Authenticity of Discourse Markers and Features in Iranian School English Textbooks

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ABSTRACT

A carefully-constructed discourse is requisite for acquainting learners with a native-like lingual situation. The present study sought to appraise three locally-made EFL textbook series, prescribed by the Ministry of Education in Iran for the school students, in respect of their discourse features to ascertain the extent to which these course-books enable the foreign language learners to achieve pragmatic competence. The post-use evaluation of 21 dialogues incorporated in the course-books divulged that they were satisfactory at living up to the provision of sufficient instances of discourse markers but showcasing them in a hackneyed and iterative motif and in a cursory and hasty tempo. Situational ellipsis, as the most salient feature of the spoken discourse, was sparsely evidenced and for some discourse markers a one-off insertion of their instances was witnessed. Results of this study have some practical implications and suggestions for language teachers and textbook developers.

KEYWORDS: Discourse markers; EFL textbook; Materials evaluation; Spoken communication

INTRODUCTION

Course-book is deemed as a pivotal reservoir of input frequently utilized and exposed to EFL learners in Iranian classroom context. Gravity of pragmatic competence incorporated in the textbooks makes learners attracted to a relatable and natural way of expression for imparting an intended message. The motion toward localizing materials for language learning calls for more accountability of stakeholders in education (Mathison, 2010), cognizant of the significance of the introduction of the use and function of discourse markers to the novice and inexperienced language learners (Sun, 2013). Textual input is a primary resource for foreign language learners so that uncertified and unstandardized materials development makes their language learning complicated.

Textbooks play an important role in the enhancement of students' communicative abilities when it comes to learning English as a foreign language. Knowledge and dissemination of meaningful and contextual use of language at different levels of acquisition of communicative skills have been widely appreciated by language teachers (Schleppegrell, 2020), methodologists (Kumaravadivelu, 2006), and materials developers (Tomlinson, 2011),

worldwide. It is necessary for language learners to be communicatively competent as to master not only grammatical structures and needed vocabularies, but also a least of communication skills, which is more than the simple learning of word units (Humaera, 2015). However, effective communication is more than transmission of linguistic knowledge (Habermas, 1970). Appropriate use of linguistic knowledge in the given socio-cultural context is, likewise, quintessential for a fluent and eloquent speech (Schmitt, 2012). Pragmatics is an inseparable component of language competence in order for language users to apprehend and be apprehended in their interactions with native speakers (NSs). For enjoying an acceptable level of interactional competence, language learners need to have access to appropriate linguistic forms (Kecskes, Sanders, & Pomerantz, 2017).

Having a good command of linguistic and lexical knowledge is not tantamount to being able to master a foreign language communicatively. As Sarac-Suzer (2008) proclaims, to effectively use a language, a good mastery of both pragmatic and socio-pragmatic features is required. Erstwhile researches denote that pragmatic materials introduced in textbooks are sometimes devoid of any contextual information (Crandall & Basturkmen, 2004; Vellenga, 2004; Nguyen, 2011; Washburn, 2001). Pragmatic ken is of two types: socio-pragmatic ken of when a speech act (or appropriate utterance) is required; and pragma-linguistic ken of use of semantic formula or speech act (Cohen, 2005; Jiang, 2006). Pragmatic competence is pertained to making sentence meaning and speaker meaning pertinent so as to interpret the indirectly expressed communicative intention. Dialogue is deemed as a pivotal pillar in the context of foreign language teaching because it is the most natural type of language (Pilleux, 1969) that can be exposed to foreign language learners. To acquire a native-like foreign language, learners endeavor to use that is akin to native speakers of that language. Myriad of studies on dialogues of textbooks for second and foreign language learners, especially English, have demonstrated that the dialogues of textbooks were noticeably deviant from their authentic equivalents in terms of some discourse features. These discrepancies, however, sprout from the rudimentary linguistic intuition of materials writers on real life situations in foreign language.

The textbook dialogues do not present naturally occurring interactions (Bardovi-Harlig, 1996) and are mainly designed to reflect new grammatical and or lexical units. So it is common to confront situation in which socio-pragmatic norms of the target language are violated and the speakers' cultural differences in their verbal behaviors are highlighted. However, teachers and textbook developers are invited to exercise new insights for combining authentic dialogues and pedagogical practices. According to Wolfson (1989), the dialogues incorporated in the locally-made textbooks have a language that often deviates and diverges from that of its actual situation used in the real language context**.** Artificially-made language of textbooks is the major complaint concerning locally-developed course-book.

Discourse markers (henceforth DMs) are the most eye-catching façade of natural speech. According to Hellermann and Vergun (2007) discourse structuring contains the discourse devices that make the native speakers' speech more comprehensible. However, limited and less varied use of DMs is witnessed in the spoken discourse of EFL learners (Asic & Cephe, 2013; Helerman & Vergum, 2007; Lam, 2009). DMs act as signposts for the interlocutors to lend order at the crossroad of interpretation to mark the beginning and end, distribute turns, and organize the utterances as not to intersect the established rituals. In so doing, Iranian school EFL learners' text-books were targeted to be examined for their pragmatic and discourse features and particles. The questions addressed to quantitatively and qualitatively analyze the intended textbooks are as follows:

1. What are the type, range, and distribution of DMs in the Iranian school EFL learners' textbooks?
2. To what extent do the type, token, frequency of occurrence, and distribution of DMs in Iranian school EFL textbooks succeed to impart a discourse that is pragmatically well-formed?
3. What are the functional paradigms of DMs in Iranian EFL school text-books?

LITERATURE REVIEW

As Wong (2002) puts it, textbooks should enact a model of discourse pattern and sequence structure, recurring in usual interaction in language education to train students to be communicatively competent. According to Brown and Yule (1983), for language learners to do casual conversation effectively in the target language, they need realistic models of proficient users doing that. It is important for task designers, dialogue writers, materials adaptors, and

evaluators in the classroom to efficiently and effectively exercise the role of syllabus designers to duly appreciate language-as-discourse and as a result elevate saliency of discourse. This enables learners to have more fidelity in appreciating what language is and why people have to care for it. Thinking of language as a discourse gives a new perspective, however, in this way (Gilmore, 2007).

It seems to be realistic to suspect the textbook writers for their impeccable development of a problem-free course-book of an authentic-like communicational language as one would encounter in real-life situation. Gilmore (2007) points out that, despite the recent developments, there is still a wide gap in preserving the balance between the languages of real life and textbook. As Morrow (1977) purports, an authentic text is believed to incorporate a thread of real language which a real speaker or writer generates to impart a real message of some sort to a real audience. Granger (1998) propounds that, textbooks based on authentic native English are of more utility. Textbooks incorporating authentic language enable learners not only to develop fluency (Beaugrande, 2001) but also to accomplish a degree of naturalness in the use of foreign language (Fox, 1987). Tomlinson (2008) analyzed locally adapted and international course-books used in the Southern Cone including Argentina, Brazil, Chile and Uruguay. The findings indicated the scarce use of authentic material with "teacher-made texts" particularly and, likewise, plain vocabulary and structures. Albeit textbooks for English learners are deemed as a critical ingredient in English language teaching programs, they are berated for not providing adequate opportunity for learning authentic language to the learners (Vellenga, 2004). Wolfsan (1989) appertains this to the textbook developers' substitution of language use, hinged upon their intuition they construe, which might not be ever more tantamount to the language samples that native speakers actually generate. Synthetic and artificial dialogues are prevalent in locally-made textbooks. However, as Gilmore (2004) puts it, artificiality is not per se necessarily bad.

Nguyen (2011) argues that, numerous textbooks appear to be unhelpful in teaching appropriate rules of use of diverse speech acts. Diepenbroek and Dewing (2013) concluded that there are very few textbook series that persist in their inclusion of pragmatic content in respect of scope, quality, and quantity. Materials of integrated skills do not care about oral fluency; however, those fluency development activities could easily be improved by an instructor. Taguchi, (2009) defines pragmatic competence as the ability in apposite use of language in a social context encompassing innate and acquired capacities both which is natural byproduct of socialization. Dippold (2008) conceptualizes pragmatic competence as ken of forms and tactics to impart specific illocutions (i.e., pragmalinguistic competence) and ken of the application of these forms and strategies in an appropriate context (i.e., socio-pragmatic competence).

According to McCarthy (1991), albeit an utter authenticity, that is, natural occurring language, is unachievable in classroom setting, it is important to engage language learners in an authentic practice encompassing structures and vocabulary used in real life talk. In fact, authenticity is no absolute and has diverse angles and different ranges. Authenticity has been appraised and discussed in the language classroom through a considerable radius of approaches. However, certain discourse features should be identified to pinpoint whether a text is authentic or not. Brosnan, Brown and Hood (1984) underscore the preservation of naturalness of language without any alteration. McDonough and Shaw (1993) explicate that authenticity is a situation as approximately as possible adjacent to the outside world of the classroom, in terms of selection of language materials and the methods and practices used in the classroom. Nunan (1988) gives his definition for authentic materials as ones that are not produced for the sake of teaching language. Nunan (1999), further, adds that, however, authenticity is not a particular part of language teaching in language materials; rather, it is byproduct of genuine communication. Widdowson, (1979), likewise, argues that, authenticity is not something out there to be captured, but a thing that is realized by the practice of interpretation.

However, there are some rifts and dissonance over united meaning of the authenticity. Morrow (1977) proposes the authenticity as a real speaker or writer's production of a stretch of real language for a real audience aimed to impart a real message of some type. As Rogers and Medley (1988) propound, authenticity and authentic appertain to the naturalness of form, and appositeness of cultural and situational context in language samples of either oral or

written form. Authenticity is tantamount to the genuineness, realness, meaningfulness, consistency, dependability, fidelity, indisputable validity, and legitimacy of materials or practices (Tatsuki, 2006).

According to Lazaraton and Skuder (1997), authenticity is still a problem in text in respect of formality, turn taking, and quantity of talk and so on. Grant and Starks (2001) assert that textbook material besides being outdated does not supply the learners with what they hear out of the classroom. Boxer and Pickering (1995) asserted that native speakers (NS) tolerate unskilled second learners in pragmatics, which is taken as rudeness (Boxer & Pickering, 1995), than ones with grammatical errors. Soozandehfar and Sahragard (2011), analyzing the pragmatics of the language functions and speech acts of conversation segments of Top-Notch Fundamental textbooks, evidenced the pragmatic and functionally conversational deficiencies of these textbooks.

Gilmore (2004) conducted a study to contrast discourse features of seven dialogues in textbook from 1981 to 1997 and the real authentic interactions. The findings indicated conspicuous discrepancies between dialogues and their authentic equivalences in terms of length and turn-taking patterns, frequency of terminal overlap or latching, pausing, number of false starts and repetitions, lexical density and the use of hesitation and back-channeling. The differences reverted back to propensity of material writers toward using dialogues to invigorate the grammatical points. Bouton (1996), in a textbook evaluation study, evidenced the scarce occurrence of invitations existent in the published corpora of native speakers (NS). It should be pointed out that textbooks sometimes stress one semantic formula over others or provide misleading information (Nguyen, 2011). Wichien and Aksornjarung (2011), examining both student's and teacher's English commercial books used at a Thai university for communication courses, evidenced insufficiency of textbooks' pragmatic information quantitively and qualitatively for EFL students to obtain pragmatic competence. They concluded that non-native EFL teachers should not depend just on Teacher's books and need to have recourse to other sources of authentic language to expand their pragmatic competence and knowledge.

Godoy (2014) investigated the differences between dialogues of two teacher-made international EFL textbooks the New Headway Elementary by Soars (2006) and the New Interchange Intermediate by Richards (2005) used in the Chilean context with the frequency of occurrence of formulas of offers and requests as real data in the English language CANCODE corpora of both BYU-BNC, a British National (100 million words) and the Corpus of Contemporary American English (COCA) containing four hundred million words. The statistical analysis divulged that some. These teaching materials were found to be devoid of authenticity. Fung and Carter (2007), in a corpus study on the DMs of the interactive classroom discourses of the secondary school Hongkongers and the spoken British English, evidenced the usefulness of the DMs on the interpersonal, referential, structural, and cognitive levels to structure and organize speech.

Ahour, Towhidiyan, and Saeidi, (2014) examined ''English Textbook Prospect 2" against Litz's (2005) checklist for the book's appropriateness. They concluded that the book is not apposite for the students at the high school as being uninteresting, devoid of authenticity; communicative and meaningful practice namely. Mahdavi and Abdolmanafi-Rokni (2015) contrasted 'Right Path to English 1' taught formerly at junior high schools in Iran with newly published textbook 'Prospect 1' in respect of authenticity elicited the attitudes of 120 Iranian EFL teachers in Mazandaran province, Iran, through questionnaire surveys developed by Almagro and Cañado (2007). The findings denoted that the most of the teachers hold a more positive perspective toward 'Prospect 1' than 'Right Path to English 1' regarding the authenticity. Kamyabigol and Baghaeeyan (2014), evaluating Prospect 1 taught in Iranian high schools, evidenced, despite the integration of the four skills, student-student and student-teacher interaction, pair and group work promotion by the respected curriculum, however, the dialogs and contexts suffer from authenticity, and artificial recordings with new words not reviewed in the following lesson, no phonetic transcription for new words.

Moradi, Karbalae, and Afraz (2013) investigated the speech acts in the conversations, based on Searle's (1976) model, in English Textbooks I, II, and III designed for Iranian high school students and New Interchange series (I, II, III) mostly taught in Iranian institutions. 1100 diverse speech acts were found in New Interchange series whereas 275 speech acts were only found in high school textbooks. In the case of comparison of language functions, a variety

of language functions was observed in the New Interchange series while an unequal number were seen in the high school English textbooks with recurring and no specific pattern. Not communicatively oriented English textbooks for high school in Iran, however, fail to develop the pragmatic competence.

Abdollahi-Guilani, Yasin, and Hua (2011) carried out an evaluation study on the Iranian high school English textbooks hinged upon the textbook evaluation checklist to ascertain to what extent textbooks gear up learners to handle the language skills required for English as a foreign language. In so doing, 30 experienced English teachers teaching the three books were solicited their opinions on the books. Moreover, 200 students at three grades of high school were surveyed on some of the items from the checklist. The findings divulged that no patent objective of the curriculum in the three English textbooks and no explicit specification of the short-shelf and long-term objectives are mentioned. The syllabus did not specify what the students are to do in each lesson, and to where the students will come. The students were not at ease with the books due to the content and the appearance interest the students. Textbooks contain monotonous texts devoid of up-to-date genres. The students are not given the reason why they are reading a certain text, particularly, where the classroom activities do not correlate with the meaning of the passages. The grammatical points in the grammar part are not introduced in the passages and the students learn them in isolated manner or the teacher has to create an appropriate situation to teach those points.

The conversations were mechanical so that both the teacher and the students tended to skip them. The books failed to present the skills. The listening and writing practice were not presented and least number of vocabulary items covered in the passages are practiced in the exercises as a result the new words are not reinforced. the three high school English textbook for Iranian schools focus on reading comprehension, the ways to practice words in sentences correctly, and some introduction of phonetic symbols and pronunciation. There is no correlation of the learners' needs, and the materials of the textbooks. On the whole, locally-made textbooks are devoid of authenticity in respect of content and presentation. The variety and attractiveness are not considered in the passages. The progress from easy to hard content has not come into consideration and the cultural and communicative aspects are not heeded in the textbooks. Zaferanieh and Hosseini-Maasoum (2015) examined Iranian high school textbooks for the representations of pragmatic features speech acts and language functions based on Halliday's (1978), and Searle's (1976) models. The findings evidenced major inadequacy in pragmatic representations in these books. Different speech acts and language functions were insufficiently covered and dialogues lacked grading and authenticity with inappropriate simplifications and reductions, with no provision of meta-pragmatic information, systematic presentations, and culturally and religiously influenced presentation of English speech acts in dialogues.

Vellenga (2004) studied quality and quantity of eight ESL and EFL textbooks developed for intermediate to upper-intermediate levels through surveying informally the major publishers' four texts in integrated skills for EFL and four texts in grammar ESL to pinpoint information on pragmatic, meta-language style, and speech act by dint of page-by-page analysis. Moreover, through cross-reference study of the teacher's manual of each book to evaluate the pragmatic information. Teacher interviews were likewise conducted. The findings demonstrated that there was a dearth of meta-linguistic and meta-pragmatic information in the textbooks, endorsing the claim by Cullen and Kuo (2007) and Namaziandost, Shatalebi, and Nasri (2019) in that there is a paucity of these features and markers in the textbooks. On whole, the little extent of pragmatic information was observed in all the texts. Albeit a larger percentage of pages of EFL texts with pragmatic information were seen, the quality of pragmatic information appears to be better in ESL texts in respect of number of speech acts and number of pragmatic cues. However, no meta-pragmatic discussion on politeness or appositeness of most types of speech acts. Meta pragmatic information or extensions beyond the scope of the textbooks were not seen. The interviews on teacher exhibited that from among four teachers, three introduced outside supplementary activities. However, those activities contained scarcely pragmatic topics.

METHODOLOGY

The present study adopted a retrospective or post-use (reflective) stance to appraise *Prospects 1, 2, and 3* (the English textbooks for Iranian junior high school students at grades XII) to examine the spoken grammar of these EFL course-books used at school. The analysis methods adopted were based on the framework proposed by Carter and McCarthy (2006) and Cutting (2011) to dissect three main features of spoken language viz., (1) lexical (2) syntactical features, (3) discourse features for the linguistic and communicative competence purposes in respect of appropriateness, naturalness, and contextual consideration and Fung and Carter's (2007) framework of interpersonal, referential, structural, and cognitive categories to appraise discourse marking, which are more prevalent in the casual spoken grammar than written discourse. The textbook conversations were examined to ascertain to what extent they approximate authentic intercultural discourse and to draw further implications regarding the gaps in real spoken communication incorporated in the given conversations of this series. The instances of different types of linguistic features and categories and the choices were excerpted from the contents of the conversations and the total frequencies and percentage of different features of spoken discourse found in the Prospect series textbooks were enumerated and tabulated as they are depicted in Table 1.

MATERIALS AND INSTRUMENTS

A total of 21 short communication dialogues excerpted from three locally-made textbook series under rubric Prospect Series (Alavimoghadam, Kheirabadi, Foroozandeh, Sharabyani, Anani Sarab, & Ghorbani, 2013-2015), aimed for seventh, eighth, and ninth grade school EFL students in Iran, for national purposes, written by the board of foreign languages were chosen for a descriptive-analytical study of their discourse features. Prospect 1, released in 2013, which has been designed for seventh grade school EFL learners in Iran, contains eight lessons, each beginning with a conversation segment, revolves around the themes of identifying ourselves, classmates' inquiry on names and acquaintance, giving happy birthday news and questioning on age, inquiry into family status, pointing to someone by appearance, looking for persons, asking for address, and at last food. A conversation-like exercise of sound and letter was included for analysis in this study. Prospect 2, which has been developed to be imparting to the student at eighth grade in public Iranian school, delineates seven lessons each with one conversation theme on the topics of birth place origin, daily errands, individual skill inquiry, inquiry into friend's health problem, naming famous places in our country, countryside visiting place inquiry, and asking about individual hobbies, respectively. A practice part in each lesson has been inserted to teach spelling and pronunciation which is a conversation like task which was adopted for frequency analysis. Prospect 3 is comprised of six lessons of which six conversation themes and functions and six supporting practices for the conversation under rubric language melody were analyzed.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

This study aimed to assay three locally-made EFL textbook series, prescribed by the Ministry of Education in Iran for the school learners concerning the textual functions of the discourse features and markers to discern the weak points and potentialities of these course-books in enabling the foreign language learners to achieve pragmatic competence. To analyze quantitatively and qualitatively, the word counts of conversation-cum-tasks were done by hand to delineate the frequency of the items occurred in the texts. The interpretation of the data (dialogues) was based upon the frequency of DMs in apiece and total word counts in each book.

All the themes of the conversations were scrutinized descriptively in detail to extract the words or phrases which were qualified as DMs. In so doing, the operational definition for the discourse marker functions purported by Schiffrin (1987), Brinton (1996), Fraser (1999), Müller (2005), and Fung and Carter (2007) was used as the touchstone for qualifying the discourse markers. The DMs are tabulated in the separate tables based on their functions. However, caution was exercised not to baffle the items like 'well' where it limned the backchannel function and listenership cue function and in some places whet it connoted the meaning of the intensifier 'very' with real function of DMs. The type and frequency analysis of the disparate conversation parts of each book incorporating a radius of six and eight themes were used to identify and dissect the occurrences, distribution, and intentions of the discourse markers. These aspects of the discourse are brought up and canvassed separately and the

frequencies and types of each discourse marker found in the dialogues of the Prospect series are accordingly illustrated in the following tables.

DISCOURSE MARKING

Total word count for conversation themes in eight lessons of the book *Prospect 1* was reported to be 369 in total, in which seven discourse markers happened without any double occurrence for any of the discourse markers in each conversation albeit one discourse marker to mention it ''now'' occurs in two conversations separately, in lesson one and three. Total word count for conversation themes arranged in seven lessons of the book *Prospect 2* was 508 in total in which 35 discourse markers were evidenced of which some were repeated more than once in each theme of every lesson and some commonly happened in other lessons. More than any other discourse markers, the discourse marker 'YES' happened seven times in Prospect 2 sporadically and in lesson five and six occurred twice per conversation and DM 'how about' for five times in lessons two, three, six and twice in conversation of the lesson seven, respectively. Total word count for conversation themes plus ensuing language melody exercise devoted to six lessons of the book *Prospect 3* was reported to be 695 in total of which 51 were evidenced to be discourse markers distributed in whole lessons which happened once or more than one individually. The discourse marker 'yes' was evidenced to be happening, more than other DSs, for ten times computed totally in whole lessons including conversation parts plus language melody sections once in every task in all of the lessons and the discourse marker 'oh' for six times individually distributed in separate conversations.

INTERPERSONAL DMs

Interpersonal DMs signify shared knowledge to underline attitudes and indicate responses (Fung and Carter, 2007). Table 1 displays the frequencies of the interpersonal discourse markers and features.

Table 1. *Frequency of Interpersonal Discourse Markers based on the Book, Lesson, and Part of Lesson*

Interpersonal DMs	Book 1 frequency (lesson)	Book2 frequency (lesson)	Book3 frequency (lesson/part a,b,c)
Oh		1(1) 1(2) 1(2) 1(7)	1(1) 1(3a) 1(3b) 1(4c) 1(5) 1(6b)
Umm			1(4) 1(5)
yes		1(1)1(4)2(5)2(6)1(7)	2(1a1b) 1(2) 2(2b)1(3) 1(3) 1(4) 2(5)
yeah			1(6)
sure	1(7)	1(2) 1(3) 1(5)	1(3) 1(6)
ok			1(1b) 1(5)
that's fine		1(2)	
that's sounds great		1(2)	
no		1(2)	
really	1(1)	1(3) 1(7)	1(5) 1(5b)
well	1(7)	1(3a)1(3b)1(5)1(7)	1(1b) 1(3) 1(5)
interesting		1(7)	
that's nice			1(3)
I see			1(2)
that's great			1(5)
why not			1(5)
it's excellent			1(5b)
that'll be fun			1(5b)
that's too bad			1(6)

As clearly seen in Table 1, the most frequent item identified within the research scope is *yes* which significantly composes the majority of the DMs. Furthermore, *oh* and *well* as a frame maker compose a great deal of DM

representation within the frequency counts. The fourth feature in the rank is *actually* which has been used mostly for indicating attitudes, after yes, oh and *well*.

The writers' alternative for the discourse marker *yes* is witnessed to be Yeah, which appeared just once in all of the three books in Prospect 3, lesson six, while in lesson five of the book Prospect 3 the discourse markers *yes* is appeared to be exchanged in a friendly casual between two female friends which could be replaced by yeah or other onomatopoetic sounds. The use of *yes*, sampled below, in a casual conversation between two friends or even two classmates is an indicator of synthetically compiled dialogue which is spoiled in the matter of a friendly milieu and authenticity, likewise.

Mahsa: Oh, did you watch the reports on TV last night?
Mina: **Yes***, I did, but I like to read about them.*

It should be noted that, from instructional point of view, exploiting conversation task as a means to teach yes-or-no question is tantamount to sacrificing fluency at the expense of accuracy and marring the authenticity of the materials simultaneously, simultaneously. To put another way, to teach every skill in its own time and test them accordingly leave more room to maximize learning of the intended skill and help the developers to keep to the intended promises introduced for each part under the aegis of the titles. Kamyabigol and Baghaeeyan (2014) evidenced that dialogues and contexts in Prospect 1 are unauthentic, likewise. However, the incorporation of a counterfeit dialogue by casting and banishing it far aloof from its real register, as it is witnessed in the sample provided above when informal discourse is replaced with a formal one to carry over the burden of teaching question-answer making ability intersects cognitive adaptation, sociolinguistic development and building real concordance to a actual situation with non-real register. Overusing and overreliance on *Yes* convey that developers of these books are ill-equipped, lacking the dexterity to include a variety of other discourse markers or are inflicted with the uncertainty to acknowledge the appropriate use of that variety in its proper context. This argument corroborates the maladroit handling of materials development by non-native writer in purveying near-authentic materials and as results. For example, in lieu of using *yes* most of the time, Iranian materials developers could provide *uhh*.

In lesson two of the book Prospect 1, in the section sound and letters practice in the successive exercise for conversation a better alternative could be used in lieu of *Yes* in response to offer like oh, umm or a discourse marker conveying appreciation.

Librarian: Can I help you?
Student: **Yes***. Can I have my library card, please?*

In lesson three of Prospect 2, the teacher in response to the student he asks I have a question utters ''yes?'' which in this way conveys a kind of surprise especially with a question mark which could be replaced with some other expressions like here you are or another substitution for *yes* could be the go ahead as the affirmative response to the question raised.

Student 1: Excuse me, I have a question.
Teacher: **Yes***?*

Misapplications of some discourse markers are even evident in the text of the conversation. In the lesson one of Prospect 2, use of *oh* by teacher to react to what he hears as a surprise announcement by other interlocutors, is evident that the oh can be taken as pragmatically polite in the respect of ironical disrespectfulness as negative compliment as a jealousy guard which can be replaced with *Wow, great* or *really*. This is a kind of inter-transfer as a result of mistranslation of pragmatic function. The main meaning of *oh* in spoken dialogue is to signify the alternation of state by speaker (Heritage, 1984). The change of state denoted by *oh* can end up in positive and negative emotional illation (Aijmer, 1987). For example, by suggesting newsworthiness, a reply headed with *oh* might be perceived as more polite than one headed by *yes* (Fox & Schrock, 1999). But it could also be considered

ruder if the *oh* were used to sarcastically imply newsworthiness for something the speaker did not really think was newsworthy.

Shayan: Mr. Chaychi, this is my cousin Sam. He speaks French,
English, and a little Persian.
*Teacher: **Oh**, nice to meet you, Sam.*

COGNITIVE DMs

Cognitive DMs delineate the process of thinking through reformulation, elaboration and hesitation marks (Fung and Carter 2007). The frequency of the cognitive discourse markers and features are exhibited in Table 2.

Table 2. *Frequency of Cognitive Discourse Markers based on the Book, Lesson, and Part of Lesson*

	Book 1 frequency (lesson)	Book2 frequency (lesson)	Book3 frequency (lesson/part a,b,c)
Cognitive DMs			
Well		1(2)	
Excuse me		1(7)	1(4b) 1(6)
I know			1(1)
good			1(4)
just a second			1(6)
I think			1(6)
Interesting		1(7)	
Good			1(4)
fine	1(1)		
now	1(1) 1(3)		
look	1(8)		1(5b)

As shown in Table 2, the most widely used markers are w*ell* (8 instances) and least of all is *I think* and *I see* happening just once. Well can be co-occur with other discourse markers like *well I think, well you know*. However, it, as a starter, could be replaced with another alternative, like *Um*s and *uh*s or other upcoming delays, in the spelling and pronunciation exercise, ensuing the conversation part in the lesson three of the book Prospect 2. *Wells* are not transitionally sensitive and not a kind of filler (Fox, 2015). According to Hale (1999), *well* signals *forthcoming frustration or dissonance*. However, it should be added that as a cohesive device, *well* has a non-attitudinal function (Blakemore, 2002; Groen, Noyes, & Verstraten, 2010).

Teacher: What do you do in the afternoons, Reihaneh?
*Student: **Well**, I go to the gym on Sundays and Tuesdays.*

In lesson one of the book Prospect 3, in the conversation theme *oh,* as oh-initial turns, is not expected as it appears an example of misapplication of discourse marker which could be replaced by backchannel cues and non-lexical conversational sounds like *mmm-hmm, aummm, umm**,** um-hm um*, *am*, *hm*, as a delay device and to buy time to think.

Ehsan: What's he like?
*Parham: **Oh**, he is really great! He's clever and kind.*

REFERENTIAL DMs

Referential DMs show the nexus between utterances. As Fraser puts it (1999), they force connection between some aspects of the discourse segment they belong to and some aspect of a previous discourse segment. The most common DMs of this type is *and* inserted ranked fifth in frequency. Table 3 exhibits the frequencies of the referential discourse markers and features.

Table 3. *Frequency of Referential Discourse Markers and Features*

	Book 1 frequency (lesson)	Book2 frequency (lesson)	Book3 frequency (lesson/part a,b,c)
Referential DMs			
and		1(3b) 1(5) 2(7)	1(1) 1(4c)
actually		1(7)	1(3) 1(4)
but		1(7)	1(6) 1(1c)
of course			1(2b)
because			1(3b)

Table 3 demonstrates the frequencies of the referential discourse markers and features. In Prospect 3, lesson four, in the conversation section use of actually as a crutch word catches the eyes. It betokens something that is extant, but it is sometimes used as a means to add punch to a saying. Actually as a multifunctional discourse particle enacts as an adverb or contrastive and emphatic feature. In its emphatic role, *actually*, implies a justification, dissonance or explanation for erstwhile statement (Aijmer, 2002). The contrastive function signals the converse to ci-devant statement and likewise signifies amendment (ibid). However, he adds that, it is adopted as a style bolding device in spoken communication (ibid).

Tourist: Where is the post office?
*Pedram: **Actually** it's near here. It's just round the corner.*

STRUCTURAL DMs

Structural DMs join successive units of talks, and likewise, organize and manage sequence of verbal activities (Fung and Carter 2007). Table 4 enumerates

Table 4. *Frequency of Structural Discourse Markers and Features based on the Book, Lesson, and Part*

	Book 1 frequency (lesson)	Book2 frequency (lesson/part a,b,c)	Book3 frequency (lesson)
Structural DMs			
how about		1(2) 1(3) 1(4b) 2(7)	

Table 4 portrays the frequency of the structural discourse markers and features. An exemplar of the sequencing discourse marker is incorporated in lesson one of the Prospect 1 using *now* as follows in the statement below. However, the part of sound and letters practice in the successive task after conversation as it occurs again where it could be replaced by another synonymous counterpart like *let's turn to, let's move on to, let's get down to.*

*Teacher: Thank you, sit down, please. I'm your English teacher. My name is Ahmad Karimi. **Now**, you tell me your names.*

Another sequencing marker *first* is evident in the following excerption from Prospect 2, lesson four. Except for these two, no sequencing structural DMs is found in all of the three books.

Teacher: Let's go to the office and call your parents **first.**

Other structural markers as topic shifts include so, now, and how about which appears in lesson 8 of Prospect 1, excerpted in the following, lesson 2, 3, and 7 of Prospect 2. What about occurs in lesson 6 of Prospect 2 and lesson 3 of Prospect 1 into the bargain.

Student 1: Look, it's enough. I'm hungry. **How about you?**

The findings denoted that the discourse markers in the transcript conversation composed by non-native developers, who concocted the scenarios and schemata of their own, which were somehow successful at the inclusion of everyday issues pertinent to Iranian cultures and modus vivendi, especially school errands, however, appear to fail to enjoy the variety needed to enrich and equip the intended users. The iterative and hackneyed phrases that, overlapped in some lessons and conversely failing to appear in other ones to enhance the erstwhile occurrences, seem to reflect the inadequacy of those communication dialogues.

DMs such as *uhh*, *hıh, hı-huh, kind of/sort of, right, yeah*, *of course*, *like*, *alright, listen, by the way* which happen to be seen more frequently in the discourse of native speakers can be used for substituting other discourse markers to uplift the variety of the communication features. Non-lexical conversational sounds appeal to young learners than words in that they summon their imagination more readily and make at ease them to associate well with the event and activate their meta-cognitive involvement.

VAGUE EXPRESSIONS, APPROXIMATION, AND HEDGING

Vague expressions are used to convey a kind of message that is not straightforward. No instance of vague expression is seen, except for one case in all the three books, namely, in practice part in last lesson of Prospect 1 in the sentence *Let's have something to drink*, in lesson 7 of the Prospect 2 in the statement *'What sort of things do you read?'* in conversation practice, and in lesson five of the Prospect 3 inserted in the sentence '*There are many interesting things there*'. Regarding the study of syntactic and lexical features specialized to the spoken grammar, the initial scrutiny revealed that the vague expressions, such as *something, anything, stuff, thing, kind of,* and *sort of,* and suchlike, are scant.

In Prospect 2, lesson 5, vague expression many can be taken as mistakenly ironically and causes misconception. However, questioning on famous building in Isfahan when the inquirer seems to have a prior knowledge before setting his trip to Isfahan and that this conversation is supposed to be between a tourist and an indigenous citizen leaves a drawback on the behalf of the textbook developers to pose such question.

Phanindra: Any famous buildings?
Morteza: Yes, many. Actually, Isfahan is very famous for its mosques and palaces.

The use of approximations 'a little' in the sentence *He speaks French, English, and a little Persian,* extracted from the lesson one of the Prospect 2 book, and another from the lesson 6, the conversation part, as follows *There's a lot of wind in summer, fall and winter,* whereas no trace of usage of approximation is witnessed in Prospect 1. An exemplar of hedging, *sort of*, in lesson 7 of Prospect 2 is seen as it is inserted in the following excerpt. It should be notified that hedging in the interrogative statement like this is used as a tactic to soften the upcoming confusion and annoying or domineering effect.

What sort of things do you read?

No sign of vague quantifiers, like a *bit* and *a little bit* acting pragmatically as downtowner or softener found is found in the triad of the books.

SITUATIONAL ELLIPSIS

Situational ellipsis is the purposeful deletion of items. There is no well-thought agenda for the introduction of situational ellipsis in the series as some instances of situational ellipsis is noticed in Prospect 1, lesson eight as it is seen in the following, but suddenly vanishes in Prospect 2 and 3, where it is expected to be seen as the learners are in developmental route in lieu of inserting the complete form of expression in which pronoun of the phrase sounds great can be eliminated. The corpus of natural speech of native speakers of English is laden with instance of frequent elliptical constituents like initial *I* plus copular *be* in declaratives (e.g., *I am*), expletive *it* or other demonstrative pronouns and its accompanying verb *be*), (e.g.,*It is*), interrogatives (e.g., *What's*), subject pronouns (e.g., *we, he*), existential *there* plus *copular* copular verb *be* and prepositions (e.g., *in, at*). Written grammar is supposed to be

devoid of ellipsis. The studies conducted by Carter and McCarthy, (2006) and Cullen and Kuo (2007) evidenced that natural native-speaker English conversation is replete with frequent elliptical elements.

Student 2: Me, too. Let's have some cake and milk.
Student 1: Sounds good, but I'd like some tea with my cake.

HEADERS AND TAILS

The term 'headers' appertains to movement of constituents to the fronting part to extend prediction of meaning like displacement of object before subject pronoun e.g., *Ali, I don't* like the white house on the corner, is that where she lives? Tails come at the end of utterance to express attitude, add punch and supply repetition like in the pseudo-cleft sentence *What I need is a good holiday* or in this example *It was fun going shopping*. However, no sign of header and tails is evident. According to Carter and headers and tails enact as "interpersonal grammar", in which the speaker feels committed to be sensitive and empathetic to the listener's sense of belonging as to smooth the flow of communication and facilitate cohesion.

PAUSING AND REPEATING

Naturally occurring discourse is typically teeming with pausing and repeating (Lege, 2012). The pausing *umm* as a silent filler device in lesson 4 and 5 in Prospect 3 is seen but unfilled ones (i.e., '…') is absent in all of these books. Unfilled pauses can collocate with *um* or *umm* denoting the speaker's uncertainty and likewise in an utterance as an ellipsis indicating that speaker has something more to say or as marks the end of a turn.

Research shows that pauses as crutch words have robust effect in maintenance of discourse helping speaker to buy time provided with *umm* and *uh* to coordinate his thought and at the same time allowing listener to predict what is going to come and also recapitulate erstwhile utterance (O'Keeffe, 2007). According to Gilmore (2004), pauses alleviate cognitive load en route to bolstering comprehension through sundering utterances into smaller meaningful chunks. These authentic features of spoken discourse; hence, can be incorporated in EFL textbooks even from the outset of preliminary learning without any notorious effect on the learnability. The acclaimed themes and functions in these textbooks examined promulgate to enrich the foreign language of the students who are not adept at using English language. Taken as granted that these themes and functions are to teach the basic communication features under the guise of conversation, no sign of progressing across the difficulty and complexity level is even seen in respect of grading these themes and functions.

To sum up, the findings illustrate that, on whole, there exist DMs in these locally made series textbooks but small varieties of them are witnessed to be included. The course-books evaluated seem to be inadequately larded with textual and structural DMs in their written discourse including a fixed type of coordinators such as *but* which may be

the result of the transfer from the native language or the transmission of knowledge of coordinates from their written discourse or lack of cognizance of the range of possibilities of other items. For instance, there it seems to be an urge by the materials designers to overly use the term 'actually', where other alternatives, in turn, can be appropriately and correctively used as a synonym to preempt the use of this iterative individual discourse marker.

By and large, authentic materials should cater not only for linguistic veracity but also for equipping language learners with the skills to discern the appropriate language function during real-time interactions to enhance their communicative competence. Textbook dialogues, especially, should bear this burden to provide leeway and means to expose foreign and second language learners to the specific cultural knowledge and particular social situations, embracing diverse social conventions and different linguistic realization in specific contexts. School course-books made locally to impart language skills are designed in such a way to act as a reliable guide to appropriate language use.

However, these dialogues seem to be deviant from their authentic counterparts in terms of length, terminal overlap, latching, hesitation devices, false starts, repetitions, and pragmatic appropriateness so that it calls for the inclusion of more frequent discourse features for future national textbooks. The findings corroborate the study done by Goodarzi, Weisi, and Yousofi (2020), evidencing that none of the Prospect series enjoy the communicative

potentials, especially the Prospect 1, failing to provide significant use of discourse-level language and facilitate communicative competence in learners, both. However, the study carried out by Arab and Rastgou (2022) showed that Prospect 3 is suitable for participating learners, involving them in the classroom activities in all four skills, and managing to develop learners' communicative competence. All in all, exposure to discourse markers as the devices for joining sequence of turns and misaligning responses, bridging turn's misplacement and discontinuities, and exchanging turn's affinity through instructional materials rich at the pragmatic items is advised to help learners learning English as a foreign language.

IMPLICATIONS AND APPLICATIONS

This study provides several pedagogical implications, specifically, for the materials developers and teachers, preparing and presenting, respectively, these textbooks to the schoolchildren. It brings about the significant elements of the practical yields for the curriculum developers on the pragmatic value of these textbooks. This study illuminates the discrepancies between the discursive context and authenticity of these localized materials and their indigenous counterparts. The results will inform teachers of the importance and pay-off of discourse markers in language learning. This study is an extension to the linguistics evidence on the discourse markers and features in Iranian EFL context, while simultaneously evaluating its educational contents.

This study is also significant to Iranian educational curriculum develops in that it sheds light on the natural developmental sequence of the acquisition of the English language. The findings help the materials designers reconsider the textual structuring and discourse organization of the course-books to facilitate the sequence of the language development in EFL contexts. The findings help the teachers improve the discourse competence of the language learners. Locally-made ELT textbooks are often failed to provide natural examples of language function paralleled to language used in actual second language situation. This study provides pragma-linguistic evidence on the EFL textbooks, enabling materials developers to include discourse devices in compliance with the real language use.

The materials developers and EFL teachers need to be informed of the pros and cons of these series examined to reconsider their practices to help learners relate to the natural contents. Iranian EFL foreign language learners need to have at the very least access and exposure to the courseware materials that are pragmatically well-developed to learn the ways of living up to a cohesive, coherent, and authentic discourse (Schiffrin, 1987). The present study helps teachers and curriculum developers to learn about and review the utility or inutility of the discourse particles. The results highlighting the significance of the discourse units and elements in a natural speech assist teachers to uplift the discourse knowledge, conventions, and expectations of EFL learners. The outcomes of this study highlight

the emotive functions of these discourse markers to the teachers as to help the learners learn an authentic language and interact naturally with the native speakers.

CONCLUSION

This study attempted to evaluate the English textbooks (Prospect Series) for their discourse markers and features. Little effort is witnessed to be invested in the development of these national teacher-made course-books as to provide authentic discourse features. O'Keeffe (2007) suggests that instances based on naturally-occurring corpus be included for pedagogic goals in most contexts. The instances of situated spoken language should be incorporated in the textbooks so as to enable the English language learners to learn about the pragmatic flow of discourse and to identify and recognize how to apply these in a conversation effectively lest they should be stereotyped or misjudged by the native speaker. This study illuminates the processability, teachability, learnability, and the presentation of the discourse in these textbooks. This reflects the degree of authenticity preserved in the transcribed conversation conceived by the writers to be in vicinity to real target language use. The care for choosing the elements of spoken grammar and their cognitive difficulty in congruence with pedagogical needs and levels of the learners will be scrutinized and the needed work to improve the conversation scripts will be implicated.

Overreliance and overusing of a fixed number of pragmatic features dilute the materials developed by non-native writers being remiss of adding meat to the speech through apposite pragmatic markers which consequently disarm the foreign language learners of enjoying a well-fitted discourse. Likewise, inability to comply with the

interlocutor's register and appearing incongruous to its style make the interaction cumbersome and intolerable and roughly predictable to move forward any further. According to Qun (2009), this preempts the use of other types of DMs. Supposedly, theses textbooks are aimed to teach language to less advanced students at early stages of foreign language learning. It seeks to introduce and base the introduction of language via more of onomatopoeic words like *umm/mmm/umh/um*-hum instead of *well* which appears to sound more formal and is mostly found in discourse of more advanced language users. However, appositeness should not be sacrificed at the expense of simplicity. Hedging or vagueness can be postponed to later stages of learning when learners have developed basic spoken grammar.

Although this study opens up the discursive content of Iranian school English course-books, there are several limitations that should be taken into account when considering the results. The study method to answer and discuss the research questions is subject to some amounts of bias, interests, and expectations. However, mono-method bias could influence the results, into the bargain. Triangulation principle in the analysis of texts can be deployed to evaluate the school course-books. Another limitation concerning this study that should be noted is that one-sided concern with the textbooks may influence the analytical approach. Other research strands, approaches, and frameworks, such as contrastive pragmatics, corpus studies, and socio-cognitive research, might come into effect to increase the reliability and validity of the findings. Hence, different multi-level studies and paradigms can be harnessed to overhaul the discourse particles and features in EFL textbooks.

So, it is suggested that future studies compare and contrast textual function of Iranian school English course-books with situational-dimensional functions of its source language. Further studies could include the levels of proficiency of the students to yield more comprehensive findings. This study prompts to explore the way these DMs are taught and acquired can be investigated using needs analysis to understand the lacks and wants of the learners in terms of discursive practices of these textbooks. Interpersonal functional components of these textual materials regarding their discourse markers and futures can be examined cross-culturally. Textual function of the discourage markers and features addressing the norms of politeness equivalent in the source language can be cross-examined. The dialogues of these course-books as written by the non-native speakers can be further examined for their authenticity of the discourse markers and features of their functional equivalence mapping onto the source language.

Subsequent studies may include different theory-based models and frameworks of discourse analysis to substantiate the results. Further studies are needed to explore from a syntactic, semantic, and pragmatic perspective the way these markers and features work in discourse hindering or facilitating learners' language development.

Cross-language and intra-language analysis of these discourse markers and features can be done to examine whether these discourse devices have a function equivalent to that of its natural setting. Future research might include an ethnographic tenet, such as survey study or interview, to further elaborate on the pedagogical relevance and importance of the sequences of the development of these discourse markers in learners' linguistic proficiency stages.

The discourse markers and features can be further analyzed extra-linguistically for their real-world effects on the language learners. Future studies might evaluate discourse markers and features in the course-books for their extra-linguistic functions, contributing to textual progression and language development. Their discourse status and conditions can be analyzed through the inquiry into the reactions, feelings, and attitudes of the learners to the discourse markers and features of these textbooks. Further investigation is needed to apprehend if these discourse markers and features help prolong or discontinue communication. The effects that these discourse markers and features leave upon the language users can also be thoroughly explored from the point of the views of the teachers and learners.

Future studies can consider the split and gulf between discourse features incorporated in the textbooks written by nonnative writers and authentic materials in light of their interpersonal functions. It seeks the researchers to do more field study to apprehend if these discourse markers and features are successful at making language learners relate to their corresponding functions. A systematic linguistic-pragmatic analysis can also be implemented to determine the exact nature of the functional application or misapplications that these texts have in the context of situation. Future studies can take into account the teachability and learnaibility aspects of these discourse markers and features produced by the non-native for the sake of the foreign learners. The authenticity of these language teaching materials can be studied for their realization of faithfulness to the realistic and authentic interactional discourse.

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