

Textbook evaluation: ELT teachers' perspectives on “*Learning to Read English for Pre-University Students*”

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Abstract

As Ellis (1997) underscores, it is mandatory that we evaluate every single textbook used to teach a language. The present study aimed to evaluate *Learning to Read English for Pre-University Students*, currently taught at Iranian high schools. To this purpose, 75 high school EFL teachers were given Litz (2000) textbook evaluation questionnaire. Their answers were analyzed based on a Likert scale. The results of the study showed that the textbook mostly did not live up to the teachers' standards, mainly because it has ignored listening, and writing skills and does not follow a communicative approach in teaching different skills and components of language. Results of this study have implications both for teaching and material development.

Keywords: textbook evaluation; high school students; EFL teachers in Iran

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1. Introduction

A textbook is an organized body of material useful for the formal study of a subject area. The development and maintenance of a useful textbook can be an open and collaborative process. School textbooks pass on fundamental knowledge to the younger generation. Textbooks certainly provide an important tool in transferring knowledge. This transfer of knowledge aims at both conveying information about the subject and developing the understanding of the subject. The textbook is also the most important and often the only source of content and pedagogic information for the teacher. Teachers' viewpoints on the utility and the effectiveness of the textbooks are also fundamental in order to recognize their merits and demerits with regard to particular teaching contexts.

2. Theoretical Background

As Rea-Dickens and Germaine (1994) assert evaluation is an intrinsic part of teaching and learning. Hutchinson and Torres (1994) suggest that the textbook is an almost universal element of English language teaching, and a textbook is an essential part of any educational context. Likewise, Grant (1987) believes that perfect book does not exist. Therefore, it is necessary to evaluate ELT materials in order to respond to the users' needs and provide appropriate materials in language classroom situations and contexts. Heycroft (1998) highlights the most important reward of using textbooks, as being psychologically vital for students for measuring their accomplishments concretely. A textbook is essential because it sets the direction, content, and the teaching method (McGrath, 2002). Tomlinson (2001) gives two reasons why the interest in material development increased. The first one was that material development enabled the teachers to understand and apply the theories of language learning more easily. The second reason was that teachers needed to be able to evaluate materials that would be appropriate for their particular class. Ellis (1997) proposes three levels of pre-, in-, and post-use in textbook evaluation.

It is mandatory that textbooks be evaluated permanently in order to ensure their appropriacy. According to Tomlinson (2001), textbook evaluation is an activity within applied linguistic discipline through which teachers, supervisors, administrators, and material developers can make judgments about the effect of the materials on the people using them. Likewise, Harmer (1996) believes that course book evaluation is a class internal judgment about the real performance of a book. In this regard, Genesee (2001) argues that book evaluation is a process of collecting, analyzing, and interpreting information. As a result of this process students will improve their language competence and educational programs will be more prosperous. Elsewhere, Sheldon (1988) attributes professional, financial, and political benefits to the selection of a language teaching textbook. There are different checklists based on which textbook evaluation is performed, examples of which, could be Litz (2000) Textbook Evaluation Questionnaire, Thein (2006) survey questionnaire, and Dougill's Textbook Evaluation Checklist. Ansary and Babaii (2002) outlined a summary of common-core characteristics of standard ESL/EFL textbooks. They scrutinized ten ESL/EFL reviews and ten textbook evaluation checklists. They come up with a group of universal features of EFL/ESL textbooks in such areas like approach, content presentation, physical make-up, and administrative concerns.

As there is a plethora of ELT textbooks on the market, material developers need to evaluate them in order to find out the advantages of each over the others. This would enable them to make the best choice as for a textbook.

3. Empirical Background

Book evaluation is rather a new trend in Iran. Reviewing the literature, we can find different kinds of empirical studies evaluating textbooks. In Iranian contexts, these studies have mainly focused on some original English textbook series used at Iranian English language institutes, or locally prepared materials used as textbooks in junior and senior high schools of Iran. These studies have analyzed the textbooks based on textbook evaluation forms, taxonomies, discourse representational features, and the role of features like religion or gender in textbooks. We can also find some qualitative book evaluation studies. The literature review would also include some empirical studies done outside Iran.

3.1 Evaluation of Book Series, University Course Books, and Junior and Senior High School Books

Azizifar and Baleghani (2014) investigated Top-Notch textbooks (Saslow & Ascher, 2006). They used a survey questionnaire developed by Thein (2006) to evaluate the aforementioned series comprehensively. Twenty-five male and female EFL teachers in Ilam replied to a 51-statement textbook assessment checklist. The results of their study revealed that although the majority of the teachers were highly satisfied with Top-Notch series, it also suffers from a number of weak points that require teachers' awareness and consideration.

In another study on Top Notch software, Behjat (2013) scrutinized this series based on Ansari and Babaii's (2002) adopted framework to evaluate ELT software, to see if it meets the criteria to have enough credibility for its present position in language classrooms. She suggests the software as a suitable package because of the following reasons: 1. It offers adequate practice on oral and aural skills; 2. Sound and picture quality are good enough to motivate the learners to use it later at home; 3. The activities encourage learners to use language creatively in different contexts; 4. The software has other distinguishing features like cultural awareness, learners' autonomy promotion, and language use in real life situations. Meanwhile the package suffers from lack of reading and writing practices.

Similarly, Alemi and Hesami (2013) evaluated the three English language textbooks (Right Path to English) used at junior high schools in Iran, from the teachers' point of view. They asked thirty-five junior high school teachers to fill the Litz (2000) questionnaire. The results indicated that the junior high school textbooks were not acceptable from the teachers' point of view. They concluded that the English language textbooks that are currently taught at junior high schools in Iran do not meet the teachers' expectations.

Elsewhere, Soleimani and Dabbaghi (2012) evaluated the efficiency of the New Interchange course book, in terms of providing sufficient and comprehensible pragmatic input for Iranian learners of English to fulfill their basic communicative needs based on the content of the books. They administered an oral discourse completion test to 50 students at upper intermediate level of proficiency. The results of statistical analyses indicated that the books provided enough pragmatic input for language learners to deal with their basic communicative needs.

In a similar vein, Alemi and Sadehvandi (2012) evaluated Pacesetter Series written by Strange and Hall (2005) in four levels of starter, elementary, pre-intermediate, and intermediate. They used Litz (2000) questionnaire to evaluate the series completely. The results of their studies proved that the series meet the students' communicative needs. The researchers further addressed two salient points. The first problem is that the series underestimates the speaking skill. The second problem is that it incorporates the European culture, which would cause frustration. On the other hand, Ajabshir (2011) evaluated "English for the Students of Management" written by Moshfeghi, F. It is taught for the ESP course of the students of Management at some Payame Noor universities in Iran. They administered two types of Likert scale questionnaires among the students and instructors. They found some drawbacks with the book in relation to the author's approach to language and methodology, lack of balance between language skills, and insufficient inclusion of communicative activities.

Yet, another study was carried out by Abdollahi et al. (2011) on the authenticity of Iranian English textbooks, based on Dougills' textbook evaluation checklist. They found that textbooks lack the authenticity of natural

English in terms of content and presentation. Furthermore, the passages were found not to be attractive for students and tended to avoid cultural and communicative points.

Moreover, Riazi and Mosallanejad (2010) investigated the type of learning objectives represented in Iranian senior high school and pre-university English textbooks using Bloom's taxonomy of learning objectives. They analyzed different activities in the textbooks to determine the frequencies of the existence of different learning objectives, which was based on Bloom's (1956) taxonomy of learning objectives. They found out that lower-order cognitive skills were more dominant than higher-order ones in Iranian high school and pre-university English textbooks. They included three high school textbooks and the sole pre-university textbook. Moreover, they found out those pre-university textbook used higher-order activities more than high school textbooks, a fact which made a significant difference between the two textbooks.

Also, Riasati and Zare (2010) evaluated New Interchange Series in order to determine the overall pedagogical value and suitability of the series. They got thirty-five Iranian EFL teachers to fill in Litz (2000) textbook evaluation questionnaire. They concluded that most teachers had similar opinions with regard to the effectiveness and suitability of the series. Moreover, they pinpointed a number of weak points which the series suffered from.

In another study, Riazi and Aryashokouh (2007) studied the four high schools and pre-university English textbooks. In their study, they analyzed the consciousness-raising aspects of vocabulary exercises. They found that of only one percent of the exercises to be categorized as consciousness-raising. They also found that the exercises mostly focused on individual words with no emphasis on fixed expressions, and lexical/grammatical collocations. They found that rather than learning how to use words in context, students learned the meanings of isolated words.

Meanwhile, Jahangard (2007) analyzed textbooks used in grades one to four of Iranian High schools. He evaluated the positive points and drawbacks of the textbooks based on 13 common criteria obtained from different material assessment forms. The results of their studies showed that Book Four was superior to the three other books. Finally, Yarmohammadi (2002) evaluated the senior high school textbooks based on a revised version of Tucker's model. The results of his study showed that these textbooks suffered from a number of drawbacks:

- They are not authentic;
- English and Persian names are used interchangeably; and
- Speaking skill is ignored.

3.2 Book evaluations based on discourse features

Investigating the role of discourse features, Amal Saleh and Sajjadi (2006) studied the representation of social actors in the EFL high school textbooks in Iran. They aimed to find out how the representations used in the texts construct certain social and normative realities. As such, they intended to know whether curriculum developers, consciously or unconsciously had given a special priority to a particular social group, such as a special gender, social class, or race in developing the content of the texts. Their analysis of the text materials showed that females were significantly under-represented, with the ratio of 6:1. Further, the frequency and type of activities males and females engaged in were significantly different.

In a similar study, Amini and Birjandi (2012) examined the extent and type of gender bias in two of the Iranian mostly used EFL textbooks at the high school level. They studied sexism in five categories of visibility, firstness, generic masculine constructions, sex-linked occupations, and activities. The results of their study showed that overall, the two textbooks investigated overrepresented male characters both linguistically and visually in frequency and order of occurrence, occupation, stereotypical activities, and the linguistic manifestation

of masculine generic referents.

On the other hand, Cheng and Biglar Beigi (2012) studied religion and education with particular reference to EFL textbooks which are taught in Iranian junior high schools. They scanned Iranian secondary-level EFL textbooks published by the Ministry of Education to find religious concepts in the form of linear and nonlinear content. They concluded that religion is not overtly depicted nor is it explicitly taught. At the same time, EFL textbooks were viewed as not exposing students to the culture of the language that is being taught.

In a similar vein, Darali (2007) evaluated the Spectrum series. He focused on cultural pragmatic knowledge of the language integrated in the lessons. He found that the series did not focus on frequent language functions as it should. Another problem was that the book did not explain the use of different forms within the same context. Appropriateness, paralinguistic information, and contextual information were also ignored in the series.

3.3 Textbook Evaluation outside Iran

Intriguingly, textbook evaluation has also been carried out in contexts outside Iran.

First, Mahmood and Saeed (2011) explored to what extent the approved books by Ministry of Education of Pakistan have harmony among them with respect to basic characteristics of textbook and how qualification, experience and nature of job in educational department affect the evaluation. They selected eight textbooks introduced in the public and private sector schools of Pakistan. They collected the data through a questionnaire called "Textbook Evaluation Form" from 230 teachers and 67 teacher educators. The results of their study indicated that there is discord among the textbooks and the evaluation of the textbooks is influenced by qualification and experience on some characteristics of textbooks.

Likewise, Vellenga (2004) studied the effect of pragmatics in EFL/ESL textbooks. She studied eight textbooks to find out the amount of pragmatic information. She studied mainly on the use of meta-language, explicit treatment of speech acts, and meta-pragmatic information. He found out that textbooks lack explicit meta-pragmatic information. The researcher also suggested that teachers should bring outside materials related to pragmatics into the classroom to improve the students' pragmatic knowledge. He concluded that learning pragmatics from textbooks was not possible.

Elsewhere, Morgan (2003) evaluated IELTS preparation textbooks and found that the materials do not endeavor to improve the language competencies that the candidates need for their study or profession aims. Further, he added that as the IELTS candidates are highly motivated, there is no need to make the books visually attractive. This, he adds, to be a drawback of the book. Also, Kartner (2003) wonders why students and teachers are interested in a textbook at the end as much as they were at the beginning of a school year. He recommends that textbooks incorporate as much new ideas and perspectives as possible in order to become more appealing.

Finally, Weiten, Deguara, Rehmke, and Swell (1999) evaluated the role of textbook pedagogical aids. They scrutinized pedagogical aids used in the textbooks as reported by students. The results of their studies showed that students thought that bold face technical terms, chapter summaries, self-tests, and running or chapter glossaries were highly utilized in their books.

Most of these studies have evaluated different textbooks with regard to various models, frameworks, and checklists. There is not a study focusing on the teachers' perspectives toward Pre-University textbook taught at high schools in Iran measuring it against a questionnaire. Consequently, the purpose of the present study was to evaluate the Pre-University textbook in Iranian high schools from teachers' point of view. The present study tried to contribute to the growing body of the literature on textbook evaluation through investigating the efficiency of the Pre-University textbook in providing sufficient pragmatic input to learners. This study is basically objective since it is the analysis of materials measuring them against a standardized questionnaire.

This study aimed to address the following questions:

1. How do Iranian high school teachers evaluate the appropriacy and suitability of Pre-University textbook?
2. What are the upsides and downsides of Pre-University textbook?

The reason for choosing Pre-University course-book was that although this textbook is the last book that Iranian high school students study, it does not seem to fulfill the students' communicative needs. This study was an attempt to find out the drawbacks of the book and hence some remedies.

4. Methodology

4.1 Participants

Seventy five high school teachers of English at Shiraz high schools took part in this study. They were selected randomly among teachers of English at Shiraz high schools. They had teaching experiences of eight to twenty-five years. These teachers had a good experience at the book *Pre-University* regarding the content, objectives, layout, and design of the book.

4.2 Textbook

The textbook is *Learning to Read English for Pre-University Students*. The authors of the book are Dr. Birjandi, Dr. Anani Sarab, and Mr. Samimi. They have compiled the book in order to be taught in high school, at pre-university level at the Ministry of Education. In the introduction of the book it is claimed that the purpose of the book is mainly to improve the reading skill in an organized framework. The book consists of eight units which are divided into two parts to be used in two terms by pre-university students. Each unit consists of three parts of reading, vocabulary, and grammar.

4.3 Instrument

Teacher Textbook Evaluation form developed by Litz (2000) was used to be filled by 75 high school teachers. The questionnaire is based on Likert scale. It is a standardized questionnaire used for book evaluation. For each question there are ten scales ranging from highly disagree to highly agree. The number of scales was decreased to five in order to ease the statistical analyses. There are seven subcategories in the questionnaire developing into forty items which measure various features of the textbook: practical consideration, layout and design, activities, skills, language type, subject and content, and conclusion.

4.4 Issues of validity

The questionnaire used in this study was Litz (2000) Textbook Evaluation Form. Since it is a standardized questionnaire used worldwide for book evaluation, it is a valid measure.

4.5 Issues of reliability

Cronbach's Alpha reliability of the questionnaire which was filled by 64 teachers was calculated to be .81 which is high enough.

4.6 Data Collection Procedure

Litz's (2000) Textbook Evaluation questionnaire was handed out to 75 teachers. The teachers were also asked to write their personal information like their age, teaching experience, and degree. Using SPSS (Statistical Package for Social Sciences) their answers were analyzed.

5. Results and discussion

In this part based on the teachers' responses to the questionnaire, the researchers tried to answer the research questions, i. e., How do Iranian high school teachers evaluate the appropriacy and suitability of Pre-University textbook? 2. What are the upsides and downsides of Pre-University textbook? To serve this purpose the mean and standard deviation for each subcategory was calculated. The results for the analysis of mean score and standard deviation of each section is displayed in table one.

Table 1

Descriptive Statistics for Each Section

Feature	Mean	SD
Practical considerations	4.10	0.12
Layout and Design	2.97	0.15
Activities	2.58	0.08
Skills	2.28	0.09
Language Type	2.63	0.85
Subject and Content	2.88	0.11
Conclusion	2.40	0.75

5.1 Practical considerations

As shown in table one, the mean score and standard deviation of practical considerations are 4.1 and 0.12 respectively. This shows that most teachers approved of this part. The book is cheap and easily accessible. But, the book has been revised in 2002 which is rather a long time ago. Unfortunately, there are no supplementary materials like teacher's guide, workbook, and audio-tapes accompanying the book. As it is mentioned in the introduction of the book, the aim of the book is to develop reading skill of the students, which is not a comprehensive purpose. To make the book more comprehensive, the authors could have added other parts focusing on all language skills through a communicative approach.

Table 2

Descriptive Statistics for Practical Considerations Sub-Sections

Factors	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	SD
Practical consideration one	75	2.00	5.00	4.5	0.88
Practical consideration two	75	1.00	4.00	4.4	0.92
Practical consideration three	75	1.00	5.00	4.0	1.22
Practical consideration four	75	1.00	4.00	3.8	1.12
Practical consideration five	75	2.00	5.00	3.8	0.88
N (Listwise)					

5.2 Layout and Design

As it is shown in table one, the mean score for this part is three meaning that teachers did not have a very high opinion about this subcomponent of the evaluation form. In the table of contents of the book a detailed overview of the functions, structures and vocabulary that will be taught in each unit is presented. The sequencing in the grammar section is based on present-practice order. As for the readings, there are some warm-up exercises before each reading which stimulate the students' background knowledge (schemata). After the reading, in comprehension check section, some exercises are included to not only test the students reading comprehension, but also eventually make them able to discuss different topics. At the end, some reading skills are presented which are followed by some exercises. Finally, a vocabulary review exercise is given. This exercise is a good activity to teach vocabulary through contextualization. In the section "Focus on Grammar", grammar points are first presented through some sentences. The grammar points are focused inductively by raising some questions

before presenting the rules. Then some exercises are presented to practice the grammar points. There is no production part involved. The book could have included some production exercises through which students could have personalized their answers through talking about their real life experiences.

At the end, in the part "Grammar Digest" the grammar rules are explained deductively. This part could have been presented in the second section after the presentation of the grammar through some sentences. The authors could have explained the grammar points both inductively and deductively in this section. Unfortunately, there are no sections which develop writing and reading skills. If the authors had included these two skills, the book would have been organized more effectively. There is a glossary at the end of the book which has listed the vocabulary with the lesson number. Here lack of word definitions is a paucity spoiling the rigor of the book. The only review section included in the book is the review of *English Book Three* of high school which is included at the beginning of the book before unit one.

Later in the book there are no review exercises. Having review sections could have consolidated the students' knowledge of grammar, vocabulary, and reading comprehension skill. Neither does the book contain any evaluation quizzes or tests. The authors could have added some quizzes or tests to foster the dynamic assessment of the students' progress at different areas of language. There is no teacher's book accompanying the textbook. But in the introduction of the book some strategies for developing reading comprehension skills and improving one's knowledge of vocabulary are given. In a teacher's book the authors could have explained quite in detail the methodology, objectives of the book, and some guidelines for using the textbook to the utmost advantage.

Table 3

Descriptive Statistics for Layout and Design Subsections

Factors	<i>N</i>	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	<i>SD</i>
Layout & Design 1	75	2.00	5.00	3.40	0.95
Layout & Design 2	75	1.00	4.00	3.30	0.88
Layout & Design 3	75	1.00	4.00	3.00	0.77
Layout & Design 4	75	1.00	4.00	2.80	0.67
Layout & Design 5	75	1.00	3.00	2.50	0.89
Layout & Design 6	75	1.00	2.00	2.50	0.66
Layout & Design 7	75	1.00	2.00	2.30	0.64
Layout & Design 8	75	2.00	5.00	4.00	1.12
Valid N (Listwise)	75				

5.3 Activities

This part of the evaluation form deals with such issues as a balance between fluency and accuracy, communicative and meaningful practice, taking advantage of individual, pair, and group work, using contextualized vocabulary in motivating contexts, creation of original and independent responses, the internalization of newly introduced language, and ease of modification or the use of supplementary materials for the activities. As it is shown in table one the mean score for this part is 2 implying that the teachers were not satisfied with the activities section.

Fluency might be improved through such activities as role-playing, free writing, and information-gap activities, which are not seen in *Pre-University* book. Most of the activities focus on accuracy rather than fluency through exercises like fill-in-the-blank, matching exercises, scrambled words, controlled writing, and multiple choice questions. The only activity in *Learning to Read English for Pre-University Students* which somehow encourages meaningful and communicative practice is the discussion questions after the reading where the students are asked to discuss their personal ideas about the topics raised in the reading passage. A paucity of communicative exercises is also observed in the grammar section of the textbook. Most of the activities should be done individually. Partners are required to compare their activities after they have done them. Students could

have been asked to do the activities in pairs and compare their answers while doing them. There are no cases of group work activities.

The vocabulary is presented through reading passages. There is a column beside the reading passage where the new vocabularies and their meanings are introduced. There is one exercise after the reading comprehension check which asks the students to choose the correct word through multiple choice questions. Furthermore, some techniques for finding the meanings of the new words through context are provided in the section called reading skills. These activities do not provide sufficient motivating and realistic contexts for teaching vocabulary. Grammar is presented through some isolated sentences. More contextualization is needed for grammar presentation like contextualizing the new grammar point through some texts where the students would be required to discover the new grammar points. The same problem exists in the practice part of the grammar, i. e., students practice the new grammar points in isolated sentences. Personalization and contextualization of the new grammar points could facilitate the internalization of the new grammar points. There is no production part in teaching grammar. Adding some production activities like free writing or information-gap activities would make the grammar section more motivating and interesting.

The raters agreed on the fact that *Learning to Read English for Pre-University Students* activities promote independent responses. But they need to provide more creative and original responses through incorporation of spontaneous and personalized ideas. The teachers agreed that there is more need for the internalization of the newly introduced language. This could be achieved through more free activities where students would be able to use the language in real life situations. The result of the raters' evaluation of the modification of the activities or the use of supplementary materials was average. The textbook's activities can be modified in the grammar section for practice exercises, but it cannot be modified or supplemented in the reading section.

Table 4

Descriptive Statistics for Activities

Factors	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	SD
Activity One	75	1.00	3.00	2.50	0.87
Activity Two	75	1.00	3.00	2.00	0.67
Activity Three	75	2.00	4.00	4.00	1.12
Activity Four	75	1.00	3.00	2.50	1.13
Activity Five	75	1.00	3.00	2.00	0.88
Activity Six	75	1.00	4.00	2.50	1.23
Activity Seven	75	2.00	4.00	2.60	1.34
Valid N (Listwise)	75				

5.4 Skills

As shown in table one the mean score and standard deviation of skills are 2 and 0.36 respectively, meaning that teachers were not happy with the skill subsection. This section of the evaluation form deals with such issues as whether the materials focus on the skills that the students need, whether there is a balance among the four language skills, and finally whether the textbook pays attention to subskills, natural pronunciation, and the integration of individual skills into each other.

The raters agreed that the textbook does not focus on the skills that students need to practice. There is not a balance among all four skills of reading, writing, listening, and speaking. There are no activities for listening comprehension and just one speaking activity in the form of some discussion questions in the comprehension check of the reading. As for the sub-skills, there are some activities devised to improve reading skills. There are no activities teaching the sub-skills of listening comprehension. There are no activities highlighting and practicing natural pronunciation, stress, and intonation.

The teachers believed that the activities in comprehension check integrate speaking and writing skills to

some extent. Other than that, no traces were found for the integration of different language skills. *Learning to read English for Pre-University Students* mostly focuses on reading comprehension, grammar, and vocabulary. It does not focus on the skills and their integration into each other.

Table 5*Descriptive Statistics for Skills*

Factors	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	SD
Skill One	75	1.00	3.00	2.00	0.50
Skill Two	75	1.00	4.00	2.30	0.73
Skill Three	75	1.00	4.00	2.50	0.88
Skill Four	75	1.00	3.00	2.00	0.45
Skill Five	75	1.00	3.00	2.60	0.75
Valid N(Listwise)	75				

5.5 Language Type

As it is reported in table one, the mean and standard deviation for language type are 3 and 0.85 indicating an average level of satisfaction approved by raters. The Language Type component consists of six subsections tapping areas like the authenticity of the language, the appropriacy of the language for the level, suitable progression of vocabulary and grammar, exemplification of the grammar points, use of language functions in real life, and finally the incorporation of different registers and accents. As for the authenticity of the language, we can say that the language of the reading is authentic while the language used in the comprehension check and grammar section is not authentic. As students at the Pre-University level are supposed to be advanced learners of English, authentic language is recommended in order to motivate the students' interest.

The language used in *English for Pre-University Students* textbook is rather at the right level for the students' English ability as they have studied English books one, two, and three at high school. The raters agreed that the progression of grammar points and vocabulary items is appropriate. As for the presentation of grammar points, more personalized, real-life examples would facilitate the internalization of the new structure. There is no language function in *English for Pre-University Students* textbook. The only register used in *English for Pre-University Students* is Standard English. It would be much more interesting if a diverse range of registers and accents were represented.

Table 6*Descriptive Statistics for Language Type*

Factors	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	SD
Language Type 1	75	1.00	3.00	2.50	1.12
Language Type 2	75	2.00	5.00	4.00	1.23
Language Type 3	75	1.00	4.00	4.20	1.00
Language Type 4	75	1.00	3.00	2.10	0.76
Language Type 5	75	1.00	2.00	1.00	1.00
Language Type 6	75	1.00	2.00	2.00	0.75
Valid N(Listwise)					

5.6 Subject and Content

As it is shown in table one the mean and standard deviation for subject and content are 2.3 and 1.12 respectively. This part of the evaluation form deals with such issues as the relevance of subject and content to the students' needs, the use of realistic, interesting, and motivating subject, use of variety, and finally cultural bias and negative stereotypes in the materials.

The subject and content of *Learning to Read English for Pre-University Students* partially fulfills the

students' needs. The book develops only reading skill, grammar and vocabulary components of the language. There are no activities teaching listening and writing skills. If these two skills were included in the form of some interesting activities, the book would be more motivating for the students. Also, using an integrated approach towards teaching different skills and components of language would increase the students' interest and motivation towards learning the language.

As the subject and content of the textbook are artificially concocted for teaching purposes, they are not realistic. It would be more realistic if authentic texts were chosen for reading passages and more real-life and personalized examples were used in grammar sections. This would also make the subject and content of the book more interesting, challenging, and motivating. For example, in teaching vocabulary using topical word networks, synonyms, antonyms, pictures, realia, and collocations would facilitate the internalization of the meanings of the words. As for the variety in the subject and content of the book, we might say that there are various topics for reading passages, but the book suffers from a paucity of various topics in other parts like in the language used to teach grammar and vocabulary. The book does not apply any stereotypes and is not culturally biased.

Table 7

Descriptive Statistics for Subject and Content

Factors	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	SD
Subject & Content 1	75	1.00	3.00	2.60	0.76
Subject & Content 2	75	1.00	4.00	3.00	0.88
Subject & Content 3	75	1.00	3.00	2.00	0.96
Subject & Content 4	75	1.00	3.00	2.70	1.12
Subject & Content 5	75	2.00	5.00	4.10	1.23
Valid N(Listwise)					

5.7 Conclusion

As it is shown in table one, the mean and standard deviation for conclusion are 2 and 0.75 respectively. This section taps areas like whether the textbook is appropriate for the language learning aims of the institute, whether the textbook is suitable for small-medium, homogeneous classes of university students, whether the textbook raises students' interest in further English language study, and finally whether the teachers would choose to teach this textbook again.

Given that the aim of *Learning to Read English for Pre-University Students* is improving students' reading comprehension skill, we might judge that the textbook is appropriate for the language learning aims set by the Ministry of Education. But in a larger scale, we see that the book does not develop other skills of language like listening, speaking, and writing, which is a deficiency of the textbook. The textbook is not at the suitable level for small-medium, homogeneous classes of university students. It is designed for Pre-University students. Most of the raters agreed that the textbook raises the students' interest in further English language study. By applying a more communicative approach and covering all the skills and components of language the textbook would become much more interesting. Almost fifty percent of the raters chose to use this book again.

Table 8

Descriptive Statistics for Conclusion Sub-sections

Factors	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	SD
Conclusion 1	75	1.00	3.00	2.60	0.76
Conclusion 2	75	1.00	3.00	2.00	0.64
Conclusion 3	75	1.00	3.00	2.40	0.84
Conclusion 4	75	2.00	4.00	2.60	0.94
Valid N(Listwise)					

To answer the second question of the study: "What are the upsides and downsides of *Learning to Read*

English for Pre-University Students?", the following section introduces a number of advantages and disadvantages of *the book*:

- The price of the textbook is reasonable.
- The textbook is easily accessible.
- The textbook contains some guidance in the introduction about how the textbook can be used to the utmost advantage.
- The materials objectives are apparent to both the teacher and students.
- The activities utilize individual as well as pair and group work.
- The textbook pays attention to the sub-skills of reading.
- The language used in the reading passages is authentic.
- The language is at the right level for Pre-University students.
- The progression of grammar points and vocabulary items is appropriate.
- The subject and content of the book is partially relevant to the students' needs as English language learners.
- There is sufficient variety in the subject and content of the book.
- The materials are not culturally biased and they do not portray any negative stereotypes.
- The textbook fulfills the needs of the students for reading comprehension.

However, the series possesses the following drawbacks:

- The textbook is rather an old publication.
- There is no teacher's guide, workbook, and audio-tapes accompanying the textbook.
- The layout and design is not appropriate and clear.
- The textbook is not organized effectively.
- The glossary does not include the word's definition.
- There are not adequate review sections.
- There is not an adequate set of evaluation quizzes or testing suggestions included.
- There is not an even distribution of free vs. controlled exercises and tasks that focus on both fluent and accurate production in the textbook.
- The activities do not encourage sufficient communicative and meaningful practice.
- The grammar points and vocabulary items are not introduced in motivating and realistic contexts.
- The activities do not promote creative, original, and independent responses.
- The tasks are not conducive to the internalization of newly introduced language.
- The textbook's activities cannot be modified or supplemented easily.
- The materials do not include and focus on the skills that the students need to practice.
- The materials do not provide an appropriate balance of the four language skills.
- The textbook does not highlight and practice natural pronunciation (i.e. stress and intonation).
- The practice of individual skills is not integrated into the practice of other skills.
- Most of the language used in the textbook is not authentic – i.e. like real-life English.
- The grammar points are not presented with brief and easy examples and explanations.
- There is no language functions included in the book.
- The language of the book does not represent a diverse range of registers and accents.
- The subject and content of the textbook is not generally realistic.
- The subject and content of the textbook is not interesting, challenging, and motivating enough.
- The textbook is not appropriate for language-learning aims of the students if we consider all four skills of language as our aim.

6. Conclusion and implications

The current study attempted to evaluate *Learning to Read English for Pre-University Students* against Litz (2000) Textbook Evaluation form. It investigated the upsides and downsides of the book. The results showed that the textbook benefits from features like low price, accessibility, clarity of materials objectives, developing reading sub-skills, and progression of grammar points. Meanwhile, the researchers observed some drawbacks in the textbook like lack of teacher's guide, workbook, and audio-tapes, word definitions in glossary, review sections, evaluation quizzes, and paucity of communicative and meaningful practice through language skill activities.

Results of this study have pedagogical implications. They can also guide material developers in devising

appropriate textbooks for language learners. By adding more communicative activities, utilizing tasks which integrate different skills and components of language, providing a balance of the four language skills through relevant exercises, developing natural pronunciation, taking advantage of more authentic language, including more realistic personalized exercises, and including a diverse range of registers and accents the textbook would become more interesting, challenging, and motivating. As for any other textbook, the prominent role of the teachers as the managers of the textbook should be highlighted.

The researchers believe that the findings of this study will in general shed light on book evaluation against standardized questionnaires. It will most probably help material developers in the Ministry of Education of Iran consider the drawbacks of the book and revise it accordingly to meet the students' communicative needs.

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