

A Breath of Fresh Air into Iranian English Textbooks Evaluation of English Textbook “Vision2” for Iranian High School Students from Teachers’ Perspectives

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Abstract

The Purpose of this study was to investigate the appropriateness of newly developed Iranian high school English textbook “Vision2” from teachers’ points of view. 25 male and female high school English teachers were randomly selected from Hormozgan province, Iran to participate in the study. The evaluation of textbook was conducted quantitatively through a 3-points Likert scale checklist which was proposed by Dr. Montasser Mohamed AbdelWahab (2013). The data was subjected to analysis through descriptive statistics. Findings indicated that although the book has some strong sides, teachers pointed to major weaknesses in textbook in terms of lack of glossary list, shortage of time to cover the stated objectives and a need to recycling the newly learned vocabularies in subsequent lessons. In the light of these findings, the researcher reported some recommendations to address the slight drawbacks of the English language textbook for 11th grade. The findings of the study would be useful for teachers and material developers.

Keywords: Evaluation, English Textbook, Vision2

1. Introduction

As stated by Zohrabi, Sabouri, and Kheradmand (2014), "textbooks are one of the elements that may promote or discourage learners depending on their materials. They are a kind of support for both teachers and learners. Textbooks provide students a kind of consistency "(p.95). Textbooks are essential tools in improving learning and teaching and helping teachers to carry out their responsibility satisfactory. Since the major users of the textbooks are the students and teachers, their opinions toward textbooks should be collected and analyzed.

Teachers have the responsibility of evaluating textbooks, so the evaluation of teaching materials is an integral part of a teacher’s work. , the main focus of this research is to evaluate the teachers’ viewpoints regarding the new textbook "Vision2". The researcher tried to find out high school teachers ' perceptions towards the new textbook. Taking these points into consideration, the present study probed into finding out teachers’ perceptions of the Iranian high school English textbook "Vision2"(Ansari & Babaii (2002). The aim of this study is to evaluate the new version of Iranian EFL high school textbook "vision2" from teachers' perspectives. This study will evaluate the English textbook through Dr. Montasser Mohamed AbdelWahab's evaluation checklist. His checklist consists of four main criteria including: 1) Physical and utilitarian attributes 2) efficient outlay of objectives and supplementary materials 3) learning teaching content 4) language skills.

1.1 Research Hypothesis

- 1- "Vision2" is not appropriate for Iranian high school students in terms of physical and utilitarian attributes.
- 2- "Vision2" is not appropriate for Iranian high school students in terms of efficient outlay of objectives and supplementary materials.
- 3- "Vision2" is not appropriate for Iranian high school students in terms of learning-teaching content.
- 4- "Vision2" is not appropriate for Iranian high school students in terms of language skills.

2. Methodology

2.1 Participants

The participants included 25 experienced English teachers randomly selected from high schools in different districts of Hormozgan province, Iran. They were asked to fill in the questionnaire prepared by Dr. Montasser Mohamed AbdelWahab carefully and honestly and issue their opinions about the textbook. The respondents were asked to put a tick mark in the column of their choice.

2.2 Materials

The English textbook titled "Vision2" evaluated for this study. "Vision 2" is a new textbook which is written by Dr. Ali Moghaddam, Dr. Kheirabad, Rahimi, and Davari (2017). In order to attain the aim of the study, the textbook includes work book, student book, audio CD and teacher's guide.

2.3 Instruments

Survey questionnaire was used to know teachers' perspectives on the new English textbook for eleventh grade of high schools in Hormozgan, Iran. An electronic questionnaire adopted from Dr. Montasser Mohamed AbdelWahab textbook evaluation checklist was used. His checklist consists of four main criteria including: 1) Physical and utilitarian attributes 2) efficient outlay of objectives and supplementary materials 3) learning teaching content 4) language skills.

The respondents were asked to put only a tick mark in the column of their choice that represents their perceptions. In this study, 3 points Likert scale (poor, satisfactory, good) was utilized.

2.4 Procedure

The data gathered through a checklist adopted from Dr. Montasser Mohamed AbdelWahab's evaluation checklist distributed among 25 experienced English teachers randomly selected from different districts of Hormozgan province, Iran.

2.5 Data Collection

In order to evaluate the textbook from teachers' viewpoints, data were collected at the end of the educational year. 25 high school English teachers from different districts of Hormozgan province required to complete the questionnaires to reveal their perceptions of new English textbook they used in their classrooms. For data collection a closed-ended questionnaire proposed by Dr. Montasser Mohamed AbdelWahab was distributed to the participants. Finally, to investigate the results, descriptive statistics were used.

2.6 Data Analysis

The data obtained from questionnaires quantitatively analyzed in order to seek overall perceptions of 11th grade Iranian teachers of English toward English textbooks. The statistical package for science (SPSS) is used for data analysis which included standard deviation, mean, percentage and frequency.

3. Results

3.1 Revisiting the First Research Question

The first research question was "Is Vision2 appropriate for Iranian high school students in terms of physical and utilitarian attributes? "

The descriptive statistics related to physical and utilitarian Attributes are provided in Table 1.

Table 1. The Results of Checklist from the physical and utilitarian attributes

Textbook evaluation scales	0		1		2	
<i>General appearance</i>	N	%	N	%	N	%
Item 1	14	56	7	28	4	16
Item 2	2	8	7	28	16	64
Item 3	2	8	17	68	6	24
<i>Layout and design</i>	N	%	N	%	N	%
Item 4	18	72	4	16	3	12
Item 5	2	8	8	32	15	60
Item 6	10	40	11	44	4	16
<i>Visuals</i>	N	%	N	%	N	%
Item 7	6	24	14	56	5	20

0=Poor; 1=Satisfactory; 2=Good

As shown in table1, 56% of teachers stated that the outside cover is not informative and attractive, while 28% believed that the design of book is satisfactory.(Item 1). The second item that asks about the appropriateness of the font size and type of the textbook, confirmed positively by 64% of the participants, and 28% were satisfied with font size and type of the book (Item 2). Around 68% of the teachers gave satisfactory responses to item three (Item 3). For item four, 72% of teachers believed that there is not a detailed overview of the function and structures in each unit (Item 4). 60% of the participants stated their agreement in this aspect, which indicates that there is appropriate overview of vocabulary in the book, but 8% disagreed with this issue (Item 5). Some teachers about 40% believed that there are mistakes in the book (Item 6). For the last item in this domain, 56% of teachers were satisfied with visuals (Item 7).

3.2 Revisiting the Second Research Question

The second research question was " Is Vision2 appropriate for Iranian high school students in terms of efficient outlay of objectives and supplementary materials?"

Table 2. The Results of Checklist from the efficient outlay of objectives and supplementary materials

Textbook evaluation scales	0		1		2	
<i>Book objectives</i>	N	%	N	%	N	%
Item 8	17	68	6	24	2	8
Item 9	8	32	2	8	15	60
<i>Teaching aids</i>	N	%	N	%	N	%
Item 10	1	4	10	40	14	56
Item 11	5	20	6	24	14	56
Item 12	16	64	7	28	2	8

0=Poor; 1=Satisfactory; 2=Good

The first item in this domain is about the relevance of objectives to learners' need and interest.56% of the teachers stated that they are satisfied in this aspect, but 24% disagreed with this issue (Item 8). The second item in this part which is about balance between four main skills, listening, speaking, reading and writing, were answered by 68% of the teachers in negative way, while 24% were satisfied with this item (Item 9). 60% of teachers believed that activities allow students to talk more than teachers but 32% declared they are not satisfied with this item (Item10). 56% of teachers admitted that the activities and exercises introduce the main principle of CLT (Item 11). In the last case of this section, 64% of the participants stated that the activities used in the book do not enable the learners to use English outside the classroom (Item 12).

3.3 Revisiting the Third Research Question

The third research question was "Is Vision2 appropriate for Iranian high school students in terms of learning-teaching content?"

Subject and Content

Item 13-15 evaluate the textbook's subject and content. The results related to subject and content are presented in table 3.

Table 3. The Results of Checklist from the Subject and content

Textbook evaluation scales	0		1		2	
<i>Subject and Content</i>	N	%	N	%	N	%
Item 13	21	84	2	8	2	8
Item 14	8	32	14	56	3	12
Item 15	4	16	17	68	4	16

0=Poor; 1=Satisfactory; 2=Good

As indicated in table 3, 84% of the participants didn't support the statement that the book contains fun elements (Item 13). About48% of teachers stated that the subject and content of this book is not interesting, challenging and motivating, while 44% of participants were satisfied with this item (Item 14). 68% of teachers were satisfied with

the statement that the topics provide a list of new or difficult words, while 16% of them rejected this item, and the rest 16% agreed this statement (Item 15).

Items 16-19 evaluate the textbook's exercises.

Table 4. The Results of Checklist from the exercises

Textbook evaluation scales	0		1		2	
<i>Exercises</i>	N	%	N	%	N	%
Item 16	4	16	8	32	13	52
Item 17	6	24	12	48	7	28
Item 18	7	28	8	32	10	40
Item 19	8	32	13	52	4	16

0=Poor; 1=Satisfactory; 2=Good

As it is shown in table 4, 52% of the participants agreed that the exercises have clear instructions that explain how every exercises can be done, while 16% of the respondents disagreed with this statement (Item 16). 64% of the study samples agreed that the exercises tasks move from simple to complex (Item 17). About 40% of the teachers believed that the textbook's activities incorporated both individual paired and group work, while 28% of respondent disagreed with this item (Item 18). In the last case of this section, 52% of the teachers were satisfied with the statement that the textbook provides models for final achievement tests (Item 19).

Table 5. The Results of Checklist from the Social Cultural Context

Textbook evaluation scales	0		1		2	
<i>Social Cultural Context</i>	N	%	N	%	N	%
Item 20	2	8	2	8	21	84
Item 21	13	52	10	40	2	8
Item 22	17	68	6	24	2	8

0=Poor; 1=Satisfactory; 2=Good

For the first item in social and cultural context, majority of the participants stated their agreement with the statement that the book is free from stereotypical images and information (Item 20). As indicated in table 5, 52% of the teachers disagreed with the statement that the content presents different cultures, while 40% of them are satisfied with this item (Item 21). 68% of the respondents believed that the content doesn't discuss some well-known characters from different areas of the world, while 8% agreed this issue (Item 22).

3.4 Revisiting the Forth Research Question

The forth research question was "Is Vision2 appropriate for Iranian high school students in terms of language skills?" The descriptive statistics related to language skills are presented in Table 6.

Table 6. The Results of Checklist from the Language Skills

Textbook evaluation scales	0		1		2	
<i>Listening</i>	N	%	N	%	N	%
Item 23	8	32	1	4	16	64
Item 24	17	68	6	24	2	8
<i>Speaking</i>	N	%	N	%	N	%
Item 25	1	4	10	40	14	56
Item 26	13	52	6	24	6	24
<i>Reading</i>	N	%	N	%	N	%
Item 27	14	56	5	20	6	24
Item 28	2	8	3	12	20	80
<i>Writing</i>	N	%	N	%	N	%
Item 29	16	64	2	8	7	28
Item 30	4	16	19	76	2	8

Item 31	5	20	5	20	15	60
<i>Vocabulary</i>	N	%	N	%	N	%
Item 32	18	72	4	16	3	12
Item 33	6	24	17	68	2	8
Item 34	12	48	11	44	2	8
Item 35	22	88	1	4	2	8
<i>Grammar</i>	N	%	N	%	N	%
Item 36	18	72	4	16	3	12
Item 37	3	12	3	12	19	76
Item 38	16	64	7	28	2	8
Item 39	6	24	5	20	14	56
Item 40	2	8	3	12	20	80
<i>Pronunciation</i>	N	%	N	%	N	%
Item 41	6	24	13	52	6	24
Item 42	7	28	16	64	2	8

0=Poor; 1=Satisfactory; 2=Good

As it was estimated, the first item in this domain confirmed positively by 64% of teachers, While 32% rejected (Item 23). Around 68% of teachers gave negative response to the second item which is about exposing the students to the voice and pronunciation of the native speakers of English (Item 24). Nearly all teachers agreed that activities are developed to encourage student-student and student-teacher oral communication (Item 25). 52% of the participants stated that there isn't sufficient material for spoken English, while the rest responded this item in positive way (Item26). As indicated in table 6, 56% of teachers believed that most of reading passages are not up-to-date, interesting and meaningful (Item27). The second item in reading part is about appropriateness of reading texts length confirmed positively by 80% of teachers (Item 28). 64% of the participants did not support the first item in writing domain, but 28% of teachers agreed the statement that some of writing tasks are easy for most of the students and the rest 8% declared their satisfaction with this matter (Item 29). It is obvious that 76% Of teachers expressed their satisfaction with the statement that writing in textbook are guided and controlled. However, 16% of them disagreed with this issue (Item30). 60% indicate that writing activities are suitable in in terms of length, degree of accuracy, and amount of guidance (Item31). As shown in table 6, most of the teachers dis agreed the first item related to vocabulary that asks about appropriateness of the load (number of new words in each lesson) to the linguistic level of students (Item 32). While around 68% of the participants were satisfied that the exercises for vocabulary are rich and adequate, 24% of the respondents expressed their disagreement (Item 33). 48% believed there isn't specific method for teach new vocabulary (Item 34). The great number of disagreement refers to the statement that the sentences and examples use the words that are known by learners, teachers also believe in lack of a glossary and vocabulary list at the end of the book (Item 35). The first item in grammar regarding the appropriateness of time allotted for teaching the material confirmed negatively by 72% of teachers, while 12% agreed and the rest 16% were satisfied with this issue (Item 36). Most of teachers declared their agreement and satisfaction on statement that the grammar lessons are often derived from listening and reading passages (Item 37). It is obvious that 64% of teachers believed that grammar examples are not appropriate and interesting to the student's level (Item38).

This investigation showed that 56% of the participants agreed with easy and brief examples of grammar points and 24% rejected this matter (Item 39). The last item in the grammar part is about designing the structures in a way to be taught inductively confirmed positively by 80% of teachers (Item 40). As it is shown in table 6, 52% stated that pronunciation is easy to be learnt. However, 24% of teachers denied this matter. (Item 41).

In the last case of this section, more than half of teachers stated their satisfactory with the last item, while 28% rejected this issue (Item 42).

4. Discussions

The result of analysis revealed that teachers perception about "Physical and Utilitarian Attributes" were positive in general. Although teachers believed that outside cover is not informative and attractive, they stated their agreement in other aspects related to these criteria. Participants of the study pointed out that adding title page, impact page and Get Ready part are good ideas for warming up. The results revealed that most of teachers felt negative about the textbook in term of subject and content. A great majority of teachers stated the book doesn't contain fun elements; they believed the subject and content of "Vision2" is not interesting, challenging and

motivating. Teachers think the textbook did not appeal to students' interest. The quantitative data analyses indicated that teacher perceptions about the activities and exercises of the textbook were positive in general. Teachers emphasized that due to the vocabulary load in the reading passages, the students had great difficulty in comprehending the reading texts and doing the related tasks and activities. Teachers believed the lack of vocabulary list in each lesson or even more at the end of the book makes students confused; because most of students think the words that they should learn in each lesson is limited to "New Words and Expression "part of the book. The results also revealed that the particular textbook was good in the presentation of grammar.

The positive points are as follows:

1. The activities introduce the main principle of CLT.
2. The instructions are clear for the students.
3. The book is finely continuing the goals of "Vision1".
4. The artwork in the textbook is helpful for students to understand the lesson.
5. Teachers' guide is good for teachers to be familiar with the right ways of teaching the book.

The negative points are listed below:

1. The outside cover of book is not informative and attractive.
2. There is not balance between four skills.
3. The activities don't enable the students to use English outside the classroom.
4. The topics are not interesting.
5. The recordings are not clear and understandable for students.
6. The book is limited to three long lessons, which makes the book boring for the learners.

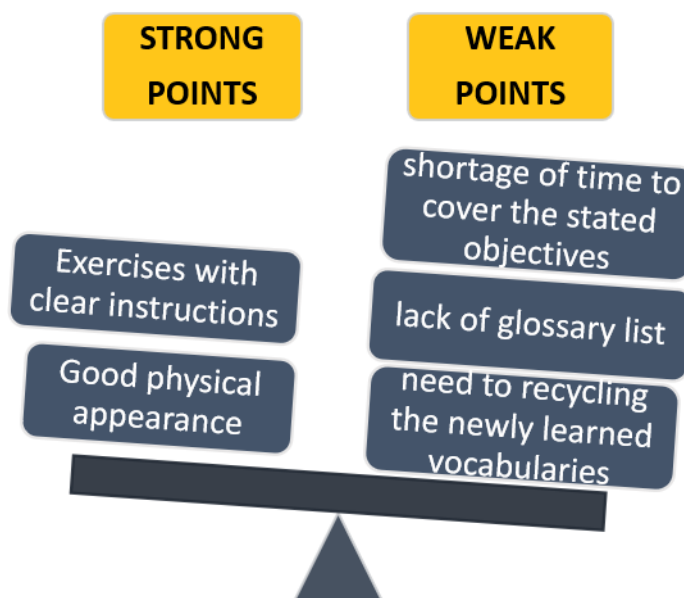


Figure 1. The positive and negative points based on textbook evaluation

4.1 Pedagogical Implications of the Study

In the light of the findings of the study, the researcher presents the following implications:

4.2 Implications for Teachers

- 1- Teachers should develop the teaching aids so as to be able to deal with the individual differences among students.
- 2- They have to be trained to employ modern technology such as computers and internet.
- 3- Teachers ought to provide students with additional writing texts so that they can express themselves through writing freely about their desires, needs, feelings, ... etc.

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Appendix

Textbook Evaluation Form

Dear colleagues, please provide the following information.

- 1) Gender: male..... female.....
- 2) Teaching experience: ----- years

This study was conducted to find out the overall attitudes of high school teachers about evaluation of “Vision 2”. According to your personal idea, please rate the following items related to different features of the English textbook. Please choose one of the choices for each item.

Please Note: Poor = 0 Satisfactory =1 Good = 2

Physical attributes			
A.General Appearance		0	1 2
1.The outside cover is informative and attractive.			
2.The font size and type used in the textbook is appropriate.			
3.The textbook has sufficient number of pictures to make the situation more life-liked			
B.Layout and design			
4.The textbook includes a detailed overview of the functions and structures that will be taught in each unit.			
5.The textbook includes a detailed overview of vocabulary that will be taught in each unit.			
6.The textbook is free of mistake.			
C.Visuals			
7.The visuals are well produced, varied and attractive.			
Efficient outlay of objectives and supplementary materials			
A.Book objectives			
8.The objectives are related to the learners' needs and interest.			
9.The objectives make a balance between the four main skills, listening, speaking, writing, reading			
B.Teaching aids			
10.The activities allow students to talk more than teachers.			
11.Activities and exercises introduce the main principle of CLT.			
12.The activities used enable the learners to use English outside the classroom.			
Learning-teaching content			
A. Subject and content			
13. The textbook contains fun elements			
14. The subject and content of the textbook is interesting, challenging and motivating.			
15. The topics provide a list of new or difficult words.			
B. Exercises			
16. The exercises have clear instructions that explain how every exercise can be done.			
17. The exercises Tasks move from simple to complex.			
18. The exercises incorporate individual pair and group work.			
19. The textbook provides models for final achievement tests.			
C- Social and Cultural Contexts			
20. The content of the textbook is free from stereotypical images and information.			

21. The content presents different cultures.			
22. The content discusses some well-known characters from different areas of the world.			
Language Skills			
A. Listening			
23. The textbook has appropriate listening tasks with well-defined goals.			
24. The cassettes expose the students to the voices and pronunciation of the native speakers of English.			
B. Speaking			
25. Activities are developed to encourage student-student and student-teacher oral communication.			
26. There is sufficient material for spoken English (e.g. dialogues, role-plays, etc.) that help to de-emphasize teacher's talk.			
C. Reading			
27. Many of the reading passages are up-to-date, interesting and meaningful			
C. Reading			
27. Many of the reading passages are up-to-date, interesting and meaningful			
28. The Length of the reading texts is appropriate.			
D. Writing			
29. Some writings are easy for most of the students to deal with			
30. Writings in the textbook are guided and controlled.			
31. Writing activities are suitable in terms of length, degree of accuracy, and amount of guidance.			
E. Vocabulary			
32. The load (number of new words in each lesson) is appropriate to the linguistic level of students.			
33. The exercises for vocabulary are rich and adequate.			
34. There is specific method to teach new vocabulary.			
35. The sentences and examples use words that are known by learners.			
F. Grammar			
36. The time allotted for teaching the material is sufficient.			
37. Grammar lessons are often derived from the listening and reading passages.			
38. The grammar examples are appropriate and interesting to the students' level.			
39. The grammar points are presented with brief and easy examples and explanations.			
40. Structures are designed to be taught inductively.			
G. Pronunciation			
41. It is easy to be learnt.			
42. There are cassettes/CDs for pronunciation practice.			

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