

Evaluating Speech Acts in ELT Textbooks: The Case of Compliments and Complaints in the *Touchstone* Series

Mahdieh Jalilian

*MA Candidate, Department of English, Isfahan (Khorasgan) Branch,
Islamic Azad University, Isfahan, Iran
mahdieh.jalilian@yahoo.com*

Ali Roohani*

*Assistant Professor, Shahrekord University, Iran
roohani.ali@gmail.com*

Abstract

Textbooks play an important role in English Language Teaching (ELT), particularly in the English as a Foreign Language (EFL) context where they provides the primary linguistic input. The present research was an attempt to evaluate the *Touchstone* series in terms of compliment and complaint speech acts. Four *Touchstone* textbooks (*Book 1, Book 2, Book 3, and Book 4*) were selected and content analysis was done using Olshtain and Weinbach (1993) complaint strategies and Wolfson and Manes' (1989) classification of compliments. The frequencies and percentages of compliments and complaint speech acts were obtained. Data analysis showed that, first, the total frequency of the complaint speech act was higher in *Touchstone, Book 4* than the other three textbooks; second, the frequency of complaint and compliment speech acts in the Writing section was quite low, but the Conversation section had a high frequency of compliment speech act in the *Touchstone* series; third, the expression of annoyance or disapproval complaint strategy was frequently used in the *Touchstone* series; fourth, the compliment strategy of 'noun phrase + looks/is (intensifier) adjective' was very frequent in the *Touchstone* series; finally, there was a significant difference between the frequencies of the two speech acts, in general, in the four *Touchstone* textbooks. Considering the weaknesses and strengthens of *Touchstone* series, implications for teachers, material developers, and textbook writers are provided.

Keywords: *Touchstone, Material evaluation, Speech act, Complaint, Compliment*

1. Introduction

In the 1970s, Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) was introduced in response to audio-lingual teaching method and their disappointing outcomes. The mechanistic nature of audio-lingual pattern practice could not prepare learners for using target language in everyday conversations. According to Hymes (1972), learners' communicative competence, which is the

ability to express expeditiously what they mean in the target language, is highlighted in the CLT approach to achieve communication in real-life situations. According to Niezgodá and Röver (2001), communicative competence is the common goal of communicative approaches in language teaching. Thus, the need for the textbooks to bring CLT into EFL settings has become significant.

As for the materials used in classes, the results of Chadran's (2001) study showed that teachers preferred commercially produced materials available in the market over the prescribed textbooks developed by the educational ministries. They preferred not to engage themselves in producing materials of their own and considered textbooks outdated and dull. Nowadays, commercial ELT textbooks such as *Touchstone* series have become popular in many language and tutoring centers for English language teaching/learning. Some of these ELT textbooks are adopted without any pre-use evaluation. They might make language learners grammatically competent, but they may fail to make them how to use the target (Eslami-Rasekh, 2005). In fact, these ELT textbooks may not contain enough contents about the communicative function of language, at the center of which is pragmatics. This would give emphasis on the importance of analyzing and evaluating textbooks in terms of pragmatic issues, especially speech acts. Among the fundamental speech acts are complaints and compliments.

Complaints and compliments are two types of English speech acts commonly addressed in ELT textbooks (Bouton & Kachru, 1993; Olshtain & Cohen, 1991). As Brown and Levinson (1989) state, complaints are not single words, but a string of words put together accompanied by criticism. Usually objection to something wrong or illogical to us is the main purpose of complaint. Complimenting is a positive politeness strategy that points to the partner's positive face.

Accordingly, this study, can build the necessary foundation based on which teachers might be able to help Iranian EFL learners to tackle pragmatic failures and become more competent learners in terms of utilizing speech acts of complaint and compliment, appropriately. In addition, the results of this study would be of value to all

who teach L2, and, consequently, to those who learn it. Thus, the present study aimed to answer the following questions:

1. How frequently is complaint speech act used in the *Touchstone* series, following Olshtain and Weinbach's (1993) classification of the complaint strategies?
2. How frequently is complement speech act used in the *Touchstone* series, following Wolfson and Manes' (1989) classification of the compliment structures?
3. Are there any statistically significant differences in the proportion of the speech acts of compliments and complaints in the *Touchstone* series?

2. Literature Review

Several studies have explored the manifestations and functions of different pragmatic aspects of English language presented in ELT textbooks. Soozandehfar and Sahragard (2011) analyzed the conversation sections of *Top Notch Fundamental* textbooks based on the pragmatic dimensions of language functions and speech acts. For this purpose, 14 conversations from the entire 14 units of the textbooks were selected randomly and the two pragmatic models of Halliday's (1978) language functions and Searle's (1975) speech acts were applied. The results indicated that the conversations in these newly-arrived textbooks were not pragmatically efficacious and functional.

In their study, Alemi and Rezanejad (2014) investigated the frequency of occurrences and proportions of speech acts of complaints and compliments in the four volumes of the textbook *English Result*. It was found that the textbooks were rich in terms of the number of the two speech acts; however, regarding their presentation, there were only one or two dominant strategies in both cases. In general, the textbooks were reported to provide learners with adequate amount of complaints and compliments, but with low variations in strategy types, which

may result in learners' insufficient conceptual and practical knowledge of speech acts to be applied appropriately in different contexts.

Furthermore, Toolabi (2002) conducted a study on the use of speech acts existing in the English textbooks for Iranian high school and *New Interchange* series. Using speech act model of Searle's (1975), they analyzed speech acts within the conversations to find the way of their presentation. Findings showed that the *New Interchange* series applied 1100 different speech acts whereas for high school textbooks it was only 275 speech acts. They also compared the two sets of books in terms of language functions and found different language functions used in the *New Interchange* series; yet, the functions were presented unequally in the high school English textbooks. In addition, some of them returned in the books, which followed no certain pattern. As the high school English textbooks used in Iran are not communicatively oriented; the researchers concluded that language learners or students could develop the pragmatic competence by these books.

Different studies have also explored the Compliment Responses' (CRs) features in different cultures and languages. For instance, CRs within compliment and compliment responses of a group of American and Japanese English interlocutors have been analyzed in Ishihara (2003) study. The results revealed that Japanese speakers preferred to moderate the compliment or like Americans used "thank you" after a compliment. In another study, Jianda (2006) compared various features of compliment and CRs related to native and non-native English speakers.

Echols and Al-Batal (1996) investigated the differences and similarities between American English and Syrian Arabic CRs. Findings revealed that in both cultures the speakers did not reject compliments and

were more likely to accept or mitigate the force. Conducting a cross-cultural study, Ishihara (2011) compared British English and Spanish CRs. In a follow-up study, Berry (2000) studied the way of producing target-like CRs in English in female Arab learners of English. She found that female Arab learners transferred L1 compliment terminologies and approaches to target language.

A gender-based study also was carried out by Heidari, Rezazadeh, and Eslami Rasekh (2009) on Iranian EFL learners. He found that females tended to use evade and discard strategies rather than males did. Finally, House (1996) compared English and Turkish formulas, topics, and classification of topics according to control, performance, appearance, skill, and attribute while the bilingual learners were utilizing speech acts.

Regarding the importance of textbooks as the primary source of learning and teaching in EFL contexts, practitioners and researchers in the sphere of ELT course design and language pedagogy have increasingly felt the need of evaluating materials developed and taught from different perspectives. To this end, many EFL materials and textbooks have been undergone various investigations. A rather comprehensive study was conducted by Riazi (2003). He reported the results of his evaluative study based on an ELT textbook under the title of *English Fisherhand 2* (EF2). The study was carried out in Sung Kyun Kwan University in Suwan, South Korea. As he stated the purpose of this research project was to determine the overall pedagogical value and suitability of this book towards the specific language program in that particular learning environment. A sample of eight intermediate English course instructors as well as five hundred students who were enrolled in the program has been employed.

Darali (2007) investigated the addition of pragmatic issues, by making a precise analysis of *Spectrum* series and suggested that the series have provided different language functions. Yet, some of the functions which were often employed in everyday conversation, e.g. promising, and threatening, were not only in the form of accidental functions, but also not as common as others.

Rezaei (2010) based on the principles of communicative and task-based approaches, implemented a study, and made a precise analysis on the *New Interchange* series to examine the extent of principles of CLT and TBLT (Task-Based Language Teaching) approaches included in the series. To do this, using Ellis' (2008) task model, she found that the principles of communicative and task-based approaches have not been followed by the *New Interchange* series.

E.A. Soler (2005) examined and assessed five selected English language course books concerning vocabulary selection and teaching techniques they used. Content analysis, as an examination and evaluation method, was preferred in this study. As a consequence of this evaluation, all selected textbooks combined lexis into their syllabuses by emphasizing on word knowledge by means of single headings and additional sub-headings, such as Word Formation, Vocabulary, Easily Confused Words, Word Building, Keyword Transformation, Synonyms and Near-synonyms.

Rastegar (1992) evaluated two series of ELT textbooks used for teaching English in Iranian high schools from 1965 to the present. In so doing, they used textbook evaluation model of E. A. N. Soler and Martínez-Flor (2008). The results revealed that one of the main factors for the students' success in English was the ELT textbooks. They proposed that in the textbooks, the learners should have enough

opportunity to prepare the language they are learning communicatively.

In the area of textbook evaluation, several studies have been carried out. For instance, Vellenga (2004) compared EFL and ESL(English as a Second Language) textbooks. She considered that textbooks hardly offered enough information for learners to obtain pragmatic competence effectively. Findings revealed that the textbooks had a lack of meta-linguistic and explicit meta-pragmatic information, and the assessment of EFL and ESL textbooks showed while the amount of pragmatic information was small across all texts, a larger percentage of pages of EFL texts included pragmatic information.

Otlowski (2003) conducted another study in the area of pragmatics. He evaluated the *Expressway A* series, a series of ELT materials to study the interpretation of gender and the representation of the different ethnic groups. This textbook was analyzed based on two criteria: the criterion of gender bias (the illustration of women in stereotypical roles), and the criterion of ethnic group portrayal (the visibility and interpretation of ethnic groups in the text). In terms of these criteria, he evaluated the conversations and graphic pictures of the textbook. In conclusion, he suggested that while *Expressway A* had been more improved than many earlier EFL textbooks, it still portrayed women in roles that no longer exactly represented their role in society. A sanitized view of the ethnic make-up of the societies was also given in the text. In addition, it revealed a large degree of cultural thoughtlessness. According to Otlowski (2003), if a nonnative English teacher uses textbook effectively, there is a need for more detailed notes on the sociolinguistic treatment of certain terms, on the women's role in society, and on the cultural make-up of the directed societies. He claimed that students should learn about the different roles of

women in society and they need to learn about the linguistic debate on the grammatical terms of situation and lack of situations to women in texts.

Eslami-Rasekh (2005) evaluated an EST (English for Science and Technology) materials to observe how far the recommended textbooks used in ESL classrooms (in Malaysian context) offered the essential tools in organizing learners for the transition of language skills across principles. They used a framework for assessment, which was argued to be developed by Cohen (1999). However, they maintained that most of the EST syllabus and materials were specific to the requirements of growing scientists and technocrats and obviously different from the syllabus and materials used in General English. Lastly, they observed that their study emphasized some characteristics of EST materials in comparison to General English. They argued that these features could be incorporated into future General English materials to enable some of the EST aims achievable for the advantage of second language learners.

Tavakoli (1995) implemented a valuable study on the language functions in the conversations inserted in the English textbooks of Iranian senior high schools. Based on a model of speech acts by Searle (1975), the data were analyzed as criteria for assessing the conversations to see whether the various kinds of speech acts were properly used. She claimed that three of five various kinds of language functions (representative with high frequency, directive, and expressive) were used in the texts, although declaration had been overlooked.

The general properties and the suitability of the *Touchstone* series in Iran EFL context have been investigated by Ghobadi and Fahim (2009). Forty highly experienced teachers included 20 males and 20 females, holding BA to Ph.D, participated in this

research. To obtain information required for the study, they used Riazi (2003) questionnaire included 40 items. The data obtained from the questionnaire were subjected to Independent Sample *t*-test and basic statistics to check the importance of variance of male and female responses. Results showed that *Touchstone* series could be considered as a proper and suitable device for language teachers to attain their goals and the objectives of the language institutes. In addition, apart from practical concerns of the books, there was no statistically important difference between male and female teachers' attitudes towards the series. However, they did not consider speech acts in the study.

As mentioned earlier, in spite of several studies undertaken on the realm of textbook evaluation, they have mostly reflected a general assessment of these textbooks and a small proportion have explored the speech acts. Furthermore, some studies on the speech acts have particularly emphasized requests, refusals, face, apologies, and the procedures taken to accomplish these speech acts. Nonetheless, few studies have examined the complaints and compliments embedded within the EFL materials. Moreover, these studies have used different models, methods, and procedures; still, there is a need to more research in the field. As a consequence, the present study has elaborated on the speech acts of compliment and complaint in *Touchstone* series, a series of ELT materials.

3. Methodology

3.1. Materials

For the purposes of this study, *Touchstone* series Garcia (2004) were selected and analyzed based on the speech act theory and with the focus on compliment and complain speech acts. *Touchstone* is a name for a set, which was published firstly in 2005 by Cambridge University Press. The audiences for this textbook are adults living in non-

English speaking countries. Each textbook consists of a student book, a workbook, and an entertainment CD. The entertainment CD includes language games, songs, and fun exercises, which have been designed in harmony with the content of the units of the textbook. Alongside conversations, listening, reading, and writing sections, there are sections titled “conversation strategy” where the strategies used by native speakers are explicitly explained.

3.2. Design and Procedure

The study was carried out both qualitatively and quantitatively. The content analysis was done in order to collect data. In this type of research method, written or visual materials are analyzed for the purpose of identifying specified characteristics of the material (Eisenstein & Bodman, 1986). To do so, the units of the *Touchstone* series were analyzed to determine the extent to which complaint and compliment speech acts were represented. In the present study, the Olshtain and Weinbach’s (1993) complaint strategies and Wolfson et al. (1989) classification of compliments were used as a lens to guide the present research, due to their significant background in this field and their practicality in textbook evaluation. Olshtain and Weinbach (1993) presented seven complaint strategies as follow:

- 1) Below the level of reproach, e.g. Do you mind if look around?
- 2) Expression of annoyance or disapproval, e.g. 1-The restaurant was really crowded. 2-How embarrassing!!
- 3) Accusation and warning, e.g. these guys were like totally blocking the door.
- 4) Requests for repair, e.g. please see if you can fix this as soon as possible.
- 5) Justification (which includes reasons expressed when complaining to defend or lend support to the speaker's position or request for demand)

6) Criticism, e.g. He acted like we were in his way.

Wolfson et al. (1989) compliment patterns consisted of:

- NP looks/is (intensifier) ADJ.
- PRO is (intensifier) (a) ADJ NP.
- I intensifier like/love NP.
- You V. (a) (really) ADJ. NP.
- You V. NP. (really) ADV.
- You have (a) (really) ADJ. NP.
- What (a) ADJ. NP!
- ADJ. NP!
- Isn’t NP. ADJ!

The researchers analyzed *Touchstone* series in terms of speech act of compliant and speech acts of compliment using the above-mentioned frameworks. In order to ensure that the content analysis was reliable, the researchers utilized inter-rater reliability and intra-rater reliability. Examining the Inter-rater reliability, the correlation between the researchers’ counts and a second rater’s counts was obtained. The agreement was 97.3%, that is, a high level of correlation. However, in another occasion and in terms of ensuring intra-rater reliability, the researchers did the content analysis twice with a three-week time interval. The degree of consistency in the two analysis attempts (i.e., the intra-rater reliability) was found to be 96.5%. To answer the research questions raised in this study, the obtained raw data from all textbooks were fed into SPSS (*Statistical Package for Social Sciences*) for further data analysis.

4. Results

The data collected were subjected to descriptive and inferential statistics. The frequencies and percentages of speech act of complaint in *Touchstone textbooks* were obtained to answer the first research question. Table 1 reports the frequencies and percentages of the complaint strategies in *Touchstone*, based on Olshtain and Weinbach (1993) classification.

Table 1. Frequencies and Percentages of Complaint Strategies in Touchstone Textbooks

Textbook	Speech Act Strategy	Frequency	Percentage
<i>Touchstone Book 1</i>	Below the level of reproach	14	24.2
	Expression of annoyance or disapproval	22	38.0
	Accusation and warning	6	10.3
	Requests for repair	4	6.8
	Justification	5	8.6
	Criticism	7	12.1
<i>Touchstone Book 2</i>	Below the level of reproach	14	24.2
	Expression of annoyance or disapproval	14	24.2
	Accusation and warning	8	13.7
	Requests for repair	5	8.6
	Justification	7	12.1
	Criticism	10	17.2
<i>Touchstone Book 3</i>	Below the level of reproach	15	13.3
	Expression of annoyance or disapproval	20	17.7
	Accusation and warning	14	12.4
	Requests for repair	10	8.8
	Justification	16	14.2
	Criticism	38	33.6
<i>Touchstone Book 4</i>	Below the level of reproach	15	13.1
	Expression of annoyance or disapproval	36	31.3
	Accusation and warning	25	21.7
	Requests for repair	14	12.2
	Justification	10	8.6
	Criticism	15	13.1

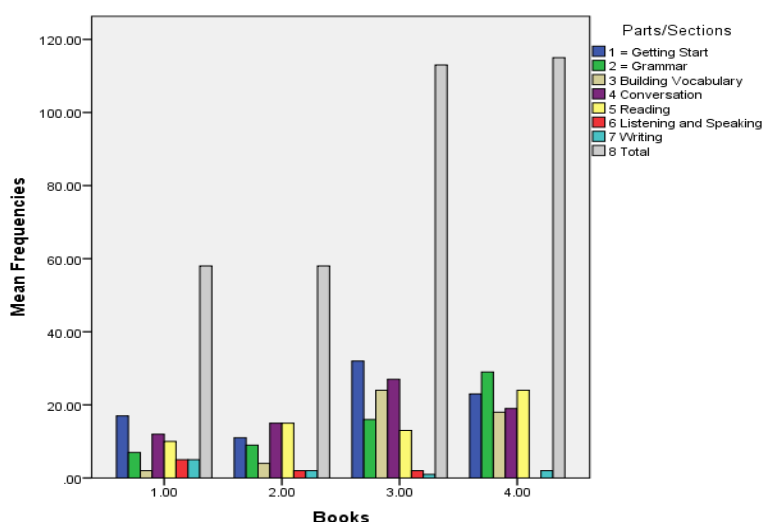


Figure 1. Bar Graph of the Frequencies of Complaint Speech Act in Different Sections of Touchstone Series

According to Table 1, the expression of annoyance or disapproval complaint strategy was very frequent in *Touchstone* series, e.g. I get so annoyed with people like that; I get upset when people push on the subway; It's so rude, etc. Besides, the criticism and expression of annoyance or disapproval complaint strategies in *Touchstone, Book 3 and Book 4* constituted the highest proportion of the complaint speech act strategies. The requests for repair and justification strategies had the least percentages of complaint strategies in *Touchstone* series.

Figure 1 summarizes the data for all four *Touchstone* textbooks. It displays the frequencies of complaint speech act for the seven main parts (i.e., Getting Start, Grammar, Building vocabulary, Conversation, Reading, Listening, and Speaking, and Writing) in the *Touchstone* series. The frequencies and percentages of speech act of compliment in *Touchstone* textbooks were obtained to answer the second research question. Table 2 reports the frequencies and percentages of the compliment strategies in *Touchstone* textbooks.

Table 2. *Frequencies and Percentages of textbooks Compliment Strategies in Touchstone Textbooks*

Textbooks	Speech Act Strategy	Frequency	Percentage
<i>Touchstone, Book 1</i>	NP looks/is (intensifier) ADJ.	44	33.8
	PRO is (intensifier) (a) ADJ NP.	17	13.1
	I intensifier like/love NP.	9	6.9
	You V. (a) (really) ADJ. NP.	15	11.6
	NP looks/is (intensifier) ADJ.	44	33.8
	You V. NP. (really) ADV.	12	9.2
	You have (a) (really) ADJ. NP.	10	7.7
	What (a) ADJ. NP!	6	4.6
	ADJ. NP!	9	6.9
<i>Touchstone, Book 2</i>	NP looks/is (intensifier) ADJ.	15	11.8
	PRO is (intensifier) (a) ADJ NP.	18	14.2
	I intensifier like/love NP.	17	13.4
	You V. (a) (really) ADJ. NP.	29	22.9
	NP looks/is (intensifier) ADJ.	13	10.2
	You V. NP. (really) ADV.	20	15.8
	You have (a) (really) ADJ. NP.	8	6.2
	What (a) ADJ. NP!	4	3.2
	ADJ. NP!	3	2.3
<i>Touchstone, Book 3</i>	NP looks/is (intensifier) ADJ.	38	26.8
	PRO is (intensifier) (a) ADJ NP.	13	9.2
	I intensifier like/love NP.	8	5.6
	You V. (a) (really) ADJ. NP.	21	14.8
	NP looks/is (intensifier) ADJ.	17	12.0
	You V. NP. (really) ADV.	14	9.9
	You have (a) (really) ADJ. NP.	5	3.5
	What (a) ADJ. NP!	16	11.3
	ADJ. NP!	10	6.9
<i>Touchstone, Book 4</i>	NP looks/is (intensifier) ADJ.	24.6	35
	PRO is (intensifier) (a) ADJ NP.	20	14.1
	I intensifier like/love NP.	12	8.5
	You V. (a) (really) ADJ. NP.	23	16.2
	NP looks/is (intensifier) ADJ.	24	16.9
	You V. NP. (really) ADV.	15	10.6
	You have (a) (really) ADJ. NP.	4	2.8
	What (a) ADJ. NP!	6	4.2
	ADJ. NP!	3	2.1

According to Table 2, the total frequency of compliment speech act, as demonstrated above, was higher in *Touchstone, Book 3* and *Book 4* than other three textbooks ($N=142$). Furthermore, among the seven sections, the Conversation and Getting Start sections in *Touchstone, Book 1* and *Book 4* constituted the highest proportion of the compliment speech act. Generally, the *Conversation* section had a high frequency of compliment speech act in the *Touchstone*

series. However, the frequency of compliment speech act in the Writing section was quite low in the *Touchstone* series.

Moreover, Figure 2 summarizes and displays the frequencies of seven complaint strategies (i.e., below the level of reproach, expression of annoyance or disapproval, accusation and warning, requests for repair, justification, and criticism) for all four *Touchstone* textbooks.

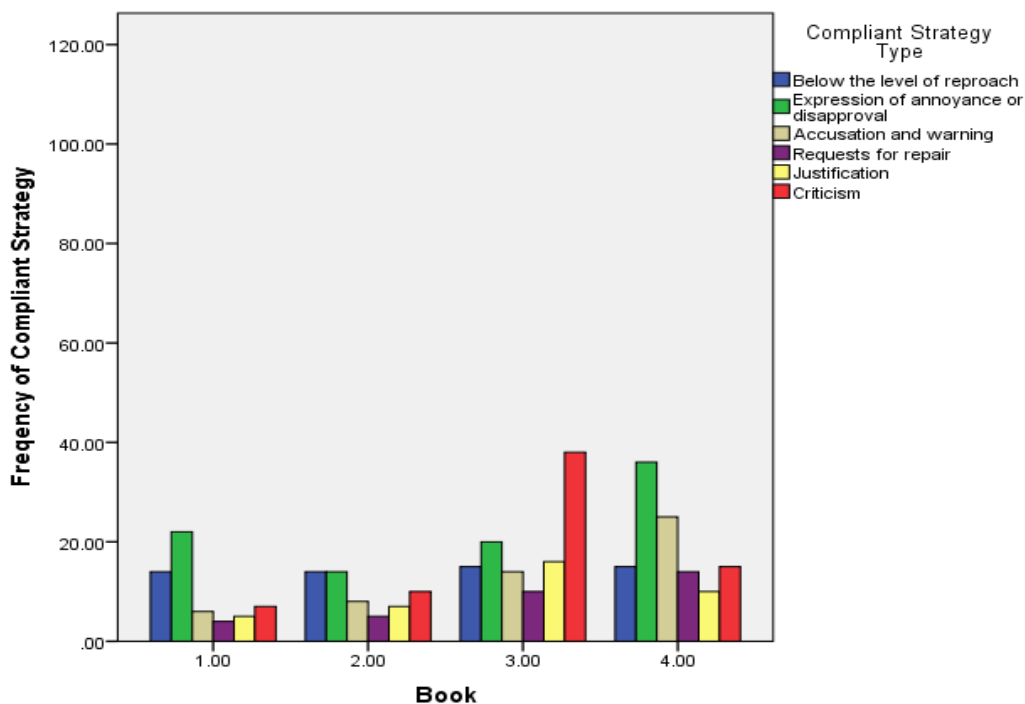


Figure 2. Bar Graph of the Frequencies for Seven Complaint Strategies in *Touchstone* Series

According to Figure 2, the expression of annoyance or disapproval complaint strategy was very frequent in *Touchstone* series. Besides, the criticism and expression of annoyance or disapproval complaint strategies in *Touchstone, Book 3* and *Book 4* constituted the highest proportion of the complaint speech act strategies. Therequests for repair and justification strategies had the least percentage of complaint strategies in *Touchstone* series.

The third research question was intended

to find out whether there was any statistically significant difference in the proportion of the speech acts of complaints and compliments in the *Touchstone* series. To address this research question, Chi-square tests were conducted. Table 3 shows the total frequencies of the two speech acts in the four *Touchstone* textbooks. Table 4 shows the result of a two-way Chi-square on the total frequencies of the two speech acts in the four *Touchstone* textbooks.

Table 3. *Frequencies of Complaint and Compliment Speech Acts in Four Textbooks*

	Book 1	Book 2	Book 3	Book 4
Complaints	58	58	113	115
Compliments	130	127	142	142

Table 4. *Chi-Square Test on the Frequencies of the Two Speech Acts in the Four Textbooks*

	Chi-Square Value	df	p
Pearson Chi-Square	16.405 ^a	3	.001
Likelihood Ratio	16.585	3	.001
Linear-by-Linear	13.506	1	.000
N of Valid Cases	885		

a. 0 cells (0.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 71.91.

According to Table 4, there was a statistically significant difference between the frequencies of the two speech acts in the four *Touchstone* textbooks ($\chi^2=16.40$, $df=3$, $*p < .05$). In order to see in which section the proportions of the two speech acts were significantly different, Chi-square tests were run on the frequencies of speech acts in each section. Table 5 summarizes the result of Chi-square tests on the total frequencies of the two speech acts for each main section in *Touchstone* textbooks. The alpha level was set at .05, which is commonly used, to reduce type II error (not supporting the alternate hypothesis when the alternate hypothesis is true).

Table 5. *Frequencies of Complaint and Compliment Speech Acts for Section the Textbooks*

	Frequency of Complaint	Frequency of Compliment	Chi-Square Value	P
Getting Start	83	107	2.78	.095
Grammar	61	65	.08	.777
Building vocabulary	48	62	1.54	.214
Conversation	73	138	19.42	.000
Reading	62	86	3.58	.058
Listening and Speaking	7	32	14.76	.000
Writing	10	15	.64	.423

According to Table 5, the Chi-square value for the Conversation section was statistically significant. In other words, the difference in the frequencies of complaint and compliment speech acts was statistically significant in the Conversation section of *Touchstone* textbooks ($\chi^2=19.42$, $p=.000$).

5. Discussion and Conclusion

Based on the overall analysis of frequencies and percentages of these speech acts, one can conclude that there are some fluctuations among them in these textbooks. Halliday (1978) and Cutting (2002) argue

that an acceptable type of conversation includes all of the language functions as well as speech act with an equal distribution throughout the textbook. Though in a number of instances of real-life communications, there are limited types of speech acts, an authentic textbook should consist of speech acts equally distributed throughout to make EFL learners competent in their speaking skill pragmatically.

In addition, Searle (1976) believes that all types of speech acts are frequently used in every day communication, and argues that various kinds of settings direct us to use different kinds of speech acts to keep

the basic relationships in the social lives. Undoubtedly, to become pragmatically competent and proficient in almost all the situation of communication, EFL students require to gain the knowledge of all kinds of speech acts so as to be able to apply pragmatically proper speech acts in various communicative settings. In this regard, the evaluations of conversations of *Touchstone* series revealed that they did not include all types of Searle's (1976) speech acts, on the one hand, and based on the findings the speech acts under study, namely, complaint and complement, were not equally distributed and the difference in the frequencies of complaint and compliment speech acts were statistically significant in the Conversation section in the *Touchstone* textbooks. Other taxonomies did not include the speech acts provided by the comprehensive taxonomy of Searle's.

In addition, it was revealed that the Getting Start and Conversations sections in *Touchstone, Book 3* constituted the highest proportion of the complaint speech act. This might be related to the fact that the speech act of complaint is of paramount significance, and holds an integral part of the dialogue between the interlocutors in real communication. Conversations are instances of authentic usage of language; therefore, it is expected to find the highest number of complaint speech acts in the conversations.

Furthermore, it was concluded that the frequency of complaint speech act in the Writing section was quite low since the individuals may express their compliance in their spoken language rather than written language. Thus, the authors might have focused on this speech act in the oral conversation. Furthermore, in written exercises in ELT materials the focus is mainly on organization of the text in order to enable language learners to get along with the difficulties with which they usually face.

From among the Wolfson et al. (1989) classification of compliment, the compliment

structure of the 'NP looks/is (intensifier) ADJ.' was very frequent in *Touchstone* series. This may be due to the fact that this structure is among the first and easiest ways for EFL students to describe and express the quality of an object and individual.

Finally, 'What (a) ADJ. NP!' and 'Isn't NP. ADJ!' as the seventh and ninth compliment structures of Wolfson et al. (1989) classification, respectively, had low proportions of the compliment. It is assumed that, based on the Wolfson et al. (1989) classification, these two compliment structures are infrequently used in the above textbooks and nonnative speakers of other languages are less exposed to these structures. It may be possible that the non-native speakers of English fail to convey or comprehend the intended illocutionary force of these structures as the result of less exposure to them.

The results are in line with part of the findings of Delen and Tavil (2010) who demonstrated that there was a bias to some particular speech act strategies in *Summit, Top Notch, and Northstar Reading and Writing* series. A DCT (discourse completion questionnaire) taken by 90 students from a Turkish university revealed that all students had the ability to realize the speech acts of requests and refusals; however, they were incapable of making complaints efficiently since no complaint strategy was used in their textbooks. According to the study done by Delen and Tavil (2010), who investigated three sets of textbooks, *Summit, Top Notch, and Northstar Reading and Writing*, it was reported that there was almost no complaint strategy found through the three textbook series. While in the present work, it was documented that the textbook was rich in terms of providing learners with complaint and compliment strategies; however, in terms of quality and diversity in the range of those speech acts, they operated rather weakly.

In addition, the results of the present study lend support to the study conducted

by Alemi and Rezanejad (2014) who investigated the frequency of occurrences and proportions of speech acts of complaints and compliments in the four volumes of the book *English Result*. They found that the books were rich in terms of the number of the two speech acts, but in presenting them, there were only one or two dominant strategies in both cases.

Since *Touchstone* series are considered as newly-arrived ELT textbooks in Iranian EFL educational context, they have become so popular. Those who decide to begin learning English through *Touchstone* series would adopt them for their novelty. However, being newly published would not ensure the efficacy of ELT textbooks for EFL students.

The results showed that speech acts of compliment and complaint were frequently used in some sections / parts in the *Touchstone* series. In addition, the *Touchstone* series fell short of providing equal distribution of the two speech acts; the frequency of complaint and compliment speech acts in the Writing section was quite low and the Conversation section had a high frequency of compliment speech act in the *Touchstone* series; Grammar and Conversation came next; complaint speech act was not observed in the Listening and Speaking section in *Book 3 and Book 4*, but the expression of annoyance or disapproval complaint strategy was very frequent in *Touchstone* series; we may infer that the EFL learners taught by these ELT textbooks might be exposed to some speech acts more than others, and might be unable to use others. Although the study faced limitations such as the necessity to limit the speech acts, and lack of adequate literature to compare the findings, the results are significant. All in all, the results of this study would provide some insights for material developers and teachers into the pragmatic aspects of language through the lens of speech acts strategy use, and aid EFL learners improve their communicative and pragmatic competence in the context

where they are deprived from real L2 language communication and use, and their primary source for acquiring another language is the textbooks.

This study can inspire other interested researchers to try to address some new research questions. Further study can be done to evaluate other ELT textbook available in Iranian market with different speech acts such as apology, so as to get additional information about the efficacy of instructional ELT textbooks for EFL Iranian learners. Also, since the attitudes of the learners are of paramount importance for evaluating the textbooks. Further studies can be conducted to find out learners' attitudes towards positive and face-threatening speech acts. Questions are raised to see whether the amount of frequency of speech acts within the textbooks creates situations that motivate learners to improve their language competency.

Reference

- Alemi, M., & Rezanejad, A. (2014). Native and Non-native English Teachers' Rating Criteria and Variation in the Assessment of L2 Pragmatic Production: The Speech Act of Compliment. *Issues in Language Teaching*, 3(1), 88-65.
- Berry, R. (2000). Youser-friendly' metalanguage: What effect does it have on learners of English? *IRAL-International Review of Applied Linguistics in Language Teaching*, 38(3-4), 195-212.
- Bouton, L.F., & Kachru, Y. (1993). *Pragmatics and Language Learning*. Urbana-Champaign, IL: Division of English as an International Language.
- Chadran, J. (2001). Content-based instruction: An Indonesian Example. In S. B. Stryker & B.L. Leaver (Eds.), *Content-based instruction in foreign language education: Models and methods* (pp. 219-235). Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University Press.
- Cohen, A. D. (1999). Strategies in Learning and Using a Second Language. *TESL, the Electronic Journal for English as a Second Language*, 3(4), 1-5.

- Cutting, F. (2002). Compliment and compliment response research: A cross-cultural survey. In W. Bublitz, A.H. Jucker, & K.P. Schneider (Eds.), *Handbooks of pragmatics: Pragmatics across languages and cultures* (pp. 79-101). Berlin: Walter de Gruyter.
- Darali, G. (2007). *Pragmatic dimension in spectrum textbooks*. (MA), Shiraz University, Shiraz.
- Delen, K., & Tavil, G. (2010). Pragmatics and language teaching: Bringing pragmatics and pedagogy together. In L. F. Bouton (Ed.), *Pragmatics and language learning* (pp. 21-39). Urbana-Champaign: Division of English as an International Language, University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign.
- Echols, N., & Al-Batal, A.D. (1996). Describing Speech acts: Linking research and pedagogy. In N. Ishihara & A.D. Cohen (Eds.), *Teaching and learning pragmatics: Where language and culture meet* (pp. 37-56). Edinburg: Pearson Education.
- Eisenstein, M., & Bodman, J.W. (1986). 'I Very Appreciate': Expressions of Gratitude by Native and Non-native Speakers of American English. *Applied Linguistics*, 7(2), 167-185.
- Ellis, R. (2008). *Second language acquisition*. Oxford: University Press.
- Eslami-Rasekh, Z. (2005). Raising the pragmatic awareness of language learners. *ELT journal*, 59(3), 199-208.
- Garcia, P. (2004). Pragmatic Comprehension of High and Low Level Language Learners. *Test-Ej*, 8(2), n2.
- Ghobadi, A., & Fahim, M. (2009). The effect of explicit teaching of English "thanking formulas" on Iranian EFL intermediate level students at English language institutes. *System*, 37(3), 526-537.
- Halliday, M. (1978). Coming to terms with pragmatics. In N. Ishihara & A. D. Cohen (Eds.), *Teaching and learning pragmatics* (pp. 3-21). Edinburg: Pearson Education.
- Heidari, M.A., Rezazadeh, M., & Eslami Rasekh, A. (2009). A contrastive study of compliment responses among male and female Iranian teenage EFL learners. *The International Journal of Language Society and Culture*, 29(18-31).
- House, J. (1996). Developing pragmatic fluency in English as a foreign language: Routines and metapragmatic awareness. *Studies in second language acquisition*, 18(02), 225-252.
- Hymes, D. (1972). On Communicative Competence. In J.B. Pride & J. Holmes (Eds.), *sociolinguistics* (pp. 269-293). Harmondsworth, England: Penguin Books.
- Ishihara, N. (2003). Giving and responding to compliments. *Teaching pragmatics*. Washington DC: Office of English Programs, US Department of State. Retrieved on November 28th, State. gov/education/engteaching/pragmatics. htm.
- Ishihara, N. (2011). *Formal instruction on the speech act of giving and responding to compliments*. Paper presented at the proceedings of the 7th conference of Pan-Pacific Association of Applied Linguistics.
- Jianda, L. (2006). Assessing EFL learners' interlanguage pragmatic knowledge: Implications for testers and teachers. *Reflections on English language teaching*, 5(1), 1-22.
- Levinson, S. C. (1989). *Pragmatics*. Oxford: Cambridge University Press.
- Niezgoda, K., & Röver, C. (2001). Pragmatic and grammatical awareness: A function of the learning environment. In K. R. Rose & G. Kasper (Eds.), *Pragmatics in language teaching* (pp. 63-79). England: Cambridge University Press.
- Olshtain, E., & Cohen, A. D. (1991). Teaching speech act behavior to nonnative speakers. In M. Celce-Murcia (Ed.), *Teaching English as a second or foreign language* (pp. 154-165). New York: Newbury House.
- Olshtain, E., & Weinbach, L. (1993). Interlanguage features of the speech act of complaining. In G. Kasper & S. Blum-Kulka (Eds.), *Interlanguage pragmatics* (pp. 108-122). England: Oxford University Press.
- Otlowski, M. (2003). Ethnic diversity and gender bias in EFL textbooks. *Asian EFL Journal*, 5(2), 1-15.
- Rastegar, Z. (1992). *The analysis of dialogue in Iranian guidance and high school texts in terms of their pragmatic functions*. (M.A Thesis), Shiraz University, Shiraz .

- Rezaei, S. (2010). Developing a multiple-choice discourse completion test of interlanguage pragmatics for Iranian EFL learners. *ILLI Language Teaching Journal*, 6(1-2), 43-58.
- Riazi, A.M. (2003). What do textbook evaluation schemes tell us? A study of the textbook evaluation schemes of three decades. In W. Renandya (Ed.), *Methodology & materials design in language teaching* (pp. 52-69). Singapore: Singapore SEMEO Regional Center.
- Searle, J. R. (1975). Indirect speech acts. In P. Cole & J. Morgan (Eds.), *Syntax and Semantics* (pp. 59-82). New York: Academic Press.
- Soler, E. A. (2005). Does instruction work for learning pragmatics in the EFL context? *System*, 33(3), 417-435.
- Soler, E. A. N., & Martínez-Flor, A. (2008). Pragmatics in foreign language contexts. In E. A. N. SOLER & A. Martínez-Flor (Eds.), *Investigating pragmatics in foreign language learning, teaching and testing* (pp. 3-25). Bristol: Multilingual Matters.
- Soozandehfar, S.M.A., & Sahragard, R. (2011). A textbook evaluation of speech acts and language functions in Top-Notch series. *Theory and Practice in Language Studies*, 1(12), 1831-1838.
- Tavakoli, F. (1995). *Functional analysis of the dialogues in the Iranian senior high school English textbooks*. (M.A Thesis), Allameh University, Tehran.
- Toolabi, J. (2002). *Characterization of language functions in the Iranian high school English textbooks*. (M.A Thesis), Shiraz University, Shiraz
- Vellenga, H. (2004). Learning Pragmatics from ESL & EFL Textbooks: How Likely? *Tesl-Ej*, 8(2), n2.
- Wolfson, N., Marmor, T., & Jones, S. (1989). Problems in the comparison of speech acts across cultures. In S. Blum-Kulka, J. House, & G. Kasper (Eds.), *Cross-cultural pragmatics: Requests and apologies* (Vol. 31, pp. 174-196). Norwood, NJ: Ablex.