Critical Evaluation of Iranian Junior High School Textbooks (Prospect 1, 2, 3): Teachers' View in Focus

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Abstract

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. The current study aimed at investigating Iranian English teachers' attitudes towards Prospect 1, Prospect 2, and Prospect 3 books and to figure out if there were any significant differences among their attitudes towards them. To this end, 80 Iranian English teachers participated in this study. The participants were selected from the teachers who taught English in the schools of Shahinshahr and one district in Isfahan. Three questionnaires, one for each book separately, were designed by the researcher and administered to the participants to elicit their attitudes towards the books. The questionnaires were designed based on Murdoch's Model. The results indicated that the participants had positive attitudes towards the books. It was also revealed that there were not significant differences about the participants' attitudes towards Prospect 1 and Prospect 3, and Prospect 1 and Prospect 2. However, there was a significant difference between their attitudes towards Prospect 2 and Prospect 3. The findings of the present study may contain some implications for EFL teaching and material development.
Keywords: Prospect Books, Textbook, Textbook Evaluation

INTRODUCTION

To many professional teachers, ELT textbooks are basic elements in ELT teaching and they are the most extensively used instructional materials in schools at the present time. Sheldon (1988) contends that, textbooks are obvious central point of any ELT program. In explaining the vital role of textbook in ELT teaching, Benevento (1984) states that whenever foreign language teachers meet each other, the first words after "How do you do" is usually what course books do you use (p. 6). Bryd (2001) maintains that ELT

textbooks embody two kinds of information, which are thematic/topic content (family, school, etc.) and linguistic content (grammar, vocabulary, skills). The users of ELT textbooks engage with the content of the document to obtain the linguistic knowledge needed to communicate in a foreign language. ELT textbooks build the four language skills of speaking, listening, reading, and writing in a second/foreign language.

Textbook evaluation can be very useful in teacher development and professional growth. Cunningsworth (1995) and Ellis (1997) suggest that textbook evaluation helps teachers move beyond impressionistic assessments and it helps them to acquire useful, accurate, systematic, and contextual insights into the overall nature of textbook material. Textbook evaluation, therefore, can potentially be a particularly worthwhile means of conducting action research as well as a form of professional empowerment and improvement. Similarly, textbook evaluation can also be a valuable component of teacher training programs for it serves the dual purpose of making student teachers aware of important features to look for in textbook while familiarizing them with a wide range of published language instruction materials. In summary, it is a fact that evaluation of textbook and other materials is the natural and fundamental part of the teaching and learning process.

It is a fact that selecting and evaluating textbooks in EFL context is of utmost importance. However in Iran, there is limited research conducted to evaluate the textbooks that are already in use or those that are intended for use in future. In most of these studies, the researchers have themselves evaluated different textbooks by means of the checklists and questionnaires suggested by other scholars (Jahangard, 2007; Razmjoo, 2007). English is taught for six years in Iranian high schools. Since many teachers encounter immense problems in terms of teaching English in high schools and pre-university centers, one may ask where the origin of these problems is. It is assumed that this predicament is mainly caused by the inadequacies in instructions and curriculums (Jahangard, 2007).

Prospect English textbooks have been used for teaching English in Iranian educational system in recent years. It is believed that this series has advantages over the previous textbooks and overcome some of their inadequacies (Ahour & Golpour, 2013; Janfeshan & Nosrati, 2014; Sardabi & Koosha, 2016). Therefore, an attempt was made in the present study to investigate Iranian English teachers' attitudes towards Prospect 1, Prospect 2, and Prospect 3 and to figure out if there were any significant differences about the teachers' attitudes towards them.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Importance of Textbook in TEFL

Textbooks play a pivotal role in language classrooms in all types of educational institutions, state schools, colleges, language schools in every country (Rahimpour & Hashemi, 2011). Despite the development of new technologies that allow for higher quality teacher-generated materials, demand for textbooks continues to grow, and the publishing industry responds with new series and textbooks every year (Lamie, 1999).

According to Razmjoo (2007), many students working with a textbook feel secure and have a sense of progress and achievement. Cunningsworth (1995) also argues that textbooks are an effective resource for self-directed learning, an effective resource for presenting materials by the teachers, a source of ideas and activities, a reference source for students, a syllabus that reflects pre-determined learning objectives, and support for less experienced teachers who have yet to gain in confidence.

Textbooks have always been the most preferred instructional materials in ELT. They are best seen as resources in achieving aims and objectives that have already been set concerning learner needs (Cunningsworth, 1995). Hutchinson and Torres (1994) argue that the textbook has a very important and a positive part to play in teaching and learning English. They state that textbooks provide the necessary input into classroom lessons through different activities, readings, and explanations. Thus, they will always survive because they meet certain needs. Allwright (1981) adds a further dimension to the role of the textbook by characterizing the lesson as an interaction between the three elements of teacher, learners, and materials. This interaction enhances the opportunities to learn.

Ur (1996) also states that a textbook provides a clear framework. It makes clear what is coming next and learners know where they are going. As mentioned above, it serves as a syllabus and save the time of the teacher because it already includes ready-made texts and tasks for a particular group of learners. It also acts as a guide to the inexperienced teachers. Finally, Ur (1996) concludes that a textbook can gain the learner with some degree of autonomy. She states that a learner without a textbook becomes more teacher-dependent.

The most important reward of using textbooks is that they are psychologically vital for students since their accomplishment can be measured concretely when we use them (Haycraft, 1978). McGrath (2002) states that a textbook is important because it sets the direction, content, and to a certain extent, how the lesson is to be taught. Similarly, he asserts that it is significant to view the images that teachers have as this reflects their attitudes and beliefs toward textbooks, which has an impact on how teachers use textbooks.

So many different definitions have been proposed for the term evaluation. Probably the most frequently given definition is by Trochim (2006, para. 2) who states that "Evaluation is the systematic assessment of the worth or merit of some object." There is another definition that emphasizes acquiring and assessing information rather than worth or merit which states that "Evaluation is the systematic acquisition and assessment of information to provide useful feedback about some object" (ibid.). According to Hutchinson and Waters (1987), textbook evaluation is basically a straightforward, analytical matching process; matching needs to available solutions.

Textbook Evaluation

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" (Tomlinson, 2001, p. 15). McGrath (2002) believes that textbook evaluation is also of an important value for the development and administration of language learning programs. Harmer sees a distinction between evaluation and assessment. He states, the assessment of a course book is an out-of-class judgment as to how well a new book will perform in class. Course book evaluation, on the other hand, is a judgment on how well a book has performed in fact (Harmer, 1994).

Constant evaluation of textbooks to see if they are appropriate is of great importance. According to Genesee (2001), evaluation in TESOL settings is a process of collecting, analyzing and interpreting information. This process enables us to make informed decisions through which student achievement will increase and educational programs will be more successful. According to Sheldon (1988), there are several reasons for the evaluation of textbooks. Among these reasons, he suggests that the selection of an English language teaching textbook often demonstrates an important administrative and educational decision in which one can see considerable amount of professional, financial, or even political investment. As there are many diverse ELT textbooks in the market, there is a necessity for the evaluation of textbooks in order to be able to recognize the advantages of one over the others, which in turn will lead to the adoption of the textbook.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The following research questions were addressed in this study:

1. What are the Iranian English teachers' attitudes toward Prospect 1 based on Murdoch's model?

2. What are the Iranian English teachers' attitudes toward Prospect 2 based on Murdoch's model?

3. What are the Iranian English teachers' attitudes toward Prospect 3 based on Murdoch's model?

4. Is there any significant difference between Iranian English teachers' opinions about the content of prospect 1, 2 and 3 based on Murdoch's model?

METHODOLOGY

Participants

The sample of this survey study consisted of junior high school teachers. This study was conducted at 20 high schools in Shahinshahr and one district in Isfahan. A total of 80 teachers containing 43 female 37 male teachers whose teaching experiences have been placed somewhere on the continuum of 10-28 years participated in the study. All participants were the employees of the Ministry of Education in Iran and participated in the compulsory teaching training courses. They were also totally familiar with the contents of Prospects books since they had so many years of teaching experience in the schools of Iran. The major of all participants was English but they had different degrees. Five of the participants had associate degrees, 72 of them had B.A. degrees, and three of

them had M.A. degrees. They were completely familiar with the purpose of the study and they were told that their answers to the questions of the questionnaire would be kept confidential.

Instruments

The instruments of the study were questionnaires and Murdoch's Model. For the purpose of developing the questionnaires, the literature related to materials evaluation was reviewed. The review of literature revealed that there are some commonly used criteria in textbook and material evaluation process. The questionnaires were examined by three specialists. This helped to eliminate the ambiguities, to complete topics and issues, and to examine the face validity. The questionnaires consisted of 28 and 30 questions related to eight criteria (practical considerations, layout and design, activities, skills, language type, subjects, content, and level of the books) determined through literature review to conduct a macro level material evaluation.

The questionnaires were designed based on Murdoch's model. To evaluate the reliability of the questionnaires, it was piloted by 10 of the teachers and then its reliability was measured by running Chronbach's Alpha. Since the questionnaires had similar items, the reliability of one questionnaire could be applicable to all three questionnaires. One questionnaire was designed separately for each book. The questionnaires of Prospects 1 and 2 had 28 similar questions. The questionnaire of Prospect 3 also had the 28 aforementioned questions, which were used in the questionnaires of Prospects 1 and 2, and two extra questions for the grammar part of the book. To make sure about the validity of the questionnaire, three experts who had Ph.D. degrees in TEFL were consulted and they were asked to express their opinions about its validity and they confirmed the suitable validity of the questionnaires. The questionnaire was used for all three levels of Prospect series.

Murdoch (1989) proposed a model for designing English teaching curricula. His model fit into environment analysis. Two parts of his model fit into needs analysis (lacks and necessities), and three parts into content and sequencing. Part of what is included in content and sequencing overlaps with format and presentation, that is, the choice of suitable textbooks (Nation & Macalister, 2009). Principles, monitoring and assessment, and evaluation are not included in Murdoch's model. These are possible weaknesses of his model. However, in his discussion of his model, it is clear that he intends that principles should be considered when dealing with several of the parts of his model (Nation & Macalister, 2009).

Procedure

This study was done in Shahinshahr and Isfahan high schools during an academic semester in 2016. In this study, quantitative and qualitative data were obtained through questionnaires and teachers were interviewed to express their opinions for the macro level of evaluation of the textbooks. Prior to the implementation of the instruments, the course teachers were informed about the textbook evaluation study and data collection procedures by means of the questionnaires. The questionnaires were given to teachers

by the researcher. The researcher stated that: "All your data will be kept confidential and no one will have access to them except the researcher."

The questionnaires were administered for each level separately. The participants were asked to express their opinions about the different characteristics of the books. For each question, there were five alternatives ranged from very low to very high in the questionnaires for the participants to express their opinions. After administrating the questionnaires to the participants and eliciting their opinions, the obtained data were collected for more analysis. The acquired data of the interviews were also collected and the results were interpreted to figure out why the participants had such opinions about the textbooks.

RESULTS

To evaluate the reliability of the questionnaires, one of them was piloted to 10 of the participants. Chornbach's Alpha was conducted for evaluating the reliability. The results are shown in the following table.

Table 1. Results of the Reliability Test

N	Cronbach's Alpha Based on Standardized Items	Cronbach's Alpha
30	.888	.881

Table 1 shows the results of Chronbach's Alpha of the reliability of the questionnaire. Cronbach's Alpha was computed for 30 items of the pilot test. The results yielded an Alpha of 0.88. It was resulted that the questionnaire had high reliability (30 items, $r = .88$). Since the other questionnaires had only 28 questions and these questions were in all three questionnaires, the results of this reliability test are applicable to all three questionnaires.

Addressing Research Question One

The purpose of the first research question was to understand the Iranian English teachers' attitudes toward the content of prospect 1. To this end, the participants express their opinions by answering the questions of the questionnaire. The answered ranged from very good to very bad for each characteristic of the book, therefore the answers ranged from 1 to 5. Hence, the medium quality value would be 3.00 ($M = 3.00$). The results of the questionnaire were analyzed via One-Sample t-tests. The results are shown in the following tables.

Table 2. Descriptive Statistics of the Teachers' Attitudes towards Prospect 1

	N	Mean	*Std.* Deviation	*Std.* Error Mean
Content	80	3.02	.674	.08
Appearance	80	3.9	1.05	.12
Writing skill in workbook	80	2.34	.88	.0986
Reading Skill	80	2.43	.76	.08
Spelling and Pronunciation	80	3.60	.68	.08
Student book vocabulary	80	3.75	.53	.056
Book usefulness	80	3.00	.69	.08
Importance of listening in the book	80	3.18	.53	.06
Coordination of student book and workbook	80	3.28	.53	.06

Table 2 indicates the mean scores of the answers of the participants to the questions designed to elicit their opinions about Prospect 1. As it is obvious, the participants evaluated the quality of the book for most of its characteristics upper than medium because the mean scores were getter than 3.00 and worse than medium for two of its characteristics since the mean scores were lower than 3.00. To understand if these differences from the medium were statistically significant or not, One-Sample t-test was conducted.

Table 3. One-Sample t Test for Analyzing the Teachers' Attitudes towards Prospect 1

	Test Value = 3.00					
	t	df	*Sig.* (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
					Lower	Upper
Content	.199	79	.843	.0150	-.135	.165
Appearance	8.434	79	.000	.9937	.759	1.228
Writing skill in workbook	-6.722	79	.000	-.6625	-.859	-.466
Reading skill	-6.773	79	.000	-.5750	-.744	-.406
Spelling and Pronunciation	7.866	79	.000	.5950	.444	.746
Student book vocabulary	12.616	79	.000	.7450	.627	.863
Book usefulness	.065	79	.948	.0050	-.147	.157
Importance of listening in the book	2.896	79	.005	.1775	.056	.299
Coordination of student book and workbook	4.780	79	.000	.2837	.166	.402

The results indicate that there were significant differences between the obtained mean scores and the medium mean score except content and book usefulness because the values under *Sig.* (2-tailed) were greater than .05 (p = .843, p = .948) for these two components, whereas the *Sig.* (2-tailed) values for appearance, writing skill in workbook (p < .001), reading skill (p < .001), spelling and pronunciation (p < .001), student book vocabulary (p < .001), importance of listening in the book (p = .005), and coordination of student book and workbook (p < .001) were lower than .05. Therefore, it could be concluded that the participants believed the book had medium quality in terms of its content and usefulness, bad quality in terms of its writing skill in workbook and reading skill, and good quality in terms of its appearance, spelling, pronunciation, vocabulary, importance of listening and reading, and coordination of student book and workbook.

Addressing Research Question Two

The purpose of the second research question was to understand the Iranian English teachers' attitudes toward the content of Prospect 2. To this end, the participants express their opinions by answering the questions of the questionnaire. The answered ranged from very good to very bad for each characteristic of the book, therefore the answers ranged from 1 to 5. Hence, the medium quality value would be 3.00 (M = 3.00). The results of the questionnaire were analyzed via One-Sample t-tests. The results are shown in the following tables.

Table 4. Descriptive Statistics of the Teachers' Attitudes towards Prospect 2

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Content	80	3.040	.3675	.0411
Appearance	80	3.631	.6785	.0759
Writing skill in workbook	80	3.244	.6162	.0689
Reading skill	80	3.638	1.0094	.1129
Spelling and Pronunciation	80	3.557	.6449	.0721
Student book vocabulary	80	3.347	.5820	.0651
Book usefulness	80	3.409	.5077	.0568
Importance of listening in the book	80	3.494	.4697	.0525
Coordination of student book and workbook	80	3.018	.4556	.0509

Table 4 indicates the mean scores of the answers of the participants to the questions designed to elicit their opinions about Prospect 2. As it is obvious, the participants evaluated the quality of the book for all of its characteristics better than medium because the mean scores were greater 3.00. To understand if these differences from the medium were statistically significant or not, One-Sample t-test was conducted.

Table 5. One-Sample t Test for Analyzing the Teachers' Attitudes towards Prospect 2

	Test Value = 3.00					
	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
					Lower	Upper
Content	.973	79	.333	.0400	-.042	.122
Appearance	8.321	79	.000	.6313	.480	.782
Writing skill in workbook	3.538	79	.001	.2437	.107	.381
Grammar	5.649	79	.000	.6375	.413	.862
Spelling and Pronunciation	7.732	79	.000	.5575	.414	.701
Student book vocabulary	5.340	79	.000	.3475	.218	.477
Book usefulness	7.201	79	.000	.4087	.296	.522
Importance of listening in the book	9.403	79	.000	.4938	.389	.598
Coordination of student book and workbook	.344	79	.732	.0175	-.084	.119

The results indicate that there were significant differences between the obtained mean scores and the medium mean score except content and coordination of student book and workbook because the values under *Sig.* (2-tailed) were greater than .05 (p = .333, p = .732) for these two components, whereas the *Sig.* (2-tailed) values for appearance (p < .001), writing skill in workbook (p = .001), reading skill (p < .001), spelling and pronunciation (p < .001), student book vocabulary (p < .001), book usefulness (p < .001), and importance of listening in the book (p < .001) were lower than .05. Therefore, it could be concluded that the participants believed the book had medium quality in terms of its content and importance of listening in the book and good quality in terms of other components.

Addressing Research Question Three

The purpose of the third research question was to understand the Iranian English teachers' attitudes towards the content of prospect 3. To this end, the participants express their opinions by answering the questions of the questionnaire. The answered ranged from very good to very bad for each characteristic of the book, therefore the answers ranged from 1 to 5. Hence, the medium quality value would be 3.00 ($M = 3.00$). The results of the questionnaire were analyzed via One-Sample t-tests. The results are shown in the following tables.

Table 6. Descriptive Statistics of the Teachers' Attitudes towards Prospect 3

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Content	80	2.605	.3923	.0439
Appearance	80	3.188	.4928	.0551
Writing skill in workbook	80	2.975	.5786	.0647
Reading Skill	80	3.638	.7159	.0800
Spelling and Pronunciation	80	3.430	.5457	.0610
Student book vocabulary	80	3.449	.4317	.0483
Book usefulness	80	2.843	.5927	.0663
Importance of listening in the book	80	3.271	.3544	.0396
Coordination of student book and workbook	80	3.039	.3286	.0367
Grammar	80	3.769	.4425	.0495

Table 6 indicates the mean scores of the answers of the participants to the questions designed to elicit their opinions about Prospect 3. As it is obvious, the participants evaluate the quality of the book worse than medium for three components since the mean scores were lower than 3.00, while they evaluated the other components better than medium since the mean scores were greater than 3.00. To figure out if these differences from the mean were statistically significant or not, the One-Sample t-test was conducted by the researcher.

Table 7. One-Sample t Test for Analyzing the Teachers' Attitudes towards Prospect 3

	Test Value = 3.00					
	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
					Lower	Upper
Content	-9.006	79	.000	-.3950	-.482	-.308
Appearance	3.403	79	.001	.1875	.078	.297
Writing skill in workbook	-.386	79	.700	-.0250	-.154	.104
Reading Skill	7.965	79	.000	.6375	.478	.797
Spelling and Pronunciation	7.047	79	.000	.4300	.309	.551
Student book vocabulary	9.298	79	.000	.4487	.353	.545
Book usefulness	-2.377	79	.020	-.1575	-.289	-.026
Importance of listening in the book	6.845	79	.000	.2713	.192	.350
Coordination of student book and workbook	1.055	79	.295	.0388	-.034	.112
Grammar	15.537	79	.000	.7687	.670	.867

The results indicate that there were significant differences between the obtained mean scores and the medium mean score except writing skill in workbook and coordination of student book and workbook because the values under *Sig.* (2-tailed) were greater than .05 ($p = .700$, $p = .295$) for these two components, whereas the *Sig.* (2-tailed) values for content ($p < .001$), appearance ($p = .001$), reading skill ($p < .001$), spelling and pronunciation ($p < .001$), student book vocabulary ($p < .001$), book usefulness ($p = .02$), importance of listening and reading in the book ($p < .001$), grammar ($p < .001$) were lower than .05. Therefore, it could be concluded that the participants believed Prospect 3 had medium quality in terms of writing skill in workbook and coordination of student book and workbook, bad quality in terms of content and book usefulness, and good quality in terms of appearance, reading skill, spelling, pronunciation, vocabulary, importance of listening in the book, and grammar.

Addressing Research Question Four

The forth research question was "Is there any significant difference between Iranian English teachers' opinions about the content of prospect 1, 2 and 3 based on Murdoch's model?" To answer this research question, One-Way ANOVA was conducted to make comparisons among the participants' attitudes towards the mean scores of all characteristics of the three books. The Bonferroni test was run as post-hoc to figure out how these attitudes were different from one another. The results of the analyses are shown in the following tables.

Table 8. Descriptive Statistics of the Participants' Attitudes towards the Books

	N	Mean	*Std.* Deviation	*Std.* Error	95% Confidence Interval for Mean		Min	Max
					Lower Bound	Upper Bound		
Prospect 1	80	3.251	.4195	.0469	3.158	3.345	2.2	4.1
Prospect 2	80	3.328	.2964	.0331	3.262	3.393	2.7	4.2
Prospect 3	80	3.154	.2068	.0231	3.108	3.200	2.8	3.7
Total	240	3.244	.3262	.0211	3.203	3.286	2.2	4.2

The table indicates that the participants' attitudes towards the three book were greater than medium but they have the most positive attitude towards Prospect 2 ($M_1 = 3.25$, $M_2 = 3.33$, $M_3 = 3.15$). To make sure if this difference was significant or not One-Way ANOVA was conducted. The results are shown in the following table.

Table 9. Results of One-Way ANOVA for Comparing the Participants' Attitudes towards the Books

	Sum of Squares	*df*	Mean Square	*F*	*Sig.*
Between Groups	1.214	2	.607	5.938	.003
Within Groups	24.218	237	.102		
Total	25.432	239			

Table 9 indicates that there were significant differences among the participants' attitudes towards the books because the *p* value was lower than .05, $p = .003$. To understand

precisely what groups were significantly different in comparison with other groups, the Bonferroni test was used as the post-hoc and its results are shown in Table 4.10.

Table 10. Results of Bonferroni Test for Comparing the Participants' Attitudes towards the Books

(I) Books	(J) Books	Mean Difference (I-J)	*Std.* Error	*Sig.*	95% Confidence Interval	
					Lower Bound	Upper Bound
Prospect 1	Prospect 2	-.0763	.0505	.398	-.198	.046
	Prospect 3	.0975	.0505	.165	-.024	.219
Prospect 2	Prospect 1	.0763	.0505	.398	-.046	.198
	Prospect 3	.1738*	.0505	.002	.052	.296
Prospect 3	Prospect 1	-.0975	.0505	.165	-.219	.024
	Prospect 2	-.1738*	.0505	.002	-.296	-.052

*. The mean difference is significant at the 0.05 level.

The results indicate that there were not significant differences between the participants' attitudes towards Prospect 1 and Prospect 2 (*p* = .398) and between Prospect 1 and Prospect 3 (*p* = .165) since *p* values were greater than .05. However, there was a significant difference between the participants' attitudes towards Prospect 2 and Prospect 3 (*p* = .002). The results are also illustrated graphically in the following figure.
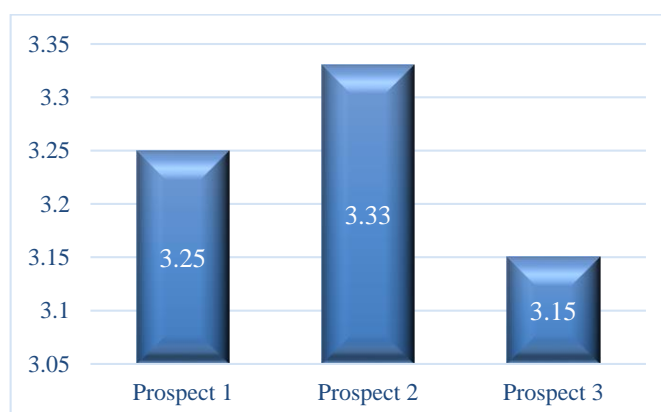
Figure 1. Mean Scores of the Participants' Attitudes towards the Books

DISCUSSION

Salehi and Amini (2016) evaluated Prospect 1 book in terms of the teachers and students' point of view. They analyzed the book for its layout and physical appearance, content, objectives, language type, skills, cultural values, and activities and tasks. They stated that teachers were in favor of the new English textbook in terms of layout and physical appearance, content, objectives, language type, skills, and activities and tasks, while they were not in favor of cultural values included in the book. These results are in line with the findings of the present study since in both studies the participants had positive attitudes towards Prospect 1 in general.

The teachers evaluated the appearance of the book as the part which has the best quality and coordination of the student book and workbook had the least quality. It could be

noted that the designers of the book paid significant attention to the appearance and cover of the book but they did not dedicate enough consideration to the writing skill especially in the workbook. It is possible that they were supposed to attract students' attention by the exiting appearance of the book and increase their motivation of learning. On the other hand, the teachers believed the student book and workbook are not related to each other properly and the workbook does not suitable exercises for students that correspond to what they learn in the student book.

The other part of the book that satisfied the teachers was the vocabulary. The words that are used in each unit in the book are related to the subject of the unit and they are very applicable for learners. In addition, the extra words that are introduce in the photo dictionary part at the end of the book are very useful for students. However, the teachers of the study were not satisfied enough with the writing skill in the workbook which is related to not suitable relationship between the student book and workbook and grammar because the reading part does not satisfy the students' needs properly. Therefore, it is necessary to pay more attention to these issues in the other versions of the book that will be published in the future.

Sardabi and Koosha (2016) evaluated Prospect 2 textbook based on the three criteria of pronunciation, content, and grammar. They also compared the strengths and weaknesses of this book with previous textbook which was *Right Path to English (RPE)*. The researchers found that Prospect was superior to RPE in terms of pronunciation and grammar while for the grammar it was the other way around and Prospect was inferior to RPE. It is obvious that the attentions of material developers in Iran has shifted to the communicative aspects of English and try to design textbooks the way that satisfy this need. By the emergence of new approaches of teaching foreign languages like communicative approach, the importance of communication has been improved and it has been reflected in textbooks.

The participants of the study believed all criteria of Prospect 2 book have good quality except content and importance of listening and reading in the book which they believed they have medium quality. Therefore, no criterion of the book had the quality of less than medium based on teachers' point of view. They believed appearance and grammar had the best quality in the book. On the other hand, the teachers believed the importance of listening and reading is not considered properly in the book. Although the grammar is not taught in this book as much as the previous books, the participants were satisfied with the coverage of grammar by this book. One of the strong points of this book is teaching communicative aspects of language which was not covered properly in previous textbooks.

Janfeshan and Nosrati (2014) investigated different characteristics of Prospect books based on Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) approach. They stated that Prospect has a good focus on oral and communicative skills. So, the common words and phrases are taught to students with precise pronunciations. Grammar is taught through functions and there is no direct point to grammatical issues. Problem solving approach of the book allows students to think more and extract the new grammatical point. Book is categorized

in good levels with appropriate activities. There are workbook and audio CD represented with the students' book and a good teachers' guide. Students are exposed to real world materials and daily language functions. However, they asserted that writing activities are very limited in the book and the culture of English speaking countries is ignored.

The findings of the current study confirm these results. Since the participants had positive evaluations for spelling, vocabulary, appearance, and pronunciation criteria in the book. The importance of speaking and pronunciation has been increased in the educational system and this change has been reflected in designing textbooks. In addition, the vocabulary included in the book is diverse and suitable for students and their everyday life. The appearance and cover of the book are exciting and it seems they can attract students' attention and enhance their intention of learning English.

The criteria of spelling and pronunciation are covered properly and these books are a step forward about these criteria in comparison with previous English textbooks in Iran (Ahour & Golpour, 2013; Sardabi & Koosha, 2016). In addition, these books have interesting appearance that attracts students' attention and enhance their intention of learning English (Mastani & Vahdani, 2015). However, the culture of English speaking countries is completely ignored in these books and so many teachers believed grammar is not taught properly and the learners' need is not satisfied (Janfeshan & Nosrati, 2014; Sardabi & Koosha, 2016). In addition, the writing skill is very limited in the books and there are not enough writing exercises in them (Janfeshan & Nosrati, 2014).

These findings are parallel to the results of the present study. The participants believed Prospect 3 has the least quality among the books and Prospect 2 has the best quality. It is obvious about content and usefulness of the book. Most participants were not in favor of these two criteria in Prospect 3. However, they believed Prospect 3 teach grammar properly. A common weakness in all three books was related to writing skill based on the participants' opinions. They believed writing skill is not covered properly in the books especially in workbooks. The other common weakness was related to coordination of student book and workbook. Most participants believed there was not a suitable relationship between what is taught in the books and exercises of the workbooks. Strong criteria in all books were spelling, pronunciation, and listening. The participants believed these criteria covered properly especially in Prospect 2.

CONCLUSION

Based on the aforementioned results and discussion, the following points can be drawn as the conclusions of the study. The participants had positive attitudes towards the books in general. They had the most positive attitudes towards Prospect 2 and the least positive attitudes towards prospect 3. There was not a significant difference between the attitudes of the participants between Prospect 1 and Prospect 2. In addition, there was not a significant difference between the attitudes of the participants between Prospect 1 and Prospect 3 either. Nevertheless, there was a significant difference between the attitudes of the participants between Prospect 3 and Prospect 2. In general, they believed all three books satisfy students' communicative needs.

It can be noted that the designers of the books paid enough attention to the oral skill in the books. Unlike the previous textbooks, the listening skill is an important part in these books. Moreover, pronunciation is taught more precisely and the correct pronunciation of students had acquired more attention. The appearance of the books is more interesting to learners and they can be attracted to the books by their appearance. However, the relationship between the books and workbooks is not suitable and the writing skill is very limited either in the student book or in workbook. Furthermore, the culture of English speaking countries is completely ignored in the books.

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