners receive should be comprehensible and one level higher than the student immediate knowledge. Although most of the learners in Fars province participated in extra curricular classes, mostly institute classes, the students in rural places had never attended in any. Another revealed result is that there was not any balance between the skills in the book and most of the empathies are on oral skills. To put all the aforementioned statements into a nutshell, it can be said that there is a big gap between students' current knowledge in Fars province and the ones in villages.

INTRODUCTION

Although the crucial role of textbook as a universal component of English language teaching is indubitable (Hutchison and Torres 1994), determining the precise and flawless role of textbook in class is vague and needs plenty of papers to be purified. 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, 2002). In language teaching every one subsequently faces a bunch of textbooks which regularly publish and come to the public so as to meet the students' needs. As the result of this phenomenon, deciding and choosing the appropriate textbook that to some extent to be able to provide the learners' needs is as foremost importance. Language teachers' attitudes toward the activities and students' demands can shape the evaluation of textbooks. Consequently, classroom instructors can be regarded as the utmost players in evaluation. Due to this reason, concerning the "language teacher" is a vital step in developing, selecting and evaluating the new textbooks.Evaluation, as a primary part in the progression of innovations and adaptations within the instructional milieu, is a dynamic process which takes into consideration the suitability and aptness of an existing practice (Rea-Dickens and Germaine 1992) and can be used as a worthwhile instrument for both instructors and material writers.

Many experts suggest that evaluation checklists should be used for a thorough examination of a textbook's language.A whole slew of investigations have also been done in Iran on the textbook evaluation and each of which has taken into account various aspects of the books. Koosha and Dastjerdi (2012) scrutinized the use of request forms in Richard's Interchange Series, Books I, II, and III. Soozandehfar and Sahragard (2011) examined the conversation sections of Top Notch Fundamental textbooks. Tavakoli (1995) researched the language functions in Iranian English textbooks of senior high schools. Razmjoo (2007) inspected the CLT principles in the Iranian high school and private institute textbooks.

Statement of the problem

Any textbook preparation needs an organized evaluation. A wide variety of factors which reflect the curriculum objectives should be taken into account when preparing and evaluating textbooks. Among which, teachers' comments and experiences can pave the way for the immediate and ensuing students in a certain society. So considering the instructors' comments, thoughts, experiences and opinions while designing a textbook is a great concern and needs considerable amount of time and attention.As a result, language teachers should play an active role in designing the textbook since they are the immediate usersof the language and the textbook itself, furthermore they are the ones who deal and spend lots of their time with learners therefore; they are informed about their trainees' background, requirements, and hopes.Teacher-made materials (textbooks) are not used extensively in public high schools.Ministry-appointed materials, the textbooks which mostly designed by local writers inside the circle, Iran, for the curriculum is the only source which is put into action by teachers in Iran. So it's a compulsion for teachers and learners to use the published book by the others in all parts of Iran.This investigation, whence, tries to scrutinize English teachers' recommendations and views about a recently released textbook entitled Prospect 1. As well, the current research also explores English teachers' perspectives regarding the existing characteristics of the constituents of the textbook *Prospect 1* primed by a couple of Iranian authors for the execution inside. The study was performed by collecting, examining and interpreting questionnaires on the elements of the *Prospect 1* with the purpose of attaining the participants' assessments. Since the book Prospect one is a newly published book and it is the first year of its implementation, the investigator has tried to scrutinize the book to see whether the book is appropriate for both city center and the remotest villages. And one of the key reasons for doing so is the background and culture differences among students of the cities in comparison with those of villages, namely, institute participation. In this regard, this study explores to determine the suitability of the book for the aforementioned students. It means that if the recently published book is fruitful and beneficial for these two groups of students or each group needs its specified textbook, furthermore,whether the textbook or to say, the foundation stone, achieved its settled objectives or not.

Significance of the Study

This study aimed at investigating teachers' perspectives in city center and remote towns or villages toward high schools' Junior Secondary book (Prospect 1) in Iran.Textbook evaluation is a basic need since it clarifies how a textbook can be refined or justified. The direct and influential effect of textbook on language learning and teaching can not be ignored. Nunan (1988) proclaims that: materials are, in fact, an essential element within the curriculum, and do more than simply lubricate the wheels of learning. At their best, they provide concrete models for desirable classroom practice. They act as curriculum models and at their very best they fulfill a teacher development role (Nunan, 1988, p. 98). Weir and Roberts (1994) present two principal reasons for evaluating the materials.First, it equips the teachers and the book writers with the evidence "which can inform theoretical disputes about directions to be followed in language teaching or in teacher education" (p.11). Second, it is a tool for marking the appropriateness of particular approaches or techniques under given conditions and whether they meet what they claim.The teachers' attitudes and their feedback can have greater significance and are of the prime importance in altering the book or so forth and they can also reveal the strengths and weaknesses of the book, and determine whether or not the book is justified, or needs supplementation and/or modification. The study attempts to identify the weak points, if any. It is also hoped that the study results would help in making some appropriate recommendations for the curriculum planners, educators and experts at educational institutes for further improving the quality of the English language book in general. This study may also provide guidance for any retrospective book evaluation or future revision of any English language textbook.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

A whole bunch of studies have been done regarding the textbook evaluation and most of which in Iran have dealt with three purposes. The first group has mostly considered the criteria of contributing a more successful textbook evaluation studies (see e.g., Ansary&Babaii, 2002). The second group has assessed certain textbooks for their strengths and weaknesses to find their merits and demerits (Jahangard, 2007; Riazi&Aryashokouh, 2007), and the third group has taken into account discourse attributes and the representation of discourse elements in the textbooks (Darali, 2007; Tavakoli, 1995). Some other studies have addressed issues other than these categories (Marzban, 2005; Manafi, 2005). Some common key characteristics and criteria for a good textbook are elaborated by Ansary and Babaii (2002) based on a close scrutiny of a corpus of 10 EFL/ESL textbook reviews plus 10 EFL/ESL textbook evaluation checklists. The features follow:

1.   approach;

2.   content presentation;

3.   physical make-up;

4.   administration concerns;

In another investigation Yarmohammadi (2002) evaluated the senior high school textbooks based on a revised version of Tucker's model.

He concluded that the senior high school textbooks suffer from a plenty of deficiencies as follow:

 1. They are not authentic;

2. English and Persian names are used interchangeably;

3. The skills related to oral are overlooked;

Hutchinson and Torres (1994) suggest that the textbook is an almost universal element of English language teaching and teaching-learning situation is incomplete until it has its appropriate textbook.According to Tomlinson (2001), textbook evaluation is an applied linguistic activity through which teachers; supervisors, administrators and materials developers can make judgments about the effect of the materials on the people using them. McGrath (2002) believes that Textbook evaluation is also of an important value for the development and administration of language learning programmers.According to Prabhu (1987), textbooks ensure uniformity and accountability. They are both realizations and determinants of methods (Vassilakis 1997).According to Nunan (1988) materials are an essential part of the curriculum. Chambers (1997), Harmer (1998), and Garinger (2002) offer a number of criteria to consider when analyzing textbooks for EFL/ESL classes. Cunningsworth (1984) deals with the necessity of relating materials to course objectives and the learner's needs. Sheldon's (1988) checklist focuses on assessing all aspects of content ranging from graphics and physical characteristics to authenticity and flexibility.Ansary and Babaii (2002) believe that teachers, students, and administers are all consumers of textbooks.Nunan (1988) mentions, materials are an essential part of the curriculum. Chambers (1997), Harmer (1998), and Garinger (2002) offer a number of criteria to consider when analyzing textbooks for EFL/ESL classes. Cunningsworth (1984) deals with the necessity of relating materials to course objectives and the learners' needs. Sheldon's (1988) checklist focuses on assessing all aspects of content ranging from graphics and physical characteristics to authenticity and flexibility. Though these approaches are more common and straightforward, other writers go beyond simply content and instead focus on cognitive and affective factors.In another study, Tavakoli (1995) used Searle's (1976) model of speech act to analyze dialogues excerpted from three English textbooks, used in Iran at the high school senior level, to see whether different forms of speech acts were correctly used and how frequently each function was used. The researcher concluded that only three of the five language functions, that is, representative, directive, and expressive, were introduced in the textbooks, while commissives and declarations were completely ignored.

METHODOLOGY

3.1 Participants

The participants who took part in the paper process were 100 English teachers who were selected among a population of teachers in Fars province and its sub-regions who were majoring in English Literature, translation and Teaching. 50 of them were from Shiraz and the rest were from sub-regions with the range of experiencing 5 to 20. All the participants' first language was Persian. The participants were picked out based upon some criteria namely, convenience sampling procedure regarding the availability, practical considerations and eventually the experience and efficacy of the instructors.

3.2 Instrumentation

So as to collect the required data for the attainment of the study, the investigator put the following instruments into action:

3.2.1 Questionnaire

In this study a questionnaire was used in terms of obtaining qualitative and quantitative data. And one of the key reasons for using the questionnaire is considering the time restrictions. The questionnaire is one of the tools by which the fastest and quickest information can be obtained in a very short period of time. Since the participants were Iranian, the researcher translated the questionnaire's items into Persian so that it could be more understandable and free from ambiguity and vagueness.

Two types of questions are taken into account in the questionnaire. Likert-scale, and open-ended questions. A five- point Likert scale was used in which responses ranged from 'strongly agree' to 'strongly disagree'.

To achieve the aims of the investigation, the frequencies, independent sample t-test and mean values are employed so as to examine the questionnaire data. The other goal that this study pursues is that if the recently released textbook is in line with teachers' perspectives and satisfies them or needs more elaboration. The Likert-scale items which were used in this study range between strongly agree to strongly disagree. The mean value ranges signify the information to interpret whether the responses obviously occur in one category or the other. Additionally, these values also display splits wherein teachers' evaluations indicate diversity. In this study, Litz questionnaire was adapted, which was designed for textbook evaluation for instructors. In his study, he used a questionnaire to discover the textbook evaluation criteria used by the instructors. Furthermore she has used the textbook under consideration as a vehicle to find out teachers' criteria while evaluating a textbook. However, the primary aim in the present study is to obtain information about the features of a specific textbook based on the criteria expresses by different authors' views and the other studies without focusing on variables. In Litz questionnaire, the numbers of items were 40. The number of the questions was increased to 44 in the present study. A number of changes were done to make it suitable for the actual context of the study

3.3 Data Collection

Data collection procedure was done in two phases. During the first

phase, Litz questionnaire was administered to obtain the teachers' perspectives about the recently released book entitled *Prospect 1*. In this regard, the questionnaires were conducted in 100 Iranian junior secondary high schools on September 2014 and the English teachers completed the questionnaires.

The 100 participants in the questionnaire were chosen from a totalpopulation of 100 schools. The questionnaires were filled out by 100 teachers in their corresponding schools where, the researcher arranged with the heads of Fars educational group and the heads held the rest.

Besides, in some schools, the investigator himself engaged in and arranged a meeting with the trainers.

In the second phase the researcher conducted semi-structured interviews.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This section deals with evaluating the textbook according to the raters' given responses. To answer the first question of study "Is there any significant difference between Fars high schools' junior secondary EFL city-center teachers' perspectives and the ones in its remotest towns or villages toward the newly published book entitled *Prospect 1*descriptive and experimental statistics was run to compute the total mean score and standard deviation of each section. The results forthe analysis of mean score and standard deviation of each section are manifested in Table 1:

Mean&*p*-value	Shiraz	Other
Practical considerations	16.1400&.816	16.3600.&.816
Layout and design	23.0800&.132	21.1800&.133
Activities	20.7600&.000	14.0800&.000
Skills	13.9200&.000	9.1000&.000
Language type	15.7600&.076	13.9000&.076
Subject and content	13.9000&.000	14.2800&.000
Conclusion	20.2200&.000	25.1600&.000
Total Items	124.1600&.012	110.2800&.013

As it is shown in this table the first numbers are mean scores and the second ones are *p*-value.

Practical Considerations

As displayed in Table 2, the mean scores of Practical considerations are **16.1400**and **16.3600,** indicating that most teachers agreed on this part. Since the *p*-value for this item is more than .05, (**.816)** it can be said that there is not any significant difference between the two groups.

Layout and design: The mean scores for layout and design of *Prospect1* are 23.0800 and 21.1800.Since the p-value for this item is more than .05, (**.**132) it can be said that there is not any significant difference between both groups' views. It illustrates that most teachers were satisfy with layout and design of this textbook.

Activities

The obtained mean score of activities are 20.7600 and 14.0800 indicating that teachers in Fars province were more satisfy than towns regarding the activities of the book. By looking at the*p*-value(**.**000), it manifests that there is a significant difference between the two group's views.Most of the raters believed that the book hasn't pursued a balance of activities approach to teaching and learning, something that the book authors themselves in a workshop in Tehran mentioned, CLT first, literacy next. With respect to this statement and results from SPSS, it is crystal clear that in *Prospect 1* the focus of attention is mostly on oral activities.

Skills

As shown in Table 5, the mean scores of skills are 13.9200 and 9.1000 that shows teachers had different views towards the presentation of skills in the textbook.The mean scores (3.0600 and 1.5510) represent that Shiraz teachers were more satisfy than teachers in towns or villages. Furthermore, the textbook doesn't provide an appropriate balance of the four language skills. It mostly draws the attention to oral skills. A close examination of the textbook units and the findings from the teachers revealed that heavier weight is attached to listening and speaking over writing and reading. In other words, activities accentuating on writing and reading might seem to be insufficient in number. And one of the critical problems that students may face is incapability of reading and writing.

Language Type

The mean scores of language types are 15.7600 and 13.9000. The results show that most teachers were satisfied with the type of language employed in *Prospect 1*.The findings in Table 6 revealed that raters agreed that the authenticity has been executed to some extent. In an assertion Guariento and Morley (2001), stated, at the pre-intermediate levels of language learning authenticity may not only hinder learners form meaningful participation in the process of learning but also demotivate them since it can bring along boredom and bafflement. Due to this reason it is supposed that the authors put the authenticity a little bit aside. However in some parts the trace and root of it is fresh and the real life language is implemented. The full authenticity can bring about problems for Iranian teenager language learners in some respects since the learners may encounter totally new examples for which they lack certain schemata. Therefore in this sense authenticity of the text is sometimes considered unproductive and useless.

Subject and Content

As displayed in table 7, the mean score for subject and content are 14.2800 and 10.5000 and *p*-value .000 which indicates that there is a significant difference between both group's perspectives.By comparing the means of two groups, it shows that there is difference between teachers' views (Shiraz=3.2400 and Other=1.7400). The subject and content of the textbook is mostly relevant to the students' needs in Shiraz in that they may raise learners' awareness and increase their positive attitude toward the target language culture. And of the reasons for this difference could be the cultural background of the learners, meaning that most of the learners in Shiraz attend in institute classes while in villages the numbers of students participating in institutes are less. Due to this reason their needs differ. In fact, the subject and content of the *Prospect1* is somewhat realistic and approximate to Iranian culture. Not all but some of the subjects presented in the textbook are interesting and motivating to the young learners and some others need close examination. However, a few instances of the contents of the textbook under study seem to represent those aspects of the foreign culture for which the learners lack the required background knowledge.

Moreover, content and subjects of *Prospect1* center around a variety of topics such as colors, food, numbers, address and the like. The textbook sometimes apply some stereotypes, and the representation of gender, age, ethnic groups, and ethnicity are not uniform.

Conclusion

The mean scores obtained for conclusion are 20.2200 and 25.1600, This displays there is a significant difference between two groups' views.findings in table 8 indicate that the teachers held the same view that the *Prospect1* was, indeed, appropriate for language learning aims set by Ministry of education. As shown in Table 8, the teachers generally agree that the textbook under study is suitable for small-medium, homogeneous, co-ed classes; however, co-ed classes is not the case of language schools in Iran.

Total Items

The mean scores obtained from **Total Items** are 124.1600 and 110.2800. It represents that there is a significant difference between two groups' views regarding this section.. It mainly signifies that the teachers in remotest towns and villages were less satisfy rather than those in centers of cities. Taken all the points together, it can be said that the teachers in villages had a bunch of barriers in path of teaching *Prospect1*.

Results and discussion

 The price of the *Prospect* 1 is reasonable; it is easily accessible, and recently published.

 The materials accompanying the textbook are to some extent satisfactorily sufficient.

 The methodology of the book is compatible to that of the raters and the institutional goals of the institutes in which the textbook is exploited.

 The textbook doesn't include a detailed overview of the functions, structures and vocabulary that will be taught in each unit.

 The clarity and appropriateness of the textbooks' layout and organization is another forte.

 The content of each unit of the textbook is somewhat organized in a way to activate the students' background schemata, to engage them in the process of learning, and to require them personalize the target elements to their own lives and to produce their own meanings.

 An adequate number of review sections and exercises are included but no evaluation quizzes and testing suggestions are incorporated.

 The teacher's guide put forth a whole slew of guidance on teaching and presenting the language components.

 The objectives are also restated in teacher's book to give the teachers insights on what should be emphasized during the course of a unit.

 The textbook does not follow a balance of activities approach to teaching and learning, thus taking into consideration listening and speaking over reading and writing.

 The activities in the textbook are both sufficiently communicative and meaningful.

 The activities in the textbook incorporate individual, pair and group work.

 Both sub-skills of grammar and vocabulary aren't presented in a motivating and realistic context.

 The *Prospect1* activities promote creative, original, and independent responses.

 The presentation of each skill is complemented by the appropriate skill tasks and the internalization of newly introduced language takes place by an equalization of controlled and freer activities.

 Activities in the textbook can be easily substituted and modified.

 The textbook pays less attention to sub-skills.

 The book draw little attention to natural pronunciation.

 The language of the textbook in some parts is authentic and not certainly at the right level for students' language proficiency, especially in remotest towns and villages.

 The presentation of grammar and vocabulary items in the textbook is appropriate for the intended audience(learners).

 The textbook uses rich context and language for the presentation of grammar points and the language functions introduced in *Prospect1* epitomize those that the learners and the teachers will exploit in an envisioned course of SLA.

 The subject and content are realistic, challenging, but not much motivating, and appropriate for students' needs.

 The textbook offers a variety of subject and contents.

 The book does not apply any sort of stereotypes. Nonetheless, the textbook possesses a few shortcomings:

 The student's book has a glossary at the end to enhance the opportunity for self-learning with respect to vocabulary sub-skill.

 The Heavier weight that is attached to listening and speaking at the expense of reading and writing can be considered as another weak spot.

 Although the type of language utilized in the textbook does in fact introduce a multitude of registers, hardly if at all it exploits a non-native accent in the audio material.

4. Conclusion

The present research was set to evaluate *Prospect1* course book using Litz's teacher textbook evaluation form. To this end, the study tried to establish whether the Iranian EFL teachers think of *Prospect1* in terms of its appropriateness and suitability in city center and remotest towns as EFL educational setting and to spot the strengths and weaknesses of *Prospect1* in schools context. The result revealed a noticeable number of benefits in applying the *Prospect1* in comparison to the previous book; however, it lacks a couple of deficiencies. It is worth mentioning that the category which the EFL teachers were the most satisfied with is practical considerations and the category which EFL teachers were the least satisfied with is skills of the book. With respect to the inadequacies of the textbook pointed out by this survey, language teachers should take responsibility and provide the opportunity for the learners to remedy the problems with substituting more challenging activities, to supplement tasks revolving around the writing and reading skills, and to offer natural examples of non-native accents through the use of authentic materials. In conclusion, language teachers should assume responsibility for compensating any deficiencies of any certain textbook since no

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