An Analytical Evaluation of Iranian High School ELT Textbooks from 1970 to the Present

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Textbooks play a very crucial role in the process of language teaching and learning. The present study carries out an evaluation of two series of ELT textbooks used for teaching English language in Iranian high schools from 1970 to the present. For this purpose, Tucker's (1975) textbook evaluation model is employed. *Graded English* and *Right Path to English* series were compared and contrasted. The advantages and disadvantages of each series were evaluated for pronunciation, grammar, content, and some general criteria on the basis of Tucker's (1975) evaluation system. At the beginning of the two series, there is an introduction that attempts to clarify the intended teaching objectives, but as the results of the study show these objectives have not been realized. Based on the analysis of the two series, there are not considerable differences among *Graded English* and *Right Path to English* as far as the pronunciation criteria are concerned. *Graded English* and *Right Path to English* fall on the positive side of the continuum when it comes to the grammar criteria. This reveals, on the one hand, the fact that they are

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fundamentally based on the structural views of syllabus design, on the other, that *Right Path to English* does not completely correct the inadequacies of *Graded English* as far as the fundamental concepts of syllabus design are concerned. The shortcomings of *Graded English* and *Right Path to English* to accord with the communicative aspects of language teaching – or specifically syllabus design and text construction – are much more revealed in applying the content criteria and especially the criterion which focuses on the appropriateness of contexts and situations. *Graded English* and *Right Path to English* are found to have overemphasized the practice of the linguistic forms, while not many of their language learning activities actually include activities which stimulate or lead to authentic communication and language use. The researchers suggest that in the textbooks, there should be enough opportunity for the learners to communicatively practice the language they are learning.

Key words: English language teaching & learning, text book design, text book evaluation, communication, achievement

INTRODUCTION

Textbooks are important resources for teachers in assisting students to learn every subject including English. They are the foundation of school instruction and the primary source of information for teachers. In Iran, in practice textbooks serve as the basis for much of the language input learners receive and the language practice that takes place in the classroom. For the EFL learners, the textbook becomes the major source of contact they have with the language apart from the input provided by the teacher. Hutchinson and Torres (1994) suggest that the textbook is an almost universal element of English language teaching, and no teaching-learning situation, it seems, is complete until it has its relevant textbook.

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 programmes.

English language is one of the compulsory subjects in the Iranian curriculum. Before the Iranian Revolution, in order to make the situation ideal, English native speakers were being employed to teach English to the students. After the Revolution (1979) due to circumstances, the system has changed thoroughly. In the Ministry of Education an organization has been established to design the textbooks for schools. With respect to the textbooks, it needs to be explained that in Iran all the textbooks for the schools are produced by the Ministry of Education and no alternatives are available. These course books are taught in both private and public schools and all the teachers follow the same syllabus. English language teachers are supposed to cover one book during each educational year. From 1970, two series of locally produced English language text books have been used in Iranian high schools; series of *Graded English* books published by the Ministry of Education in 1970 and the series of *Right Path to English* books published by the Ministry of Education in 1985.

As far as the review of literature is concerned, in Iran, several projects have been carried out to evaluate textbooks including Ansary and Babaii (2002), Yarmohammadi (2002), and Amalsaleh (2004).

Ansary and Babaii (2002) analyzed a corpus of 10 EFL/ESL textbook reviews plus 10 EFL/ESL textbook evaluation checklists and outlined what they perceived to be the common core features of standard EFL/ESL textbooks. The major categories comprise approach, content presentation, physical make-up, and administration concerns. Each set of the major features of EFL/ESL textbooks consists of a number of subcategories. They concluded the article mentioning that not all of these characteristics would be present in each and every textbook.

Yarmohammadi (2002) evaluated the senior high school textbooks based on a revised version of Tucker's (1975) model. He concluded that these textbooks suffered from a lot of shortcomings: 1. they are not authentic; 2.

English and Persian names are used interchangeably; and 3. oral skills are ignored. At the end, some suggestions were proposed to remedy the shortcomings: 1. In developing new textbooks, textbook developers can be benefited from the findings of this study; they should retain the good qualities and reduce the shortcomings indicated in the study. 2. Textbook developers should try to devise communicative exercises and activities in which the students are actively involved.

Amalsaleh (2004) examined the representation of social factors in three types of textbooks, including junior and senior high school textbooks, based on Van Leeuwen's model (1996). According to the results, generally, the textbooks demonstrated a deferential representation of social factors that tended to portray females as performers belonging to a home context and having limited job opportunities in society. In particular, high school textbooks tended to shape normative views of gender and class relations in which a middle-class urban male was considered to be the norm.

Regarding the studies mentioned, a comprehensive study is still urgently needed to allow a subsequent assessment of the amount of use of different pronunciation points, grammatical structures, and content forms in the Iranian high school English language textbooks.

Objectives

Many teachers and school authorities believe that there are different factors involved in the Iranian students' achievement in English language. One of these factors may refer to the quality and characteristics of textbooks used in the process of English language teaching in the country. The present study is conducted with the hope that knowledge of materials development can help teachers, learners, textbook developers and the educational authorities to find new ways for improving the quality of textbooks and consequently the quality of teaching and learning English in the country's educational system.

The results of the study is hoped to benefit English language teachers, learners, and textbook developers to improve their teaching, learning, and

designing of the textbooks.

As such, the study seeks answers to the following questions:

1. How are the pronunciation points, content, and grammar dealt with in "Graded English" (henceforth: GE) series?
2. How are the pronunciation points, content, and grammar dealt with in "Right Path to English" (henceforth: RPE) series?

METHOD

Materials

The materials of this study are the two locally produced series of English language textbooks used in Iranian high schools since1970, since it was practically impossible to evaluate all the books in the two series, the researchers randomly selected Book Two of high school from every one of these series. Therefore, the materials used were:

1. Book Two from the series of *Graded English* books written by Strain, Manuchehri, and Pazargadi published by the Ministry of Education in 1984 and
2. Book Two from the series of *Right Path to English* books by Birjandi, Nowrozi, and Mahmodi published by the Ministry of Education in 2002.

Instruments

To conduct the evaluation, Tucker's (1975) evaluating model was used. Then, the researchers used the ideas and suggestions of different experienced persons in the field of textbook evaluation both in Iran and abroad -including Tomlinson- and provided a modified version of Tucker's (1975) evaluating model for the study.

Tucker (1975) believes that a system for evaluating textbooks should include

basic linguistic, psychological, and pedagogical principles. Accordingly, he discusses four main categories: pronunciation, grammar, content, and general criteria. Each category has some subdivisions.

The rating scheme used with the model is based on three scales:

1. *The Value Scale (VS)* which shows the relative weight assigned to each one of the mentioned criteria by the evaluator. It consists of a score of 0 to 5.
2. *The Merit Scale (MS)* delineates the evaluator's judgment of the text in relation to any specific criterion. It ranges from 0 through 4 numerically. A score of 0 shows that the evaluator considers the text totally lacking any merit in that respect; conversely, a score of 4 reveals the ideality of the book's merit by a specific criterion.
3. *The Value Merit Product (VMP)*, which is a combination of the importance of the criterion and and the merit of the book.

Modifications on Tucker's Model

Tucker's model focuses on those elements which are generally considered fundemental to a structural syllabus. However, the researchers want to go a bit further and evaluate the textbooks from the standpoint of communicative language learing and teaching. Thus, Tucker's model is modified to fulfill the objectives of this research.

Since this study focuses on pronunciation, grammar, and content of the mentioned textbooks, the general criteria in Tucker's system are not directly relevant. Thus, they are excluded from the version adapted here.

ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

This part presents the analyses and results of the data collected and their interpretations. As noted earlier, Tucker's (1975) modified model is applied to serve the purpose of the study. The data used in this study was collected

through the analysis of *GE* and *RPE* series used for the teaching of English in Iranian high schools.

Pronunciation

In this section, the presentation of pronunciation points in *GE* and *RPE* series are analyzed. The presentation of pronunciation is evaluated on the basis of three criteria: completeness of presentation, appropriateness of presentation, and adequacy of practices.

Pronunciation in GE

Completeness of Presentation

Fries and Pike (Paulston and Bruder, 1976) classify English consonants as follow:

> p, b, t, d, k, g, f, v, θ, ð, s, z, š, ž, h, č, ĵ, m, n, ŋ, r, l, w, y.

The consonants presented in the GE series consist of the following: t, d, v, θ, ð, s, z, ŋ, w.

Considering the consonants of Fries and Pike's system, GE does not present the following consonants: /p/, /b/, /k/, /g/, /f/, / š/, / ž/, /h /, / č /, / ĵ /, /m /, /n /, / r/, / l/, and /y/.

The following initial clusters are also practiced in GE: st, bl, pl, kl, sk, sl, sp, br, dr, gr, fl. But there are some other initial clusters of two and three consonants that are not presented in GE: fr, gl, pr, tr, θr, sw, spr, str.

Vowels

The following vowels are presented and practiced in the GE series: i, i:, u, u:, e, ^, ə.

Considering the Fries-Pike's system, the following vowels are not introduced in GE: æ, o, ɔ. The first two vowels exist in Persian though they are slightly different. The third one does not exist in Persian; therfore, it should have been presented in a series such as GE.

Considering suprasegmentals; stress is treated from the outset in GE series. The stress of almost all the words which have more than one syllable is displayed though only the primary stress is emphasized. Also, sentence-stress and the stress of some expressions-e.g. *Good morning*- are practiced in GE. Two main intonation patterns -rising and falling- of English are dealt with in GE series.

On the whole, in GE, pronunciation is largely identified with the articulation of individual sounds and, to a lesser extent, with the stress and intonation patterns of the target language. Consonants, clusters, vowels, stress, and intonation are presented. However, some important points are missing in the presentation of consonants, clusters, and vowels. English syllabic /m/, /n/, /l/, and /r/ are of much importance. Also, diphthongs, pitch, and juncture are not presented in GE at all. Therefore, the score of the GE's merit – based on the presented rating scheme- would be 2.

Appropriateness of Presentation

As far as the linguistic background of Persian students is concerned, the authors of GE try to present the materials on the basis of a contrastive analysis of Persian and English (Manuchehri, 1971). However, as it was discussed earlier, some of the sounds (syllabic /m/, /n/, /l/, and /r/, etc) which are points of difficulty for Persian students are not dealt with in GE.

Anyhow, the CA of Persian and English sound systems has been the source for the selection and gradation of some of the English sounds in GE. The following segmentals are presented in groups with reference to the above mentioned source:

/i/ and /i:/, / ð / and /d/, /θ/ and /t/, /u:/ and /u/, and /w/ and /v/.

A few segmentals are presented in groups because of their voiced/voiceless distinction. For example, / ð / & /θ/, and /t/ & /d/.

Considering the inappropriate presentation of some English segmentals and also some pronunciation points which are difficult for Persian students, the merit score of GE – based on the presented rating scheme- would be 1.5.

Adequacy of Practice

Repetition drills represent the only manner in which the sound system of English is practiced in GE. The learners are expected to produce the sounds in words without having the opportunity to discriminate between similar sounds. Moreover, all the consonants and vowels are presented in words, but words - and consequently the sounds - are not practiced in sentences.

Tucker (1975) believes that the quantity of materials for pronunciation practice should be adequate. while, /ə/, / ^/, / ŋ /, and /u / sounds are not practiced adequately in GE.

Since pronunciation is practiced through just one technique, and the segmentals are practiced only in words, and finally since the practice of some sounds is not adequate as far as the CA of English and Persian sound systems is concerned, it would be justified to score GE's merit– based on the presented rating scheme- as 1 as far as the adequacy of practice is concerned.

Pronunciation in RPE

Unfortunately, pronunciation is nearly neglected in RPE. There are just a few fragmentary explanations on the pronunciation of present and past tense suffixes. It is explained, for instance that "s" added to third person singular verbs in simple present may sound /z/, /s/, or /Iz/. Also, it is said in RPE that /d/ should be added to voiced final sounds such as in "Listened", etc. Obviously, these linguistic descriptions would not help the learners to learn the English sound system. Therefore, the merit score of pronunciation for RPE– based on the presented rating scheme- would be 0.

Grammar

Grammar in GE and RPE is analyzed and evaluated on the basis of adequacy of pattern inventory, appropriate sequencing, adequacy of drill model and pattern displays, and finally adequacy of practice.

Adequacy of Pattern Inventory

GE

In Book Two, the concentration is on the simple past along with the distinction between mass and count nouns. Also, comparisons – "Ahmad is as old as Mina," "He is taller than …," "She is more beautiful than …" - and two auxiliary verbs (must and may) are presented in Book Two.

Although there are some compound nouns in GE, they are not distinguished from nouns as modifiers. Tucker (1975) believes that such a distinction should be included in any beginning text.

The presentation of grammatical patterns in GE is satisfactory enough to score its merit– based on the presented rating scheme- as 3.

RPE

Book Two offers two tenses (present continuous and simple past), three modal verbs (can, should, may), and distinguishes between mass and count nouns. It seems that the presentation of adjectives, adverbs, prepositions, and possessives in RPE is sufficient as far as the level of the series is concerned. Yet, it presents a few conjunctions in Book 2. It does not differentiate between nouns as modifiers and compound nouns either. Therefore, it would be fair to score RPE's merit– based on the presented rating scheme- as 3.

Appropriate Sequencing

GE

Although the verb "to be" is irregular, in majority of the available texts it

is presented very early because of its very high functional load. GE seems to follow the same order; however, it presents WH questions – e.g. what time is it? – before yes/no questions – e.g. are you a student?

Since WH questions involve more transformations than yes/no questions, it would be more appropriate that the latter precedes the former.

The first four lessons of Book Two review the basic structures introduced in Book One. Mass and count nouns and how many / much questions are the structures presented in lessons 5 and 6. First, mass and count nouns are distinguished; then, how many / much questions are introduced. Although these two successive units show an appropriate sequencing, how many / much questions do not appear in the remaining lessons. Of course, "how many /much questions" do appear in some of the drills in Book Two; nevertheless, their appearance is a mechanical review of these structures. In fact, the learner is only reminded of the structures practiced earlier in the book. Possessive forms, simple past tense, comparison, and some modal verbs make up the basic structures sequenced successively in Book Two.

On the whole, GE presents the structures as isolated and loosely related blocks. Sometimes the blocks have no specific relationship, and it is not clear why they are arranged in this or that way. As such, the merit score of sequencing in GE– based on the presented rating scheme- would be 2.

RPE

Book Two begins with the present continuous tense only in the statement form. Negative and question forms of this tense are not dealt with.

The simple past tense of the verb "to be" with its various forms is presented in lessons 3 and 4. This is a new area which has no relationship with what comes before and after it, because in lessons 5, 6, 7, and 8 adjectives, possessives, mass / count nouns and how much / many questions are introduced. Moreover, all of these structures are constructed in the present tense. After that, the past tense of regular and irregular verbs is dealt with, and finally three modal verbs are introduced.

The structures are presented in isolated blocks. Some of the units could be

switched around without disturbing the order.

In Book Two, there is not a profound sequencing of the grammatical structures. Therefore, the RPE's merit– based on the presented rating scheme- would be scored as 2.

Adequacy of Drill Model and Pattern Displays

GE

Grammar in GE is to be practiced through oral and written drills. Although the instructions to some of the drills specify the modality, various other drills are not often clearly distinguished. The age and the level of the learners require each drill (or group of drills) to be clearly defined and restricted in terms of the appropriate modality. For example, it is not explained how to do drills with titles such as "Change into questions", "Change from 'now' to 'every day'". Moreover, different instructions are used for the same types of drills, e.g. "Complete the following". "Fill in the missing words", "Fill in the blanks". It would more appropriate to use one instruction for similar kinds of drills as far as the age and level of the learners are concerned. Also, drills of the same modality (e.g. oral) should be grouped together so that the learners could discern easily how they should do the drills.

New patterns are usually written under each other. Vertical lines separate identical grammatical structures (e.g. subjects, verbs) so that the learners could discern the identical structures.

Unfortunately, boxes, arrows, and other graphical devices that could help the learners to understand various patterns are not used in GE. Because of the above-cited deficiencies in drill model and pattern displays of GE, its merit score– based on the presented rating scheme- would be 2.

RPE

There are three kinds of drills in RPE. The titles that display these drills are "Oral drills", "Write it down", and "Speak out". Although there are models and examples for most of drills to help the learners discern the

exercises, some of the drills are just clarified by explanations written in English. The age and level of the learners require examples and not just explanations. Basic structures of each lesson are displayed in boxes. The relationships among various patterns and the transformations that any specific structure may involve are illustrated by arrows and small boxes.

From the outset in Book Two, some grammatical terms and explanations are utilized. These are not necessary as far as the level of the learners is concerned. Moreover, the explanations may impel the learners to concentrate more on the grammarian's jargon than on aspects essential for language learning. Some of the drills are accompanied by pictures. And about ten types face in black and red are used in RPE. On the whole, drill models and pattern displays are adequate in RPE, and hence its merit score– based on the presented rating scheme- would be 3.

Adequacy of Practice

GE

Table 1 classifies the drills in GE 2. Moreover, as Table 2 shows, nearly half the drills are of transformation type, in which the learners change some sentences into negative, plural, etc. The drills are numerous, yet since the focus is on transformation type of exercise, they do not represent a variety of drill types.

TABLE 1
Classification of Drills in GE 2

GE: Book2	Mechanical drills	Meaningful drills	Communicative drills	Total
	93	1	9	103

TABLE 2
Range of Various Types of Drills in GE 2

	Types of Drills	Number
Mechanical	Transformation	41
	Verbatim repetition	20
	Completion	11
	Moving slot substitution	11
	Short answer	2
	Integration	4
	Expansion	2
	Single slot substitution	1
	Reduction	1
	Question/answer	0
Meaningful	Completion	0
	Describing pictures	1
	Reply	0
Communicative	Reply	9

On the other hand, all communicative drills in GE are of reply type in which the learners are to answer some WH-questions. In short, the drills in GE are not distributed adequately to cover various types of drills and to provide appropriate opportunity for practicing the structures. It seems that the drills in GE are lengthy. There are drills which consist of twenty items. As far as the level of the learners is concerned, drills of this length are tiresome.

On the whole, there is mainly one class and one type of drills in GE- mechanical and transformational, respectively. Therefore, the GE'S merit score – based on the presented rating scheme- would be 1.

RPE

As tabulated in Table 3, mechanical drills form the majority of the drills in RPE. In fact, Book 2 does not provide enough opportunity for the learners to practice the structures communicatively. Mechanical drills are presented more than meaningful and communicative drills.

Table 4 shows that there are two main types of drills in RPE, completion and single slot substitution. These drills constitute more than half of all the drills in Book 2. Seven types of drills are repeated less than six times in the

book. Although the drills in RPE are more divers than in GE, they are far from being exhaustive. The length of the drills in RPE seems to accord with the age and the level of the learners. There are only 22 (out of 288) drills which consist of 9 to 12 items. Each of the majority of the drills consists of five items.

TABLE 3
Classification of Drills in RPE 2

RPE: Book2	Mechanical drills	Meaningful drills	Communicative drills	Total
	110	16	3	129

TABLE 4
Range of Various Types of Drills in RPE 2

	Types of drills	Frequency
Mechanical	Transformation	28
	Verbatim repetition	11
	Completion	28
	Moving slot substitution	2
	Reply	1
	Integration	1
	Expansion	4
	Single slot substitution	33
	reduction	1
	Word Order	2
Meaningful	Completion	13
	Describing pictures	0
	Reply	1
	Two stage drills	0
	Drawing	1
	Expansion	1
	Transformation	0
Communicative	Reply	3

In summary, there are mainly one class- mechanical- and two types- completion and single slot substitution- of drills in *RPE*. The length of the drills seems appropriate. Nevertheless, *RPE* does not present an adequate number of meaningful and communicative drills. Therefore, its merit score–

based on the presented rating scheme- would be 2.

Content

This section aims at evaluating the *content* of GE and RPE on the basis of functional load, rate and manner of entry and re-entry, and the appropriateness of contexts and situations

Functional Load

GE

Book Two presents expressions such as "I am happy to have you.", "what grade are you in?", "of course", and some other expressions. Of course, these expressions are presented only once and rarely twice throughout the book. The expressions used in naming the months are presented nearly at the end of Book Tow while expressions for naming the days and months must be and could be used much earlier. In other words, GE does not benefit from the structures and expressions appropriately as far as functional load is concerned. Accordingly, its merit score– based on the presented rating scheme- would be 1.

RPE

Various expressions of greeting, leave-taking, and courtesy are introduced throughout Book Two. They are: "Hello", "How are you?", "Fine, thank you", "Not too bad", "Nice to see you", "See you tomorrow", "That's too bad", and "Thank you"

These expressions are presented as formulas, and their structures are not analyzed for the learners. They are presented in the dialogues of each unit; they are often repeated near the end of that unit with some of its words replaced by blanks to be filled in by the learners. These mechanical "fill in the blanks" drills form the only type of exercise for practicing the above-mentioned expression. The simple present tense of "to be" and "to have" is presented before irregular verbs because of their functional load. Both of

these verbs are also re-presented throughout RPE.

In brief, RPE presents some words, expressions, and structures with respect to their functional load. However, RPE overemphasizes greetings and does not provide appropriate opportunities for the learners to practice the introduced functions. Therefore, RPE's merit – based on the presented rating scheme- would be scored as 2.5.

Rate and Manner of Entry and Re-entry

GE

Book Two does not present a quite balanced rate of entry of vocabulary. For example, lesson 13 presents 27 new words, while lesson 16 introduces only 8 new words. These two units present the most and least number of new words in the second book. As far as the re-entry of grammatical structure is concerned, "how many/much" questions introduced in lesson 6 are not re-presented throughout the units succeeding this unit. And "comparison" which is offered in lesson 15 and 16 is not re-used in the succeeding units, too. Moreover, some words and grammatical structures do not play active roles in various units though they are introduced in GE. Accordingly, the GE's merit score would be 1.5 as far as rate, and manner of entry and re-entry are concerned.

RPE

The rate of introducing new words in the units of RPE 2 ranges from 10 to 25. Some units introduce only one new grammatical structure. Tucker (1975) suggests that in early units, vocabulary should be introduced sparingly.

One to three grammatical structures are presented in each unit of RPE. Such a rate of entry of grammatical structures seems to be adequate. Nevertheless, the re-presentation of some of them is not adequate. For instance, the present continuous tense is presented in the secind lesson of Book Two, but it is not re-presented throughout the book. Also, the simple past tense of the verb "to be", which is introduced in 3 and 4 lessons, does

not play any role in the four succeeding lessons. In this respect, Tucker (1975) remarks that if a verb tense is introduced, it should play a substantial part in the majority of the units. In RPE, the presentation of the mentioned grammatical structures does not follow such a manner. RPE, on the whole, introduces the structure properly, but the introduction of vocabulary and expressions has some inadequacies. On the other hand, the re-entry of structures is not appropriately treated. Therefore, its merit score – based on the presented rating scheme- would be 2.5

Appropriateness of Contexts and Situations

GE

GE presents a lot of its vocabularies and grammatical structures in isolated sentences. Obviously, isolated sentences could not present appropriate contexts and situations because; it is possible to attribute different meanings to an isolated sentence.

Regarding the *appropriateness of contexts and situations,* there is a dialogue in Unit One which is accompanied by a picture of a classroom. There are some students and a teacher in the classroom. Both the teacher and the students are males. In the dialogue the teacher says "we all speak English in the classroom". Such an utterance is not appropriate as far as the context of this dialogue is concerned. Since all of them (the teacher and the students) have already spoken English, there is no need to say such a sentence. Moreover, there is no relationship between this sentence and other sentences. In other words, this sentence breaks down with the propositional development of the dialogue. As such, it disturbs the coherence of the dialogue.

On the whole, GE dose not provide appropriate contexts and situations in its dialogues. In almost all of the GE conversations, little attention is paid to those functions which often dominate in face-to-face interaction. Of course, there are a few exceptions; nevertheless, majority of dialogues in GE suffer from not being cohesive and coherent. Also in nearly all of these dialogues the emphasis is often on usage rather than use.

Considering all of the above deficiencies, GE is a poor series as far as the appropriateness of contexts and situations is concerned and its score– based on the presented rating scheme- would be 0.

RPE

RPE offers a systematic presentation of dialogues. With the exception of the first unit, each of the units of Book Two consists of a dialogue which is accompanied by pictures. Dialogues 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 11, and 12 of Book Two, totally or partially, display the English language usage. In addition, some of the dialogues in RPE have specific inadequacies, for example, in the second dialogue of Book Two, Reza calls Ali, but this is Ali who asks all the questions. Generally speaking, one expects to know why Reza calls Ali. On the contrary, not only Ali asks all of the questions, but also he finishes up the conversation and wants Reza to call him later.

Generally, the dialogues in RPE basically deal with English usage. Even in this respect, some of the utterances are not appropriate. It needs to be pointed out that English usage could be handled directly in drills, and dialogues should be left for the presentation of natural English utterances. Therefore, the emphasis which is put on usage in RPE's dialogues is not appropriate. On this basis, RPE's merit – based on the presented rating scheme- would be scored as 0.5.

CONCLUSION

This article tried to analyze the kind of materials presented in the textbooks designed for Iranian high school students.

The high school textbook lessons start with dialogues and reading comprehension passages. Then some new structures and grammatical forms are introduced which are followed by some speaking and writing activities are presented. It seems that the aim of such activities is to provide the students with the opportunities to practice whatever they learn during the

course. However, in GE series, there are no listening activities in the text books. It seems that the material designers ignored the importance of the listening activities. They just focused on the mechanical, meaningful drills and of course to some minor extent on communicative ones. In RPE series, there was an attempt to introduce some listening activities in which the students are supposed to be involved actively. Regarding speaking activities, especially with GE series, it is clear that the textbooks are limited to substitution and repetition drills; they are required to produce simple sentences. The students find no opportunities to negotiate with each other and their teacher. Unfortunately they are not provided with the opportunity to practice communicatively the language they are learning.

In order to improve the quality of textbooks, this study suggests the followings:

1. A system for textbook development should be organized in which the roles of textbook writers, teachers, and students, are specified.
2. In developing new textbooks, textbook developers can be benefited from the findings of this study; they should retain the good qualities and reduce the shortcomings indicated in the study.
3. Textbook developers should try to devise communicative exercises and activities in which the students are actively involved.

Pedagogical Implications

In keeping with the results of the study, some pedagogical implications are offered in this section. Having understood the merits and defects of textbooks, teachers can take advantage of the assets of certain series of textbooks and compensate for their deficiencies when using the textbooks in their classes. A good teacher knows her or his students well enough to intervene at an appropriate time, adding specific details or important information in order to make the process of language teaching/ learning more authentic.

Textbook developers should try to devise exercises and activities that go

beyond lower-order cognitive skills such as mechanical drills to higher -order ones like integrated and communicative drills. Textbook development is by now an area of specialization, so textbook developers are required to appreciate the findings of different studies in the area of textbook evaluation and try to observe these findings in their textbook writing. English language teachers need to be acquainted with the principles of textbook evaluation. They can be given practice in analyzing textbooks in order to find out whether the organization of materials is consistent with the objectives of a given English language curriculum. When trainee teachers examine the selection of items of speech, grammar, and vocabulary in a textbook, and evaluate the way it presents reading and writing activities, they are at the same time improving their competence in the language and also improving their skills as teachers. The textbook is a tool, and the teacher must know not only how to use it, but how useful it can be, this involve distinguishing between method in the use of printed materials, and method in face-to-face teaching. It involves using discretion in adapting textual materials to the needs and interests of pupils, choosing only those materials and methods which are based on sound linguistic and pedagogical principles.

Suggestions for Further Studies

There are many issues that were beyond the scope of this study and deserve further attention.

First, an extension of this study to evaluate the English language textbooks recently introduced to be taught at Iranian private English language institutions is required.

Second, a further study might be conducted to investigate the whole program for teaching English as foreign language in Iran.

Limitations of the Current Study

There are some limitations in this study. First, the scope of the study is

limited to the textbooks only, and does not include the accompanying materials. Second, the findings of this study cannot be generalized to the Iranian private institutions since these institutions use their own textbooks.

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