

## ***An Analysis of English Textbooks Used at Iranian Guidance Schools in Terms of Bloom's Taxonomy***

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This study explored different types of learning objectives inherent in Iranian guidance school English textbooks from the viewpoint of Bloom's taxonomy. The primary data in this study were the English textbooks taught in Iranian guidance schools at the present time. The study used Bloom's taxonomy of educational objectives (1956) in analyzing the material found in Iranian guidance school English textbooks. A coding scheme was developed to make it possible for the researcher to use Bloom's taxonomy in codifying the data. The data was then analyzed to detect trends in the cognitive demands inherent in the above-mentioned material. Results from the codification of a total of 351 tasks and exercises showed that all of the items were concentrated in the first three levels of Bloom's taxonomy which are referred to as the lower levels of cognitive skills. In addition, a significant difference was found between the textbooks in their inclusion of different levels of cognitive skills. The results of this study can act as a guide to educational decision-makers, syllabus designers, and textbook developers who wish to modify their practice and materials in such a way as to achieve higher levels of learning objectives.

**Key words: Textbook evaluation, Bloom's taxonomy, educational objectives, Iranian guidance school**

## INTRODUCTION

Textbooks have a major influence on students' learning and the nature and type of learning activities used in the classroom. Many English teachers rely heavily on textbooks for teaching and giving assignments.

According to Educational Product Information Exchange (EPIE) (1976, cited in Rawadieh, 1998), nearly two thirds of classroom time is spent using written materials, particularly textbooks. Apple (1986) estimated that elementary and secondary students spend at least 75 percent of their time in classrooms using textbooks.

As McDonough and Shaw (2003) state, the ability to evaluate textbooks effectively is a very important professional activity for all EFL teachers. This is partly because there are very few teachers who do not use published course materials at some stage in their teaching career.

They go on to suggest that there are two scenarios in this respect. The first one is to do with contexts where teachers are under considerable professional and financial pressure to select a good textbook from among the large number of those available in the market. In this case the evaluation of current materials is of great importance as an inappropriate choice may waste funds and time and it will impose a demotivating effect on students and possibly other colleagues. The second scenario concerns teachers working with materials given to them by a ministry or similar body. Even though such teachers will not have to evaluate to adopt materials, they may well be interested in evaluation as a useful process in its own right, which will give them insights into the organizational principles of the materials and will help them to keep up with developments in the field.

Nevertheless as Dickins (1994) notes, "The materials evaluation literature has tended to concentrate more or less exclusively on the analysis of the product (level of workplan)." This means that teachers carry out the evaluation of textbooks themselves in order to determine which materials best suit their purposes. McDonough and Shaw (2003) in their model for materials evaluation, for instance, distinguish between internal and external

evaluation, but both aspects refer to evaluation at the level of workplan and the extent to which a reviewer thinks that a book will do what it claims to do. This sort of evaluation practice can be achieved via numerous checklists and guidelines built around numerous aspects of teaching and student-teacher interactions.

Tomlinson (2002, p. 69) points to two of the problems encountered with this undertaking. “The first one is the subjective nature of many of the instruments of evaluation with the view of the researcher often determining what is measured and valued. The second problem is that many instruments have been for pre-use evaluation (and are therefore speculative) and they are too demanding of time and expertise for teachers to use.” Similarly as Byrd (2001) notes, making a comprehensive yet reasonable checklist for evaluation of textbooks is an enormous challenge that requires different lists for different types of courses in different settings.

“Therefore, recently there have been attempts to help teachers to conduct action research on the materials they use and to develop instruments for use in conducting pre-use, whilst-use and post-use evaluation.”, (Tomlinson, 2002, p. 69).

Ellis (1997), for instance, suggests a retrospective evaluation designed to examine materials that have actually been used. Teachers can do this by investigating specific teaching tasks. Finally, he concludes that task evaluations constitute a kind of action research that can contribute to reflective practice in teaching.

Donovan (1998) proposes “piloting” as one form of materials evaluation which is done before a set of materials is published formally and widely. The process of piloting has three interesting features. First of all, the writers who have developed the materials are distanced from the piloting process and the teachers who participate in piloting do not know the materials writers in order to eliminate any chance of bias. Second, the teachers are free to use these materials or not. Third, the teachers participating in the piloting process have the option to use the newly developed materials as supplements and not necessarily the main material of the course.

Masuhara (1998) emphasizes teachers' needs as an important starting point in materials development and evaluation. They suggest that teacher characteristics, such as personality, psychological characteristics, teaching styles, and preference, are especially important with relation to materials. These characteristics should therefore be taken into account in evaluating teaching materials.

Therefore, there seems to be no one fixed procedure for conducting textbook evaluation studies. What is important, however, is, as Cunningsworth (1996) notes, "to limit the number of criteria used, the number of questions asked, to manageable proportions. Otherwise we risk being swamped in a sea of detail". Tomlinson (1999) also suggests that "the obvious but important point is that there can be no one model framework for the evaluation of materials; the framework used must be determined by the reasons, objectives and circumstances of the evaluation".

Most of the studies on textbook evaluation have focused on analyzing the content of textbooks (dialogues, reading texts and activities) to see how much they represent special knowledge such as language functions, speech acts, etc. However, few studies have attempted to investigate the learning objectives underpinning textbooks. The present study, as such, explores different types of learning objectives chosen for Iran's guidance school English textbooks from the viewpoint of Bloom's taxonomy.

### **Objectives of the Study**

This study sets out several objectives. First of all, it seeks to describe the guidance school English textbooks from the perspective of their content structure and objectives. Secondly, it explores different types of learning objectives chosen for each textbook from the viewpoint of Bloom's taxonomy. Findings of the second objective will make it clear which one of the six levels of learning is more dominant and emphasized in each textbook. The third objective is to suggest some guidelines to improve the quality of guidance school English textbooks based upon the findings of the study.

The study, therefore, seeks to answer the following questions:

1. What are the learning objectives in guidance school English textbooks and what levels of learning do they satisfy?
2. Are all six levels of learning equally represented in guidance school English textbook materials?
3. Does the use of levels of learning in guidance school English textbooks differ among the three textbooks?
4. What suggestions can be made for the English textbooks to be more effective in achieving higher levels of learning?

### **Theoretical Framework**

This study uses the taxonomy of educational objectives as its theoretical framework. The Taxonomy of Educational Objectives, often called Bloom's Taxonomy, is a classification of the different objectives and skills that educators set for students (learning objectives). The taxonomy was proposed in 1956 by Benjamin Bloom, an educational psychologist at the University of Chicago.

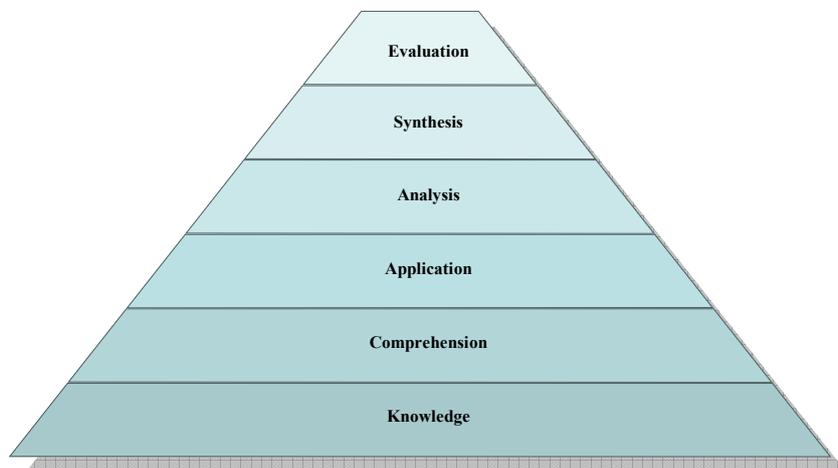
Bloom (1956), stated that the decisions on materials to be used will be determined by the experience the teacher has had in the past in working toward particular objectives. He ultimately proposed that any instructional task stimulates one of the three psychological domains: cognitive, affective, or psychomotor.

The cognitive domain deals with the knowledge and understanding of concepts or ideas. The affective domain is concerned with the attitudes and feelings that result from the learning process, and lastly, the psychomotor domain involves manipulative or physical skills. The present study is concerned with the cognitive domain since it examines the cognitive skill sets within Iranian guidance school English textbooks.

Within the cognitive domain Bloom (1956) identified six levels from the simple recall or recognition of facts, as the lowest level, through increasingly more complex and abstract mental levels, to the highest order which is classified as evaluation. The following describe the six levels of Bloom's taxonomy.

- Level 1: “Knowledge”, includes any question that requires only the retrieval of information from memory.
- Level 2: “Comprehension”, goes beyond just memory retrieval to involve some additional knowledge about the item.
- Level 3: “Application”, involves a specified situation and either computations or decisions using known methods.
- Level 4: “Analysis”, involves a specified situation that usually requires calculations, analyses, computations involving more than one method, and classifications.
- Level 5: “Synthesis”, involves more complex and involved situations. Problems involving relatively large amounts of data with more than one correction or projection are included in Level 5.
- Level 6: “Evaluation”, normally includes analyses or decisions that require the use of discussions, arguments, or justifications.

Figure 1 presents the hierarchy of the six levels of Bloom's taxonomy.



**FIGURE 1**  
**The Six Learning Levels of Bloom's Taxonomy**  
Modified from: <http://www.eecs.usma.edu/cs383/bloom/default.htm>

Using Bloom's framework, a coding scheme was developed to codify different exercises, tasks and activities in guidance school English textbooks. A copy of the coding scheme can be found in the appendix.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

The cognitive skill sets that students practice in English courses are largely dependent on learning activities that textbook authors choose to embed in textbooks. In other words, if instructors rely heavily on activities from the text, the cognitive skills embedded in English textbooks may have a significant effect on the learning that occurs in a course. If mostly low-level learning skills are incorporated into these activities, there is substantial risk that mostly low-level learning will occur.

Most of the time literature has demonstrated a lack of higher-order levels of learning and a preponderance of lower-level activities in most textbooks. Santos (1968), for instance, investigated reading questions in seven Philippine basal readers in the third through sixth grades. He found an overemphasis on recall (knowledge) questions and significant lack of higher-level questions.

Hoeppel (1980) analyzed the questions found in reading skills development books used in Maryland's community colleges according to Bloom's taxonomy. The study showed that 99 percent of the questions were categorized within the two lowest levels of thinking (knowledge and comprehension) whereas very little stimulation of higher levels of thinking was offered via those questions.

Amin (2004) used Bloom's taxonomy to investigate the learning objectives of General Persian and General English language courses by examining the textbooks, exams, and instructor's views at Shiraz University. She found higher levels of cognitive complexity in general Persian course in contrast to the general English course which emphasized lower levels of cognitive processes.

In addition, Davidson and Baldwin (2005) investigated the textbooks used in accounting courses based upon Bloom's taxonomy of educational objectives. They found that Bloom's levels of learning were not equally represented in accounting textbooks materials. They also found a lack of attention to the two highest levels of cognitive ability in all accounting textbooks used.

Accordingly, in this study, the researcher focuses on English textbook activities such as questions, exercises and problems. Because these materials can play such a major role in the cognitive skill-set that students develop in English courses, it is important to assess the skill levels embedded therein. The researcher is interested in whether English-course learning activities encompass a sufficiently wide range of intellectual and cognitive skills.

In Iran twelve years of education is offered at three levels: primary school (5 years), guidance school (3 years), and high school (4 years). In the first year of the guidance school curriculum, Iranian students are offered their first English course. Since for most students this is their first experience with learning a foreign language, special care is needed in setting the objectives and designing activities which offer higher levels of learning. Therefore investigating the learning objectives and the cognitive demands of the activities included in guidance-school English textbooks seems worthwhile.

## **METHODS**

### **The Environment**

In Iran twelve years of public school education is presented at three levels: primary school (5 years), guidance school (3 years), and high school (4 years). The data in this study are the English textbooks taught in Iranian guidance schools at the present time. Therefore, in fact the data sources are textbooks' contents. These are a series of three titled "*Right Path to English Book 1, Book 2, and Book 3*", one for each educational year.

## **Coding Scheme**

This study uses a coding scheme, based on Bloom's taxonomy, to codify, classify, and analyze the content of the textbooks. The purpose of developing the coding scheme is to make it possible for the researcher to use Bloom's taxonomy in analyzing the material found in Iranian public school English textbooks. The analysis is done to detect trends in the cognitive demands inherent in the above-mentioned material.

The coding scheme is based on the cognitive domain of the Bloom's taxonomy. Accordingly, it represents six levels from the simple recall or recognition of facts, as the lowest level, through increasingly more complex and abstract mental levels of synthesis and evaluation.

The coding categories are labeled: 1) knowledge 2) comprehension 3) application 4) analysis 5) synthesis 6) evaluation. Each coding category includes examples for each level, key words that represent intellectual activity on each level and sample task rubrics.

## **Data Analysis**

After codifying the materials, different parts of the textbooks and the frequency of each one of the six levels of learning in each textbook were identified. In addition, the data were analyzed so that it will be clear which one of the six levels of learning is more dominant and emphasized in each textbook.

## **Reliability of the Coding Scheme**

The classification of items into one of the six levels of Bloom's taxonomy is a crucial task and many researchers have found this a difficult process (Rawadieh, 1998). This is probably due to the fact that the border lines among the six levels are fuzzy and sometimes tend to overlap. In addition, sometimes one task or item may cover more than one level. A task, for

example, may tap learner's comprehension and, at the same time, ask them to apply their understanding to a new situation. In this case it would be difficult to choose between one of the two levels.

To solve the problem, Rawadieh, (1998) conducted multiple training sessions using practice items in order to obtain a sufficient degree of inter-rater reliability. Accordingly, the researcher in this study conducted two kinds of reliability analysis, namely, intra and inter-coder reliability with regard to the coding scheme. To ensure intra-rater reliability, 10 percent of the data from three textbooks (21 pages) were selected randomly. The data, then, was coded twice by the researcher in a two-week time span and the degree of consistency in the two coding attempts was found to be 1.00. In addition, a colleague was trained to code the 10 percent data and the agreement between his coding and that the researcher used as the inter-coder reliability was found to be 0.93.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### Textbook Features

Three textbooks entitled "*Right Path to English*" are used in Iranian guidance schools during three years one for each educational year.

Table 1 presents some of the features of the three textbooks.

**TABLE 1**  
**General Outlook of the Guidance School English Textbooks**

Guidance School English Textbooks	NO. of Pages	NO. of Lessons	Average Word Count
Book 1	66	10	19
Book 2	97	10	43
Book 3	104	11	131
Average	89	10.33	64

Table 1 shows the number of pages and lessons in each textbook. Each

lesson starts with a small dialogue and moves on to the tasks and exercises. As the table 1 reveals the average length of these dialogues which shows the number of words in each dialogue (word count) is calculated for each textbook.

### Tasks and Exercises in Textbooks

Dialogues in each lesson are followed by a few tasks and exercises. Table 2 shows how these exercises are labeled and what skills and components they are trying to tap.

**TABLE 2**  
**Tasks and Exercises in Guidance School English Textbooks**

TASK LABEL	ATTENDED SKILLS/ COMPONENTS	SAMPLE RUBRICS
Patterns	Grammar; listening; speaking	Listen and repeat
Oral drills	Grammar; listening; speaking	listen to the tape and substitute the words
		Look at the pictures and answer the questions
Write it down	Grammar; writing	Use <i>a</i> or <i>an</i>
		complete the sentences with the given words
Speak Out	Speaking	Look at the picture and complete the dialogue
Understanding	Reading/ Listening comprehension	Read/ Listen and answer the questions
Read Aloud	Pronunciation	Read aloud the words

What follows is a brief description of these tasks and exercises:

- a) Patterns: A new grammatical structure is introduced in each lesson and students are supposed to listen to the tape and repeat some sentences containing the new

structure. Where possible, these sentences are accompanied by illustrations. Repetition seems to have been equated with speaking and the exercise attempts to enhance students' listening and speaking abilities as well as their grammatical awareness.

- b) Oral drills: This exercise includes a series of substitution drills. Students are asked to listen to the tape and substitute the words in the pattern sentences. In some of the lessons this part also includes a section which asks students to look at the pictures and follow the model pattern. This again is to help learners practice the new grammatical structure and enhance their listening/speaking ability.
- c) Write it down: As the name suggests, in this exercise students are required to write down their answers to some questions or complete some sentences. The questions and sentences are in line with the introduced grammatical pattern.
- d) Speak out: Contrary to the name in this exercise, students are asked to look at a picture and complete a dialogue or answer some questions. This rather seems to be a sentence completion exercise which is got more to do with practising writing and is not a real speaking task. Here again they are supposed to follow the introduced grammatical pattern.
- e) Understanding: This exercise is absent in Book 1. However it is seen in the four final lessons of Book 2 as well as all through Book 3. In one part the exercise follows the initial dialogues where students are asked to listen to the dialogue and answer some comprehension questions. In another section, yet, the exercise follows the end of chapter reading passage and the students are required to answer comprehension questions after reading the passage.
- f) Read aloud: This is the final exercise in each lesson. Students are asked to read aloud a few words with the specific pronunciation point printed in bold font.

Four sample tasks are presented in appendix II in order to exemplify the kinds of tasks and exercises used in the textbooks.

The following table, Table 3, presents the percentage of these tasks and exercises within each of the three textbooks.

**TABLE 3**  
**Tasks and Exercises in Guidance School English Textbooks**

Guidance School English Textbooks	Patterns	Oral drills	Write it down	Speak Out	Understanding	Read Aloud
Book 1	8 (11.59%)	24 (34.78%)	19 (27.53%)	12 (17.39%)	0 (0%)	6 (8.69%)
Book 2	17 (14.28%)	35 (29.41%)	31 (26.05%)	20 (16.80%)	6 (5.04%)	10 (8.40%)
Book 3	14 (8.80%)	52 (32.70%)	43 (27.04%)	17 (10.69%)	22 (13.83%)	11 (6.91%)
Average	13 (11.55%)	37 (32.29%)	31 (26.87%)	16 (14.69%)	9 (6.29%)	9 (8%)

### Comparison of Tasks and Exercises

Chi-Square test results yields an 18.52 value with 10 degrees of freedom and show that there is a statistically significant difference between tasks and exercises in the three guidance school English textbooks. This is shown in table 4.

**TABLE 4**  
**Chi Square Test Results for Tasks and Exercises**

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	18.525(a)	10	.047
Likelihood Ratio	23.181	10	.010
Linear-by-Linear Association	1.547	1	.214
N of Valid Cases	347		

As Table 3 indicates the highest percentage (32.29%) belongs to oral drills, whereas the lowest percentage belongs to understanding (6.29%) and read aloud (8%). No single exercise has been devoted to practising vocabulary and very little attention has been paid to comprehension and pronunciation practices. To learn English, as the authors suggest to the learners in the preface of Book 1, students should listen, repeat and practice in proper time.

They go on to propose the natural approach for learning a language is listening, speaking, reading, and writing.

The books' main concern, then, is to teach grammar directly and inculcate the structural patterns through repetition, dialogues and substitution drills. Therefore, the overall methodology used in guidance school English textbooks is in line with the principles of audio-lingual method where structural patterns are introduced first and then manipulative drills follow which should be learned through imitation and repetition. The greatest burden on students is to repeat and memorize.

These results are in line with several studies pointed by Crawford (2002) such as Nunan (1989) who also found a failure to present appropriate and realistic language models and Kaplan & Knutson (1993) who referred to a failure to address discourse competence in the textbooks analyzed.

In addition, the results are in line with Khormaei (2005) who also found that there is too much emphasis on grammatical rules in the current Iranian high school English textbooks and Irajii (2007) who criticizes New Interchange series because the series do not follow the principles of communicative and task-based approaches.

To compensate for the pitfalls present, Khormaei (2005) proposes several activities, such as comparing lexical sets, comparing collocations in Persian and English, and identifying particular patterns of words. She believes that these activities can raise learners' awareness of the significant lexical items, and encourage them to analyze the language and learn from their own findings.

Few would disagree with Crawford (2002) who believes that effective classroom materials including textbooks must reflect the principles which are in line with our present understanding of learning in general and language learning in particular. Obviously this understanding is beyond mere structural pattern practice.

In the next part, different types of learning objectives incorporated in each textbook from the viewpoint of Bloom's taxonomy are explored.

## Learning Objectives in Textbooks

The results from the codification of the whole tasks and exercises in guidance school English textbooks are presented in Table 5 below. This amounts to a total of 351 tasks and exercises. For the items that have more than one part, the researcher evaluated each part separately.

**TABLE 5**  
**Summary Totals and Percentage of Task and Exercises Classified According to Bloom's Taxonomy**

Bloom's Level	Frequency	Percentage	Cumulative Percentage
Knowledge (level 1)	92	26.2	26.2
Comprehension (level 2)	28	8	34.2
Application (level 3)	231	65.8	100
Analysis (level 4)	0	0	100
Synthesis (level 5)	0	0	100
Evaluation (level 6)	0	0	100
Total	351	100	

As indicated in Table 5, level 3 (application) was the most common item, with a percentage of 65.8% of the items. The most frequent task observed in this level was looking at the pictures and completing the corresponding sentences. The next most common items were at levels 1 and 2 (knowledge and comprehension), with 26.2% and 8% each. The least frequencies were found at the three higher levels of learning: level 4 (analysis), level 5 (synthesis), and level 6 (evaluation) with no contribution in the items analyzed.

Overall, it was found that all of the items were concentrated in the first three levels of Bloom's taxonomy which are referred to as the lower levels of cognitive skills. Not a single item appears in the three higher levels of

learning objectives in Bloom's taxonomy.

### **Comparison of Levels of Learning**

Chi-square test results yielded a test statistic of 184.12 with 2 degrees of freedom. The three higher levels of learning were not included in chi-square analysis since the frequency of items for each one of these levels was zero. The results manifest that there is a statistically meaningful difference between Bloom's levels of learning in guidance school English textbooks. In other words, Bloom's levels of learning are not equally represented in guidance school English textbooks. This is apparent in table 6.

**TABLE 6**  
**Chi Square Test Results to Compare Bloom's Levels of Learning**

	Overall levels
Chi-Square(a)	184.120
df	2
Asymp. Sig.	.000

These results are in line with Hoepfel (1980) who analyzed the questions found in reading skills development books used in Maryland's community colleges according to Bloom's taxonomy and Santos (1968) who investigated reading questions in seven Philippine basal readers in the third through sixth grades. Both studies found an overemphasis on the two lowest levels of thinking (knowledge and comprehension) and very little stimulation of higher levels of thinking and significant lack of higher-level questions.

In addition, results correspond to that of McDonald (2003) who pointed to the writing that students are asked to do simply as a task to recall and report what they know and he called for a need for students to analyze, synthesize, and evaluate the information they receive. Davidson and Baldwin (2005), too, found that Bloom's levels of learning were not equally represented in accounting textbooks materials.

The fact that guidance school English textbooks' materials only managed

to satisfy the three lower levels of cognitive complexity (knowledge, comprehension, and application) can be attributed to the learners' proficiency level. It is assumed that students enter the guidance school, with no previous experience in learning a foreign language. Therefore, they are supposed to be beginner learners of English. The learners' low proficiency level hinders achieving higher levels of cognitive complexity. Nevertheless, Crawford (2002) believes that textbooks need to engage language learners cognitively. This being the case, we can consider it as a deficiency of guidance school English textbooks.

It should be born in mind that we not only want our students to know the content of textbooks but also to obtain cognitive skills necessary for them to be autonomous learners and take responsibility for their own future learning experiences.

In the next part, comparisons are made between the guidance school English textbooks with respect to the learning objectives they pursue.

### Comparison of Learning Objectives among the Textbooks

Table 7 compares the three guidance school English textbooks with regard to Bloom's levels of learning.

**TABLE 7**  
**Learning Objectives Among Guidance School English Textbooks**

Textbooks	Knowledge (level 1)	Comprehension (level 2)	Application (level 3)	Analysis (level 4)	Synthesis (level 5)	Evaluation (level 6)
<i>Book 1</i>	23 (31.5%)	0 (0%)	50 (68%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
<i>Book 2</i>	33 (28.07%)	9 (6.89%)	77 (65.04%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
<i>Book 3</i>	34 (22.01%)	24 (14.83%)	101 (64.16%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
<i>Average</i>	30 (26.2%)	11 (8%)	76 (65.8%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)

The following are three examples to show how the exercises in the three

textbooks relate to domains of knowledge, comprehension, and application in Bloom's taxonomy. The first one is an example from book one, the second example is from book two, and the third one is from book three.

*Sample Task from Book One*

The following example is taken from English book one, lesson six (p. 29). It is titled "Speak Out" and students are required to apply the information they have to a new activity. Therefore it is regarded to belong to the third level in Bloom's taxonomy, namely, the level of "application".

Speak Out:  
A. Ask and answer. Follow the example.  
Example: Mina/ student  
A: Is Mina a student?  
B: Yes, she is. She is a student.

↓

**Application**

1. It/ blackboard  
A: .....?  
B:.....

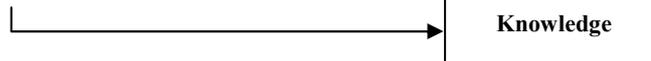
2. they/ chairs  
A: .....?  
B:.....

*Sample Task from Book Two*

This example is taken from book two, lesson one (p. 11). The students are asked to recall information from memory about colors and use this information to match the sentences with the corresponding pictures. This exercise is thus labeled as the lowest level in the Bloom's taxonomy, namely the level of "knowledge".

Write It Down:

E. Match these sentences with the pictures:



1. John has a green shirt.
2. Jim has a blue ball.
3. Sara has a brown bag.
4. I have a yellow dress.
5. They have a black car.



*Sample Task from Book Three*

The following example from English book three, lesson ten (p. 83) asks the students to read a passage and answer a set of questions based on their understanding. Therefore it is codified as comprehension which is the second level of Bloom's taxonomy.

**Reading**

“Mr. Kamali and his family are from Tehran. They now live in Birjand. They had a difficult life in Tehran. They think people in small towns have a happy life. They don't have many of the problems that people have in big cities. There are not many cars in the streets. And they don't spend a lot of time in the heavy traffic every day. They can get the things they need easily and very fast. People are not always in a hurry. They have a lot of free time. They can visit their relatives and friends. People are not very busy in small towns. And they help you when you need them.”

Now answer these questions.

1. Where is Mr.Karimi from?
2. Where is he living now?
3. Does he enjoy his life in Birjand?
4. Is life easy in big cities?
5. Are people busy in small towns?

**Comprehension**

Chi square test results gave a statistical value of 15.07 with 4 degrees of freedom (since no item was associated with the three higher levels of learning that is levels of analysis, synthesis, and evaluation, these were left out of the analysis) which show that there is a statistically significant difference between the three guidance school English textbooks in terms of different levels in Bloom's taxonomy of learning objectives. These results are shown in table 8 below.

**TABLE 8**  
**Chi-Square Test results to Compare Learning Objectives among the Textbooks**

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	15.074(a)	4	.005
Likelihood Ratio	20.185	4	.000
Linear-by-Linear Association	.237	1	.626
N of Valid Cases	351		

As table 7 indicates Book 1 and Book 2 have the highest proportion of items at level 1, the level of knowledge (31.5% and 28.57%, respectively). Book 3 has the highest proportions at level 2, the level of comprehension (13.28%). However, no item has been dedicated to this level in Book 1. All of the three books pay more or less the same amount of attention to the third level which is the level of application. As the table shows, however, no item was found in the three highest levels of learning objectives within the three textbooks.

These results are in line with Davidson and Baldwin (2005) who also found that a differently authored series had somewhat different proportions of

materials at the six levels of Bloom's taxonomy, but that very little accounting textbooks material is at the two highest levels of Bloom's learning objectives.

## **CONCLUSION**

### **Concluding Remarks**

It seems that there are no clear learning objectives identified by the ministry of education and/or authors for Iranian guidance school English textbooks. Findings suggest that guidance school English textbooks seem to be well ordered with regard to the reading ease of dialogues and reading passages. That is, in the first year since students are supposedly new to the English language, and the dialogues are very easy to follow. Later as they proceed to the second and third year in the guidance school, the textbooks become more difficult and therefore the readability index decreases.

In addition, the overall methodology of the textbooks, that is, to teach grammar directly by introducing the structural patterns and then presenting manipulative drills, ignored important aspects of language such as vocabulary and communicative activities. Obviously few would disagree with Crawford (2002) who believes that effective classroom materials including textbooks must reflect the principles which are in line with our present understanding of learning in general and language learning in particular. Obviously this understanding is beyond mere structural pattern practice.

It seems that teaching English in Iran public schools is thought to be equal to other subject matters; while language teaching should be different. Being able to communicate in a language requires more than mastering linguistic structures. Students may know the rules of linguistic usage, but they may be unable to use the language. In short being able to communicate requires more than linguistic competence and language textbooks should aim at developing communicative competence.

The fact that guidance school English textbooks' materials only managed to satisfy the three lower levels of cognitive complexity can be attributed to the learners' proficiency level. It is assumed that students enter the guidance school with no previous experience in learning a foreign language. Therefore, they are supposed to be beginner learners of English. The learners' low proficiency level hinders achieving higher levels of cognitive complexity. Nevertheless, Crawford (2002) believes that textbooks need to engage language learners cognitively. This being the case, we can consider it as a deficiency of guidance school English textbooks.

It should be born in mind that we not only want our students to know the content of textbooks but also to obtain cognitive skills necessary for them to be autonomous learners and take responsibility for their own future learning experiences.

### **Implications**

The following practical implications which are in line with the results of this study can be offered with regard to Iranian guidance school English courses:

Firstly, assigning homework from questions, exercises, or tasks will result in very different exposure to material of the various levels. However, since most guidance school English textbooks' material concentrates on the three lower levels of learning objectives, instructors are advised to avoid the practice of making assignments only from these textbooks. If students are to be exposed to material at the highest level of learning (evaluation), it is essential that a reasonable number of tasks be assigned, even if the time required to complete these tasks is substantially greater than the time needed for other types of material. As Bloom's learning theory is based on the assumption that the six learning levels are progressive and that movement to higher levels depends on successful ability in the lower levels, instructors will need to assign questions with a range of learning levels to help students develop their higher-learning abilities.

Secondly, when we consider the fact that students should be exposed to material at the highest levels of learning objectives, more higher-level textbook material seems to be required. Textbooks should be revised to include some up-to-date and challenging tasks and exercises so that students are pushed towards higher levels of cognitive abilities.

In addition, as the results of this study indicated, guidance school English textbooks gave priority to teaching grammatical patterns directly and little attention was paid to other skills and components. It is recommended that other skills should not be neglected and exercises be devised for students to practice these skills besides others. Vocabulary, reading and writing are important and should be more focused upon in the textbooks.

Finally, one should bear in mind that low proficiency level should not act as a barrier to achieve higher levels of learning objective. Supplementary materials such as films, games, and short stories can be helpful in bringing about motivation and moving away from the routine practice of structural patterns.

### **Suggestions for Further Research**

The results of this study make a variety of interesting suggestions and offer potential for further research.

First of all, the study raises an important question. If not all of the desired learning-levels are emphasized in current guidance school English textbooks, should they be? If not, which ones should be? Is it reasonable to expect analytical and evaluative skills to be present in guidance school English courses? These are the questions which need more careful consideration and exploration.

Another suggestion for further research would be to see how guidance school English courses should be coordinated to assure that students learn the critical skills and knowledge at the proper level.

In addition, guidance school English textbooks can be compared and contrasted with textbooks used in Iranian secondary education to see whether

higher proficiency levels would result in the use of more sophisticated tasks and exercises within these textbooks so that higher levels of learning objectives are satisfied.

Finally, different studies can be conducted to examine learning objectives using Bloom's taxonomy in other English courses in the Iranian educational system.

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### APPENDIX I

#### Coding Scheme Based on Bloom's Taxonomy of Educational Objectives

Level	Definition	Key Words and Description	Sample Task Rubrics
Knowledge	Recalling data or information	Key Words: define, describe, identify, label, list, match, name, outline, reproduce, select, state  Description: The student recalls and/or quotes information from memory	Fill in the blanks with the appropriate words found in the text
Comprehension	Understanding the meaning, translation, and interpretation of instructions and problems; Stating a problem in one's own words	Key Words: estimate, explain, extend, generalize, infer, interpret, paraphrase, predict, rewrite, summarize, translate  Description: The student translates, comprehends, or interprets information he has received	Answer the questions according to the reading
Application	Using a concept in a new situation or unprompted use of an abstraction; Applying what was	Key Words: apply, change, compute, demonstrate, discover, manipulate, modify, predict, prepare,	Make sentences using the given pattern and words

	learned in the classroom into novel situations.	produce, relate, show, solve, use Description: The student applies the new information in his/her future assignments or classroom activities	
Analysis	Separating material or concepts into component parts so that its organizational structure may be understood	Key Words: analyze, breaks down, compare, contrast, discriminate, distinguish, identify, illustrate, infer, outline, relate, select, separate  Description: The student compares and contrasts a new structure to the ones previously learned	Compare the following words to see how they sound differently
Synthesis	Putting parts together to form a whole, with emphasis on creating a new meaning or structure	Key Words: categorize, create, devise, design, explain, organize, plan, arrange, reconstruct, relate, revise, rewrite, summarize, tell, write  Description: The student integrates information from several sources to solve a specific problem or to answer a question	Make sentences using the scrambled words
Evaluation	Making judgments about the value of ideas or materials	Key Words: appraise, conclude, critique, evaluate, judge,	On the scale, show how you evaluate the

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justify, relate, support	words.
Description: The student selects the most effective solution to a problem and is able to justify it	Which of the following is the best answer to the question? Why?

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## APPENDIX II

### Sample Tasks and Exercises in Guidance School English Textbooks

1. English book two, lesson seven (p. 59):

#### *Oral Drills*

*Close your books. Listen to the tape and substitute the words in the pattern sentences.*

“I see Ali every day.”

- |        |                    |
|--------|--------------------|
| 1. He  | 5. watch / TV      |
| 2. We  | 6. play / football |
| 3. She | 7. go / to school  |
| 4. I   | 8. study / English |

2. English book two, lesson two (p. 17):

#### **Write It Down:**

*Complete these sentences with “**There is**” or “**There are**”.*

1. .... a car in the picture.
2. .... many trees in the park.

3. .... twelve oranges in the basket.
4. .... a pen on the desk.
5. .... many books in the library.

3. English book three, lesson nine (p. 73):

**Dialogue**

**Ali:** Hello.

**Reza:** Hello. Is that Ali?

**Ali:** Yes. Who's speaking?

**Reza:** This is Reza.

**Ali:** Hello, Reza. What are you doing?

**Reza:** I'm studying.

**Ali:** English or Persian?

**Reza:** English.

**Ali:** Do you study English every day?

**Reza:** No, not every day. But I'm practising it now.

**Ali:** Oh, mum's calling. Thank you, goodbye.

**Reza:** Goodbye.

**Understanding:**

*Give complete answers orally.*

1. Who's calling Ali?
2. What is Reza doing?
3. Does he practice English every day?
4. Who's talking to Reza?

4. English book one lesson four (p. 21):

**Read Aloud**

He

Tree

Teacher

She

Three

Please

We

Thirteen

Fourteen