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Research Paper

Evaluation of High School English Course Books in Iran: Task Types in Focus

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Abstract
This study sought to examine the type and frequency of tasks in the Iranian high school English course books (Prospect 1, 2, 3 & English Book 1, 2, 3). The corpus was analyzed based on Nunan's (1999) framework composed of five main task types, namely cognitive, interpersonal, linguistics, affective, and creative. To this end, the whole content of the aforementioned course books went through content analysis separately and accordingly descriptive and inferential results were reported regarding the frequency of each task type. The results showed that the linguistic tasks were the most recurrent type, whereas some task types (e.g., affective and creative) were totally absent. Furthermore, based on the results of Chi Square test, a significant difference was observed in the frequency of task types. While, according to communicative approach, communicative competence necessitates the inclusion of grammatical, discourse, sociolinguistic, and strategic competencies, the findings of the current study revealed that linguistic competence was overemphasized in these course books. This fact may lead to learners who are competent in producing linguistically appropriate utterances, which may at the same time be inappropriate with regard to context. The findings can have significant implications for EFL teachers and materials developers in making them conscious of the fact that the application of different types of tasks in textbooks is an important standard leading to more competent language users, especially in an EFL context like Iran.

Keywords*:* Evaluation of textbook, Nunan's (1999) taxonomy, Task types, National English course book, Task-based language teaching

Introduction

In any educational setting, textbooks seem to be the next most important element after the teachers. Textbooks, considered the heart of any educational programs, can provide the students with interesting points and lead to novel experiences (Chambliss & Calfee, 1998). It seems that textbooks cannot be separated from the curriculum in any way (Dabbagh & Safaei, 2019). According to Ayu & Indrawati (2018), textbooks can be equally important to teachers and learenrs. Zohrabi, Sabouri, and Kheradmand (2014) also assert that based on their material and content, textbooks may encourage or even discourage learners. They also believe that textbooks can provide both the teachers and learners with some kind of support.

Textbooks can guide the teachers to present the teaching material in the most suitable way. Also, they can affect the learners' attitude toward the whole learning process. Seemingly, the only source through which we can transmit knowledge to the learners in a systematic way is textbook (Ahour & Ahmadi, 2012). In the same line, Alemi and Mesbah (2013) state that the evaluation of textbooks is of utmost importance and in this way the real instructional contribution of textbooks can be proved. It is also essential that the instructors select the most suitable and appropriate textbook which meets the specific needs of the learners. Therefore, in order to discover the advantages and benefits of a specific book, it is essential to assess textbooks and to come up with the most apt textbook. Moreover, with the advent of communicative language teaching (CLT), the ability to use the target language communicatively and in real life situations has gained momentum and became an important consideration in the English language teaching (ELT).

Due to the impact of CLT, majority of the materials used globally have emphasized the prominence of involving their learners actively in the learning process by presenting different tasks and activities which can lead to more real and productive interactions among the learners. Nevertheless, majority of the Iranian high school English teachers are using the standard institutional materials produced by the Ministry of Education without being conscious of the various task types used in them. It also needs to be noted that, in Iran English is taught and learned as a foreign language and outside the language classroom there are very few or even no opportunities for language learners to be exposed to the language; therefore, the role of ELT materials used in classrooms becomes more evident. In most Iranian high schools, teachers have no choice but to teach the predetermined institutional English course books through their preferred methodology as there is no specific teacher manual available to them.

Nevertheless, the implementation of different task types in such materials can provide the main yardstick for choosing the most appropriate textbook. If the committee of the high school curriculum developers becomes aware of different task types utilized in each of these institutional materials, they can better select the most suitable one for the high school students. It can also help materials developers to design textbooks with more communicative tasks which make learners deeply involved in using the target language. The significance of the study also lies in the fact that if high school English teachers realize the types of tasks and exercises available in these textbooks, they can help their students become more proficient in English by adapting and mixing different types of tasks from different textbooks. Furthermore, being aware of this issue can definitely assist these teachers in improving their teaching methods. Also, they mostly don't ponder upon whether these task types can genuinely involve the learners in the probable future interactions. That is to say, before selecting or using high school English materials, the teachers are supposed to have an accurate and relevant understanding of the task types introduced in different instructional materials. By the same token, evaluation of English course books used in high schools concerning their task types can be of great value. Against this backdrop, the present

study aimed at exploring the different task types presented in the Iranian English textbooks used in high schools based on the Nunan's (1999) classification of tasks.

Literature Review

Theoretical background

Textbooks have always played a prominent role in the instruction and learning of language. Although some scholars have questioned their appropriateness and importance (e.g., Allwright, 1981; Garton & Graves, 2014; Richards, 2001), textbooks are still regarded to be "the utmost important and inseparable components" of language pedagogy (Dabbagh & Safaei, 2019, p. 250). Riazi (2003) also asserted that textbooks play a very important role in language pedagogy and are regarded as equally important as the teacher. Teachers are encouraged to opt for the most suitable textbook based on the pedagogical needs of their learners. One effective way which can assist the teachers in choosing the best textbook is textbook evaluation. Educators can utilize the results of textbook evaluations to select or adapt the needed teaching materials based on the learners' needs and the context of instruction. Moreover, during the past decades and due to the influence of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) methodology, main aims of language textbooks revolved around improving the communicative competence of the learners. This goal is mostly achieved through utilizing different tasks in the language pedagogy which is of course rooted in the Task-based Language Teaching (TBLT).

Recently, many language teachers and syllabus designers have focused on TBLT. As a result, most global materials emphasize the importance of involving the learners actively in the learning process by presenting different tasks and activities which in turn will lead to real interactions among the learners. Task-based language teaching centers on the ability of the learners to do a task or activity with the absence of any explicit and overt teaching of grammatical structure (Rahimipour, 2008). In traditional English teaching approach, the learning outcomes of teaching process were completely under the control of teachers. There was little use of the target language for communication and learners could just unresponsively learn some specific grammatical rules or expressions. This approach usually resulted in learners who were unable to use the target language for communication. However, TBLT encourages the learners to use language creatively through the use of tasks. This method also encourages meaningful communication and is learner-centered. Consequently, tasks provide the opportunity for learners to be actively engaged in real-life communicative activities. Moreover, they stimulate learners' interests to exchange meaning, not memorizing and repeating utterances presented by the teacher or the textbook.

According to Nunan (2004), Task-based Language Teaching (TBLT) is pedagogically an "emphasis on learning to communicate through interaction in the target language and the provision of opportunities for learners to focus not only on language but also on the learning process itself" (p. 18). Moreover, tasks have been defined in different ways within the literature. According to Willis (1996), a task can be defined as a classroom commission where the target language is used by the learner for a communicative purpose in order to achieve an outcome. Nunan (1989) also stated that the task should be complete by having a beginning, a middle, and a closing part as well as being able to be treated as a separate communicative act. Ellis (2003) defined task as "a work plan that requires learners to process language pragmatically in order to achieve an outcome that can be evaluated in terms of whether the correct or appropriate propositional content has been conveyed" (p. 16).

In addition, as Nunan (2004) stated, all these definitions are basic in one sense and that is their focus on meaning and communication instead of grammatical form. His own definition

refers to the deployment of grammatical knowledge to express meaning, highlighting the fact that meaning and form are highly interrelated, and that the learners should utilize grammar in order to handle different communicative acts.

Previous studies

The process of the development and growth of English course books for high schools of Iran has undergone enormous transformations and a lot has happened since they were first introduced in nearly seven decades ago. Moreover, different researchers have evaluated these textbooks from different points of view. In this section, we would present a detailed chronological review of the previous research studies done on the English textbooks utilized in the Iranian high schools. In a study, Razmjoo (2009) made a comparison between the Iranian local textbooks and the global ones used in private institutes to investigate the extent to which these textbooks represent the principles of CLT (Communicative Language Teaching). The results showed that the textbooks used in private institutes were superior with regard to adhering to the CLT principles. Riazi and Mosalanejad (2010) evaluated the high school and pre-university English textbooks used in Iran. Their work was grounded in the Bloom's categorization of different levels of learning goals, namely (1) knowledge, (2) comprehension, (3) application, (4) analysis, (5) synthesis, and (6) evaluation. The findings indicated that that the lower-order cognitive skills happened to be more frequent than the higher-order ones. Moreover, Rahimipour and Hashemi (2011) evaluated Iranian English language textbooks from the teachers' point of view. The findings showed that overall the teachers did not consider the textbooks satisfactory and acceptable.

Also, Talebinezhad and Esmaeili (2012) investigated the impact of implicit and explicit instruction of some various task types, namely dictation task, individual reconstruction task, and cooperative reconstruction task on 40 high school students' acquisition of grammatical competence. Overall, the findings showed that the explicit teaching of the aforementioned tasks could facilitate the grammatical acquisition. Rashidi and Kehtarfard (2014) emphasized the issue of needs analysis and evaluated the English textbooks used for third-grade high school. Basing their evaluation on the results of a needs analysis questionnaire from 180 female high-school students, they concluded that the observed textbooks could not meet the language learning needs of the students. They also argued for the need of some more supplementary sources to fulfil the needs of the students. Moreover, Papi (2015) evaluated prospect 1, taught in all Iranian junior high schools, with regard to their task types. In this study, the instrument was a task type checklist developed by Finch's (1999). The findings showed that in the target textbooks, the static tasks outnumbered the dynamic tasks. Additionally, it was observed that pair work and group work were frequent.

In addition, Asadi, Kiany, Akbari, Samar (2016) conducted a two-phase evaluation on the textbook Prospect 1 with an eye to its context, input, process, and product. The study adopted a qualitative design and the data in both phases were collected through interviews with the textbook developers and actual junior high school teachers correspondingly. The content analysis of the interviews indicated that both groups believed in some challenges, drawbacks, and pitfalls in the development and instruction of the mentioned textbook. In the same year, Kheirabadi and Alavimoghaddam (2016) investigated the Prospect books based on the views from 100 EFL teachers working in the Iranian high schools. The data were collected through a self-made questionnaire with three open-ended questions and asked for the teachers' evaluation of the series with regard to different aspects. The results indicated that although the teachers mentioned some advancements and advantages in the new series (e.g., the new communicative approach and the

included supplementary material), the book still has its own shortcomings (e.g., the low quality and relevance of the illustrations and images).

Mizbani and Chalak (2017) analyzed the activities (listening and speaking) of the Iranian high school textbook Prospect 3 based on the Bloom's (2001) Revised Taxonomy of Cognitive Domain. Their findings suggested that the listening and speaking activities in these books were characterized as low level cognitive skills. This suggested that this textbook would not be apt for training the students for higher cognitive levels. They further argued that this calls for more attention to the need for employing extra and supplementary teaching materials to assist the learners perform better in higher order cognitive skills. The focus of Gheinani, Tabatabaei, and, Chakhorzadeh's (2017) study was on the evaluation of Iranian teachers with regard to the usefulness and overall quality of the Prospect series. The data were collected through three different surveys from thirty high school English teachers. By and large, the findings indicate that the teachers favored the textbooks overall.

Furthermore, Ghasemi and Pasand (2018) evaluated the Prospect series with regard to their pragmatic suitability. They employed the taxonomy of speech acts and functions proposed by Cohen's and van Ek and Trim. The results indicated the existence of all speech acts and functions in these textbooks with various frequencies. In a mixed-method study, Elmiana (2018) examined the senior high school textbooks used in Indonesia. Nunan's (1999) taxonomy of task types was utilized as a framework for analysis. The results showed that majority of task types were present in these textbooks. However, some task types, like prediction and discrimination tasks, did not appear at all. The findings further indicated that the most and least frequent task types were the linguistic and creative tasks respectively. Also, Dabbagh and Safaei (2019) evaluated the high school English textbooks used in Iran, namely Prospect and Vision series, and the global book Four Corners with regard to their learning objectives and based on Bloom's revised groupings of learning goals. The results of their study indicated that the global textbook was superior to the national ones used in the EFL context of Iran. It also covered a more balanced number of different tasks and exercises.

Similarly, Goodarzi, Weisi, and Yousofi (2020) evaluated the junior high school English textbooks, the Prospect Series with an eye to the Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) model, and inspected the cognitive, communicative, and creative potentials of the mentioned textbooks. The findings indicated that this textbook could not meet the basic principles of CLT and failed to fulfill the communicative, cognitive, and creative potentials. Finally, in a most recent study, Sadeghi (2020) explored high school English teachers' attitude toward the book Prospect 3 through an observation checklist. In this mixed-method study, twenty-five teachers took part in the study based on convenience sampling procedure. The results showed that the main drawback noticed by the teachers was lack of a glossary list at the end of each unit and also lack of assigned time to cover the material. Moreover, although the teacher favored the book objectives, teaching aids, and the general layout of the textbook, they argued that this book is not comparable to global textbooks and it is in need of more improvements.

Purpose of the Study

To the best of the researchers' knowledge, not many studies have been conducted on the use of different task types in high school English course book evaluation, especially in the EFL context of Iran. Despite the fact that many studies have been carried out on the Iranian high school English course books' evaluation (e.g. Yarmohammadi, 2002; Amalsaleh, 2004; Razmjoo, 2007), no previous study has been done concerning their task types. This is important since as mentioned above, tasks can assist the learners in the acquisition of communicative competence

by focusing on meaning rather than form in doing different tasks and in a student-centered context. Therefore, the current study aims to probe the different task types that were utilized in the Iranian high school English course books based on Nunan's (1999) task type classification. The current study utilized Nunan's (1999) classification of tasks as this model seems to be more specific and comprehensive than the other suggested models on task types. Accordingly, the following research questions were put forward:

Q1. What task types are covered in the English course books (*Prospect Series & English Book Series*) taught in Iranian high schools?

Q2. Is there any significant difference in the occurrence and frequency of task types in *Prospect Series & English Book Series?*

Method

The corpus

The corpus of current study includes the six *English course books* of junior and senior high schools in Iran. This corpus was evaluated using Nunan's (1999) classification of the tasks. The list of the books is:

1.*Prospect 1* (Khadir Sharabian, Kheir Abadi, Alavi Moghaddam, Anani Sarab, Froozandeh Shahraki, & Ghorbani, 2013)
2.*Prospect 2* (Alavi Moghaddam, Kheir Abadi, Froozandeh Shahraki, Khadir Sharabian, and Nikoopoor, 2014)
3.*Prospect 3* (Alavi Moghaddam, Kheir Abadi, Rahimi, and Alavi, 2015)
4.*English Book 1* (Birjandi, Soheili, Noroozi, and Mahmoodi, 2001)
5.*English Book 2* (Birjandi, Noroozi, and Mahmoodi, 2002)
6.*English Book 3* (Birjandi, Noroozi, and Mahmoodi, 2003)

The English textbooks of six junior and senior high schools used in the high schools of Iran were selected. They included: Prospect 1 (student book), Prospect 2 (student book), Prospect 3 (student book), English Book 1, English Book 2, and English Book 3. The textbooks (English Book 1, English Book 2, and English Book3) have been used for about 16 years and the others (Prospect 1, Prospect 2, and Prospect 3) for about three years. These textbooks have been taught in all high schools of Iran.

Research Design

The current qualitative research focused on investigating task types and their frequency as well as *examining* the existence of a significant difference in the task types' frequency in the mentioned course books. Accordingly, the authors extracted and classified different tasks in the selected textbooks utilizing Nunan's (1999) framework (Table 1). The frequency and percentage of each task was also calculated, followed by conducting Chi-square test to specify the most frequent task types and explore the significant differences in the frequency of different task types in these textbooks.

Table 1. *Task Types (Nunan, 1999)*

Cognitive tasks	Interpersonal tasks	Linguistics tasks	Affective tasks	Creative tasks
Classifying	Co-operating	Conversational patterns	Personalising	Using new words
Predicting	Role playing	Practicing	Self – evaluating	in various tasks
Inducing		Using context	Reflecting	
Note taking		Summarizing		
Concept mapping		Selective reading/listening		
Inferencing		Skimming		
Discriminating				
Diagramming				

It also needs to be noted that Nunan (1999) divided tasks into five main groups according to the strategies underpinning them. Each of these tasks has sub-categories; therefore, twenty different micro tasks were classified under the main types of tasks. They include (a) cognitive, (b) interpersonal, (c) linguistic, (d) affective, and (e) creative.

Cognitive Tasks

Cognitive tasks comprise eight task types as sub-groups including: classifying, predicting, inducing, note taking, concept mapping, inferencing, discriminating, and diagramming. In order to make these tasks comprehensible, a short definition is given below for each of them.
●Classifying: putting similar things in different groups
●Predicting: foreseeing what may happen during learning
●Inducing: observing patterns and arrangements
●Note taking: keeping a record of the important information in your own words
●Concept mapping: using a map to show the main ideas in a text
●Inferencing: learn something new using what you already know
●Discriminating: making a distinction between the main and supporting idea
●Diagramming: labeling a diagram by the use of information from a text

Interpersonal Tasks

The second type of major tasks is called interpersonal tasks including: co-operating, and role playing.
●Co-operating: trying to share the learning experience with other students
●Role playing: imagining a new identity and use the language for the new situation

Linguistic Tasks

Linguistic tasks, as the third type of macro tasks, constitute six micro task types containing: conversational patterns, practicing, using context, summarizing, selective reading/listening, and skimming.
●Conversational patterns: mastering the ability to use expressions to handle a conversations
●Practicing: doing exercises and practice to improve both knowledge and skills of learners
●Using context: guessing the meaning of words by using the context
●Summarizing: presenting the most important points in a text
●Selective reading/listening: reading or listening only for important information, not trying to comprehend every single word
●Skimming: reading or listening to a text in order to get an overall idea

Affective Tasks

Personalizing, self-evaluating, and reflecting tasks are the three sub-categories of affective tasks.

●Personalizing: trying to share ideas and feelings on a specific subject
●Self-evaluating: rating yourself and evaluate how you learned
●Reflecting: considering the best learning procedure for yourself

Creative Tasks

Brainstorming tasks, is the only sub-category of creative tasks. Here is a short description for it.

●Brainstorming tasks: encouraging the students to reflect on as many new ideas as they can

Data Collection Procedure

To collect the data, all the tasks in the available course books were extracted and classified under their macro and micro stances based on Nunan's (1999) framework; subsequently, to increase its validity, the classification was crosschecked with two specialists in the field. Following that, the researcher calculated the frequency of every task type and specified the most common and repeated task types in each course books. Finally, a comparison of these course books was also made with each other in terms of the frequency of their macro task types.

Data Analysis

In this study, data analysis was both qualitative and quantitative by nature. The qualitative phase included the extraction and classification of different task types in the selected course books utilizing Nunan's (1999) framework. Then, the researcher mentioned different examples of task types in these course books and finally examined the benefits of using every task type. The quantitative phase of the analysis comprised both descriptive (frequency and percentage) and inferential statistics. To answer the first research question in this study, the frequency and percentage of task types in all course books were observed and then the most common and frequent task types in every course book were outlined. To deal with the second research question in this study, the Chi Square test as inferential statistics, was applied to compare the course books concerning the frequency of their macro task types. In other words, this test was run to discover the occurrence of different frequencies of macro task types in mentioned course books.

Results

Results for Research Question 1

To deal with the first research question, we analyzed every course book with respect to its task types based on Nunan's (1999) taxonomy. The results of this research question are depicted in details in Table 2.

Table 2. *The occurrence of Each Task Type*

	P.1		P.2		P.3		E.B.1		E.B.2		E.B.3	
Book	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
Task Type												
Classifying	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1.33	0	0
Predicting	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Inducing	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Taking Notes	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Concept Mapping	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Inferencing	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Discriminating	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Diagramming	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Cognitive (total)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1.33	0	0
Co-operating	2	3.45	0	0	3	5	0	0	0	0	0	0
Role Playing	2	3.45	7	13.21	3	5	0	0	0	0	0	0
Interpersonal (total)	4	6.90	7	13.21	6	10	0	0	0	0	0	0
Conversational Patterns	14	24.14	7	13.21	7	11.67	9	9.09	7	9.33	6	11.32
Practicing	30	51.72	32	60.38	30	50	43	43.43	33	44	20	37.74
Using Context	0	0	0	0	0	0	15	15.15	12	16	7	13.21
Summarizing	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Selective Listening/Reading	10	17.24	7	13.21	17	28.33	32	32.32	22	29.33	20	37.74
Skimming	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Linguistic (total)	54	93.10	46	86.79	54	90	99	100	74	98.67	53	100
Personalizing	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Self-Evaluating	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Reflecting	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Affective (total)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Brainstorming	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Creative (total)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total	58	100	53	100	60	100	99	100	75	100	53	100

* Note: P.1 = Prospect 1; P.2 = Prospect 2; P.3 = Prospect 3; E.B.1 = English book 1; E.B.2 = English Book 2; E.B.3 = English Book 3; F = Frequency; and % = Percentage.

As can be observed in Table 2, majority of the macro and micro task types were not present in the observed course books. The results indicated there was a complete absence of affective, creative, and cognitive (with the exception of only one case) tasks. As it was observed, linguistic tasks were the most prevalent, with nearly all of its micro task types observed in the course books. The next most frequent task types were the interpersonal task. Nevertheless, it needs to be pointed out that very few cases (only 17) of these task type was observed in the analyzed course books. In what follows, some samples of different task types in these course books are presented:

1. *"Take the role of a father/mother and answer your friend's questions about your weekly activities" (Role playing task, Prospect 2, Page 22).*
2. *"Talk with your classmates about national and international festivals" (Co-operating task, Prospect 3, page 61).*
3. *"Find the meaning of the underlined words" (Using context task, English book 1, page 10).*
4. *"Listen to your teacher and repeat after him/her" (Practicing task, English Book 1, page 66).*
5. *"Listen to your teacher and then put these words under the right column" (selective listening task, English Book 2, page 92).*
6. *"Ask about the cities. Complete the dialogue. Start like this……" (Conversational patterns task, English Book 2, page 67).*
7. *"Use the words in parentheses to make new sentences" (Practicing tasks, English Book 3, page 90).*
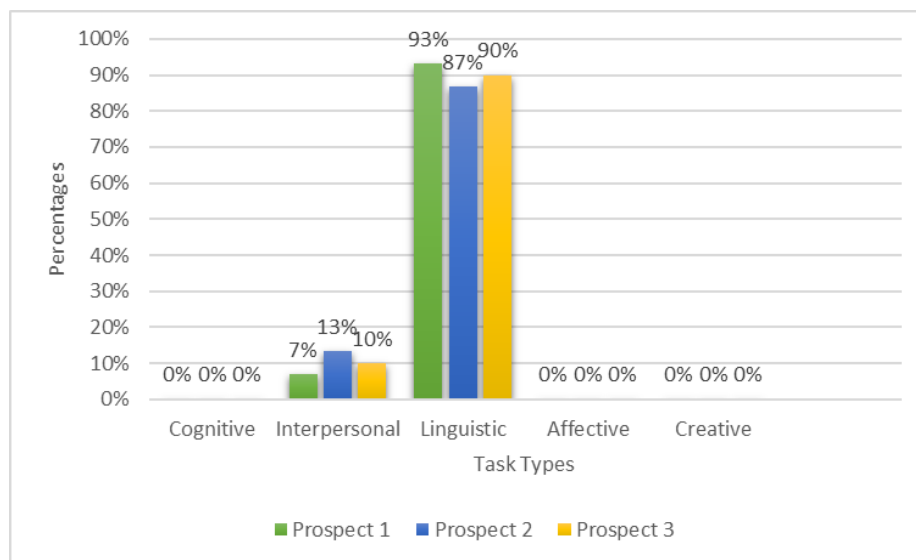8. *"Read the passage and complete the sentences. Use a, b, c, or d" (Selective reading task, English Book 3, page 8).*

Figure 1. *The frequency of the macro task types in Prospect series*

Moreover, most of the micro task types were completely ignored and few of them had the least frequency in these course books. Accordingly, Table 3 shows the frequency of all macro task types in each course book. As can be seen in Figure 1, linguistic tasks were the most frequent task type in all of these course books. These tasks in *Prospect 1, Prospect 2, Prospect 3, English Book 1, English Book 2,* and *English Book 3* were covered 93.10%, 86.79%. 90%, 100%, 98.67%, and 100% respectively.

Table 3. *The order of macro task types*

Task Type

Book Rank	*Prospect 1 (%)*	*Prospect 2 (%)*	*Prospect 3 (%)*	*English Book 1 (%)*	*English Book 2 (%)*	*English Book 3 (%)*
1	Linguistic (93.10)	Linguistic (86.79)	Linguistic (90)	Linguistic (100)	Linguistic (98.67)	Linguistic (100)
2	Interpersonal (6.90)	Interpersonal (13.21)	Interpersonal (10)	Interpersonal (0)	Cognitive (1.33)	Interpersonal (0)
3	Affective (0)	Affective (0)	Affective (0)	Affective (0)	Affective (0)	Affective (0)
3	Cognitive (0)	Cognitive (0)	Cognitive (0)	Cognitive (0)	Interpersonal (0)	Cognitive (0)
3	Creative (0)	Creative (0)	Creative (0)	Creative (0)	Creative (0)	Creative (0)

Although interpersonal tasks were in second position in *Prospect 1, Prospect 2,* and *Prospect 3*, these tasks were not included in *English Book 1, English Book 2,* and *English Book 3.* Concerning interpersonal tasks, *Prospect 1*, *Prospect 2*, and *Prospect 3* had a coverage range of 6.90%, 13.21%, and 10% respectively. With regard to *English Book 2*, cognitive tasks were in second position with a frequency of 1.33%. Nevertheless, this type of task was not observed in the other course books (*Prospect 1, Prospect 2, Prospect 3, English Book 1,* and *English Book 3*). Finally, as can be seen on Figure 2, affective and creative tasks were totally ignored by all of these course books.
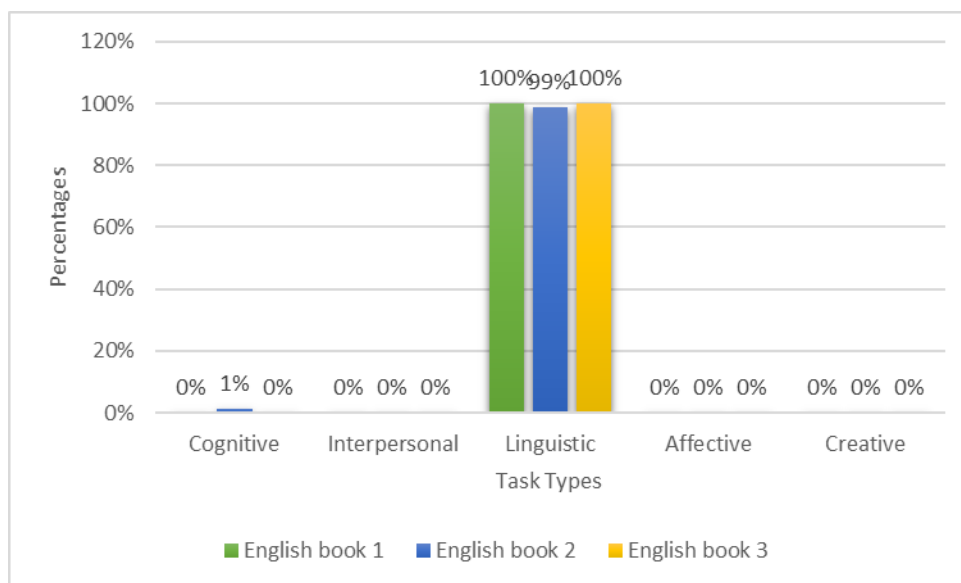

Figure 2. *The frequency of the macro task types in English Book series*

Results of Research Question 2

To answer this research question, the Chi Square test was carried out to compare the frequencies of task types in six high school English course books. The comparisons were made in two separate phases. In the first phase different levels of these course books (*Prospect 1, Prospect 2, Prospect 3, English Book 1, English Book 2,* and *English Book 3*) were compared with each other. As displayed in Table 4, the results of chi-square (X^2 (10) = 30.50, P < .05) indicated that the observed difference was statistically significant.

Table 4. *Results of Chi Square*

	Value	Df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	30.50a	10	.001

a. 12 cells (66.7%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is .13.

In the second phase, we categorized the course books (*Prospect 1, Prospect 2,* and *Prospect 3*) as *Prospect Series* and the other course books (English *Book 1, English Book 2,* and *English Book 3*) as *English Book Series* and then compared *Prospect Series* with *English Book Series*. The results of this Chi Square test is presented in Table 5. In this section, the results of chi-square (X^2 (2) = 24.24, P < .05) further indicated that the observed difference between the two series of course books was also statistically significant.

Table 5. *Chi Square Results*

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	24.24a	2	.000

a. 2 cells (33.3%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is .43.

Discussion

This study evaluated the two most used high school English course books in Iran, namely *The Prospect Series* and *The English Book Series*. Each of these two course books were analyzed in three levels and with regard to Nunan's (1999) classification of task types. The results indicated that the most prevalent type of tasks were the linguistic tasks and the other types of tasks were nearly totally neglected. Whereas nearly a 100% of tasks in these course books were allocated to linguistic type of tasks, there was a complete absence of creative, affective, and cognitive task types. Interpersonal tasks were only observed in the Prospect series and with a mean occurrence of 10%. This result goes in tandem with the study of Elmiana (2018) who analyzed task types in Indonesian high school EFL textbooks. Our findings also support the results of Alemi, Jahangard, and Hesami (2013) who evaluated Top Notch and Interchange concerning Nunan's (1999) arrangement of the tasks. They also reported that the linguistic tasks were shown to be the most frequent ones. In the same lines, Goodarzi, Weisi, and Yousofi (2020) also reported that the Iranian high school English textbooks failed to adequately follow the communicative approach to language teaching. By the same token, Razmjoo's (2009) study proved that the global textbooks used in private institutes in Iran were more successful in following the principles of CLT than the local textbooks (i.e. Prospect Series).

Moreover, cognitive tasks and interpersonal tasks were also among the least ranked task types. This finding is however in contrast with Elmiana (2018) who reported of interpersonal and cognitive tasks as the frequent ones. However, just like our study Elmiana (2018) also claimed

that creative macro tasks were the least frequent task type in the observed textbooks. It also needs to be pointed out that our results concerning the least frequent task type runs counter to the findings of Alemi, Jahangard, and Hesami (2013). While they claimed that cognitive tasks were the least frequent task types, in this study we observed that creative tasks were paid the least amount of attention. In the same vein, Alemi and Hesami (2014) also reported of an adequate number of creative tasks in the Top Notch series.

Moreover, as it was mentioned before in the results section, most of the micro task types were not in the repertoire of these course books. This is of course in spite of the fact that they each can have a significant role in the development of diverse necessary skills in the learners. For instance, with regard to the macro cognitive task types, classifying tasks require the language learners to put similar items into their related groups. According to Nunan (1999), these tasks can help learners to memorize vocabulary items very easily. Similarly, focusing on tasks can lead to more efficient learning outcomes and prepare the learners better for the acquisition of new materials (Nunan, 1999). Nunan (1999) also asserted that making an inference is considered to be a very important strategy to be learned by the learners. This kind of task provides the learners with a good chance to refer back to their background knowledge when trying ot learn a new language. According to Nunan (1999), learning includes making a relationship between the nold and new information and this is best practiced in this type of task.

Also, inducing, as another sub-category of cognitive tasks, was not included in the target course books. All of these course books did not allocate any task to inducing ones. The reason for this lack of attention to inducing task might be that in all these course books the grammar part of the English language is presented deductively; therefore, the learners would not be able to understand a specific grammatical points from the examples. As Cohn, Goldwater, and Blunsom (2010) state, grammar inducement in one of the most challenging tasks in language learning. In the same vein, Alemi, Jahangard, and Hesami (2013) also asserted that inducing task can instigate the learners to get more involved in the lesson and undergo some more intricate mental activates which can lead to more engagement with the total learning process.

The other totally ignored micro task type in these books was note-taking. It can engage the learners actively in writing down the important information in their own words, which is a crucial skill. Good notes not only help learners recall facts and ideas they may have been forgotten, but also keep learners' minds actively involved and prevent them from drowsiness and distraction.

In the same way, these course books didn't notice discriminating and concept mapping tasks as well. According to Nunan (1999), discriminating tasks allow the language students to differentiate between the main and supporting ideas while doing listening and writing tasks. It is worth mentioning that inadequacy of this sort of task in the target course books may result in language learners who are not competent and skilled at deciding upon the most crucial and significant type of information in any selected text. From this perspective, it can be concluded that lack of this mentioned task type can be regarded an important limitation and drawback (Celce-Murcia, 2001). Additionally, concept mapping tasks can engage learners actively in depicting the main themes and ideas of a selected text in the shape and form of a map; nevertheless, there was no instance of concept mapping tasks in the target course books. According to Washington (1988), concept mapping can facilitate the process of writing, increase vocabulary knowledge, improve reading comprehension and writing skills, and facilitate the comprehension of concepts in a subject area. Schmidt (1999) further stated that the concept mapping is in fact rooted in the famous principles of schema theory, assuming any piece of information is saved in the brain like abstract pictures as well as some rules to be used in

understanding this world better. Furthermore, diagramming, as another sub-category of cognitive tasks, was the next totally ignored task type in the target course books. As Sokemen (1997) argues, this task enables the pupils to label an illustration using some information from the text. Besides, it is a semantic strategy which can assist the learners in learning new vocabularies and collocations. In the same line, as Alemi and Hesami (2014) stated that diagramming tasks can improve language learning by organizing the needed information.

With respect to the macro interpersonal tasks, comprised of cooperating and role playing micro tasks, most of these observed course books (e.g., Prospect 2, English Book 1, English Book 2, and English Book 3) did not include cooperating micro tasks. Role playing tasks were also ignored by most of these books (e.g., English Book 1, English Book 2, and English Book 3). It needs to be pointed out that cooperating tasks can be very effective and fruitful in the process of language acquisition (Nunan, 1999) as it can instigate the students to interact with each other to successfully perform a task. Role playing tasks can develop the learners' communicative competence and motivation to learn more and in this regard they are considered to be very effective methods in the foreign or second language learning (Raz, 1985). In addition, it lead to a deletion of the learners' silence in the class and encourage them to interact in the target language more (Oyabu, 1999). Consequently, the lack of such task cannot foster the personal growth of students and improve their communicative skills.

The next observed macro task type in these series was linguistic tasks which was comprised of six micro tasks. With regard to using context micro task, English Book 1, English Book 2, and English Book 3 devoted some of their tasks to this category. Nonetheless, Prospect 1, Prospect 2, and Prospect 3 totally ignored it. According to Nunan (1999), this task makes the learners guess the meaning of different unfamiliar words with the help of the context around it and this can result in better and improved reading comprehension skill. Also, as Paribakht and Wesche (1999) note, majority of second language learners use guessing from the context strategy in order to learn vocabulary. In this category of tasks, summarizing and skimming tasks were among the ignored micro task types and none of the aforementioned course books covered these tasks types. This is in spite of the fact that summarizing is an essential skill that helps the learners to enhance their reading and writing abilities. Skimming, as one of the most important reading strategies, was also not included in any of these course books. In this kind of task, the learners read the text quickly to understand the general purpose and meaning of the text. Active readers use this reading strategy to help save time. Skimming can also build confidence by noticing the point that it is possible to gain meaning without reading every word in a text. Accordingly, Brown (1994) argued that skimming and scanning are among the most valued strategies that learners as well as native speakers use in reading a text. He also asserted that through skimming, the language learners can predict the main goal of a text and more easily get the message. However, to our surprise, all of these course books lacked this kind of task and did not dedicate any summarizing and skimming activities to their tasks. Hence, considering the fact that different skills are generally involved in these tasks on the one hand, and a growing need that exists for applying these skills in high-stakes international language tests on the other hand, it is contended that the aforementioned course books could not adequately cover important tasks and this can be regarded as a major shortcoming for books which are used at a national level.

The next macro task types were affective and creative tasks. As it was mentioned before, a complete absence of these macro tasks was observed. Self-evaluating and personalizing tasks, as two sub-categories of affective tasks, were totally ignored by all of these course books. Das, Mpofu, Dunn, and Lanpher (1998) also made explicit the fact that learners with self-evaluation skills can perform better overall. Furthermore, by acquiring self-evaluation skills, the students

will take responsibility for their learning objectives and perform better by focusing more consciously on their strong and weak points. However, no self-evaluating tasks were found in all of these target course books. Personalizing tasks, as another type of affective tasks, ask the pupils to talk about their own feelings and ideas about a particular topic; therefore, enquiring the learners to share their thoughts and views on a special subject in the form of personalized tasks will actively involve them in learning and result in more self-confidence in the students as well as dramatic increases in the learners' motivation. As a result, the lack of such task could be considered as a drawback for all aforementioned course books. Moreover, according to Nunan (1999), reflecting task enables learners to decide on the learning strategies that best suits them. Also, if the students want to increase their independence and achievements, they need to take complete responsibility of their learning and be actively engaged in the learning. Kohonen (2001) also asserted that the learners need to reconsider their basic assumptions and beliefs toward language learning and accordingly follow a reflective orientation. However, as the result of the present study showed, there was no instance of reflecting tasks in all of these course books.

Finally, brainstorming tasks, as the only type of creative tasks, were not observed in all of these course books as well. Brainstorming encourages learners to generate as many new ideas as possible. As Scane, Guy, and Wenstrom (1991) argue, through brainstorming type of activities the stress will fade away and the students will speak more. It would be better to provide the students with a stress-free environment to assist them write better. Moreover, as teaching brainstorming techniques can help the students in writing ability, its use seems to be totally justified. Also it can create necessary ideas in the acquisition of a second language (Harmer, 2001). In addition, brainstorming does not require any training and can be utilized at any educational level and in various situations (Buzan, 1993).

Conclusion
The results of the current study showed that most of the task types which were proposed by Nunan (1999), were not in fact included in the high school English course books used in Iran. The findings indicated that adequate attention was not devoted to all of the macro and micro task types. While, according to communicative approach, communicative competence necessitates the inclusion of grammatical, discourse, sociolinguistic, and strategic competencies, the findings of the current study revealed that linguistic competence has been overemphasized by these course books and other competencies have been excluded. Based on our findings and results, it can be argued that exposing learners to such course books will culminate in learners' competent in producing linguistically appropriate utterances, while at the same time contextually inappropriate. It is also worth mentioning that linguistic tasks may fail to prepare the students for real-life communication because they mainly tap the knowledge of grammar. This is in spite of the fact that in today's multicultural world, target language learners are more than ever required to develop communicative competence in order to be able to successfully interact with interlocutors from different languages and cultural backgrounds.

Furthermore, despite the fact that Prospect 1 (2013), Prospect 2 (2014), and Prospect 3 (2015) were newly published and were considered as the new generation of course books to be used in the high schools, they were not yet balanced in terms of the frequency of the various task types. Therefore, it can be concluded that on accounts of inequality of task type distribution, the learners exposed to these course books might be competent in one specific facet in language learning, however not well-prepared in the other aspects. With respect to the inadequacies of these course books observed in this study, language teachers are encouraged to pay more attention to this issue and help the learners by applying more communicative type of activities in

the classroom, supplementing different types of tasks together, and using authentic materials. We argue that language teachers need to take care of the pitfalls by compensating the deficiencies of the aforementioned course books, as no textbook is perfect. Moreover, the results of this research can provide first-hand valuable information to the material developers and widen their insight with regard to the significance of including a fair share of different areas of knowledge (e.g., task types). This is so important since through a revision in the teaching materials, the whole curriculum may be refined and improved.

Finally, just like any research study, the present study is not also void of limitations. First of all, the evaluation of the series was only made on their task types and their frequencies. Future studies may explore these course books from different perspectives. Also, interested researchers may investigate studies to explore the general trend of the improvements of the high school English course books used in the EFL context of Iran over time.

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