



The Perception of General English Books Among the Iranian University EFL Instructors

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ABSTRACT

The selection of a course book is a crucial undertaking a teacher will consider in molding the contents and natures of teaching and learning. This undertaking engages in comparing and contrasting the materials with the context in which the materials are going to be employed, given the general aims of the teaching program and also the personal methodology a teacher has picked up. The present research study tried to shed light on the perception of general English books among Iranian university EFL instructors. To this end, the researchers evaluated a general English coursebook (Concepts and Comments, 2005) employing a validated coursebook evaluation checklist in some universities in Golestan province, Iran. The main objective of the EGP course was to develop the student's reading skills and strategies, the present coursebook was written to meet these goals. However, the results of the study depict that though it was an appropriate book to boost the reading skill and vocabulary scope of learners, mere emphasis on reading bores the students and they require more interactive communicative use of the language.

KEYWORDS: Coursebook Evaluation; English for General Purposes (EGP); Learning Strategies

INTRODUCTION

The selection of a course book is a crucial undertaking a teacher will consider in molding the contents and natures of teaching and learning. This undertaking engages in comparing and contrasting the materials with the context in which the materials are going to be employed, given the general aims of the teaching program and also the personal methodology a teacher has picked up. There are important areas in English for general purposes including material selection, adaptation, and development. These steps provide learners with materials that will give them the essential information they will need in their future encounters with the issue. To use Bernard and Zemach's (2003) terms, when one prepares general English materials, there seem to be some elements that are so important such as choosing an appropriate language, responding to the needs and wishes of the students, and giving attention to effective learning strategies.

Materials are an important facet of the syllabus in the English classroom. Arguably, the materials to be used are observable firsthand in a teacher's methodology and can contribute a lot to a course syllabus. In this respect, authors like O'Neill (1982) have provided some justifications for the use of course books. At first sight, a good deal of the course book materials can be helpful to students and their immediate or future needs. This is true while they may not be specifically designed for them. In the second place, course books often permit the students to predict or refresh themselves with the past lessons. They take away the surprising elements from the students' expectations. As for the third advantage, course books might have the practical facet of displaying materials that are presented well in an economical form.

According to Richards (2007), materials are the main source of input for the learners and form the kind of "language practice that occurs in the classroom." In this way, Nunan (1999) is of the opinion that course book is the staple tool within any curriculum, and "it is difficult to imagine a class without books ..." As these experts have all indicated, it is actually the course book that, inter alia, promotes the learning process through mediations between the teachers and students and "offers a coherent syllabus, satisfactory language control ..." (Harmer, 2002). While materials might not often represent the actual process of teaching, they might "represent plans for teaching" (Richards, 2007). In the same line of argument, Robinson (1991) has argued that course books present "a framework for a course, forming, in essence, a syllabus." At the same time, she maintains that a course book followed strictly has facilitative psychological effects on the students as they provide a picture of what they are going to do in a semester. Hedge (2002) also claims that by picking a course book, we indeed



choose a “planned sequence of items to be taught.” In this way, Dudley-Evans and St John (2000) have further recommended four main reasons for the use of materials in the English classroom: “as a source of language, as a learning support, for motivation and stimulation, and for reference.”

Cunningsworth (1995) is of the opinion that course books have multi-faceted roles to play in the classrooms and can be useful in displaying the written and spoken materials, promoting interaction, providing activities, acting as a source for classroom activities, serving as a reference on vocabulary and grammar, serving as a syllabus, and bringing for the self-directed or learning self-access work. Richards and Rodgers (2002) have stressed the fact that the most important goal of any material is to present and practice the content leading to the ease of interaction between students and the promotion of learner autonomy. Furthermore, as Hutchinson and Waters (1989) continue to provide further arguments in the same line, the primary role of materials is said to be the facilitation of the learning process inasmuch as useful materials should not necessarily teach anything, rather they should encourage learning.

Hedge (2002) contends that good materials let the students prepare themselves previously by recommending a grammatical and functional framework responding to their common needs and desires. In principle, materials appear to give students the main source of contact with the language, the balance of skills being taught, the actual content of lessons, and the type of practice learners take part in (Richards, 2007). In fine, Harmer (2002) has presumed that course books grow the perception of progress, provide new materials for reconsideration, and involve the students in several ways.

Course books ought to be available to students of different fields and styles without considering their primary learning goals. They must also be flexible so that they can be easily adapted to the preferences of teachers and their different styles. As Lotfi (2005) reassures us, one of the facets of worthy language teaching is summarized in providing appropriate textbooks. In other words, course books must provide a reasonable correspondence between what is taught and what is learned. Selected from authentic materials and texts (Day, 2003), the question of variety in texts in the form of stimulating topics, themes, and terms, providing stimulating and motivating texts and activities (Dudley-Evans & St John, 1998), setting off proper and sensible tasks and activities (Bernard & Zemach, 2003), and having a comely physical view and organization (Riazi, 2005) are merely some of the facilitative textbook characteristics that ought to be taken for granted and be applied in the development of every textbook.

Ellis and Johnson (1994) have stressed that the selection of material has a strong effect on what happens during the course. This effect is shown on three levels as the following:

- It “determines what kind of language the learners will be exposed to and, as a consequence, the substance of what they will learn in terms of vocabulary, structures, and functions”;
- It “has implications for the methods and techniques by which the learners will learn”;
- The final item on the list is that, “the subject or content of the materials is an essential component of the package from the point of view of relevance and motivation”.

As English is a foreign language and not the second one in Iran, the classroom is often seen as the main source of language exposure for English students. Hence, materials and especially course books can have a central and leading role in introducing the students to the English language (Dudley-Evans & St John, 2000). This might suggest that it is the course book that determines the activities in the classroom, shapes, and molds the teaching methods, and the student roles. It should be mentioned, in this connection, that the main material which is used in undergraduate courses in Iranian universities is the course book.

Some of the objectives of general English courses in the Iranian universities are the following items:

1. Improving the learner comprehension ability;
2. Boosting the learner's reading speed;
3. Increasing the learner's ability to perceive the word's meaning from the context;
4. Guessing meaning from context and contextual clues;
5. Understanding implicit in addition to explicit meaning;
6. Skimming;
7. Scanning and so forth (Yousefi Azarfam & Noordin, 2014).

In Iran, at the university level, English is known as a required foreign language subject. Therefore, two to three hours per week, English courses for general purposes are offered to non-English majors in the freshman and sophomore years. The curriculum design of General English is expected to broaden the learners' horizons to be able to relate their academic study meaningfully to other realms of understanding. If this goal is to be fulfilled, providing students with versatile academic content is important. They ought to cover such topics as



culture, nature, medicine, business, science, and technology to achieve a fully inclusive development of knowledge.

English is not an official language in Iran and, thus, having taken the required English courses during the first two years of college, it is quite likely that one may have fewer opportunities to learn new English words and may even stop learning the language. As far as the students of non-English majors are of our concern in this case, the general English courses may be envisaged as a transition from the senior high school and college English proficiency benchmarks. While the students go on their education and take English for Specific Purposes (ESP) courses in the third or fourth years of college, the general English courses may also be viewed as a motivating ground for further English programs. Textbooks and materials dealing primarily with general English appear in the freshman and sophomore years. They likewise may have a constructive part in enhancing English proficiency (DehGhaedi, 2013).

CURRICULUM VERSUS SYLLABUS

Within the center of any educational enterprise, the educational program can be found. In fairly recent times, the majority of educational authorities considered the syllabus as the educational program (Johnson 1989). In design and implementation, the syllabus has received more attention in educational contexts. However, considering syllabus change as an element from a constellation of related elements is a rather recent phenomenon in discussions on educational renewal. This more holistic view of educational planning has been often introduced and recognized as curriculum development. Here, it has been assumed that curriculum and syllabi are synonymous. To be more specific, the syllabus prescribes the content which is to be covered in a given course. It only shapes a small portion of the more general school program.

Curriculum however has a more general and inclusive concept and refers to the activities that engage learners in the school program. In other words, this refers not only to what the students learn, but also to how they learn them, and furthermore how teachers help in this process by using what texts and materials, styles, and assessment methods, taking benefit from what kind of facilities (Rodgers, 1976).

As White (1988) has tried to mention the differences between these two controversial and close words, the main difference lies in the totality of content for all subject matters (in curriculums) taught in a particular type of school, and the content of a specific school subject (in a syllabus). Also, Stern (1983) maintains that there exists a multi-factorial curriculum consisting of at least four objective categories. In this respect, proficiency is the first and the most important objective in a second language. The following object is knowledge which invokes explicit knowledge about the second language (L2) and about the relevant culture. In the same line, the third goal points to the notion that the cultivation of affective goals is a complement to the scheme. It encapsulates the values and attitudes associated with language and culture. Following the same line of objectives, a transfer which is the final behavioral category highlights the possibility of learning a particular language with the aim of generalizing beyond the language which is being used.

COURSE BOOK EVALUATION MODELS

If one visits any bookstore, it is soon revealed that there are many options of ESL/EFL coursebooks that are available, and almost all of them claim to be 'communicative' focusing on 'real English' through 'stimulation activities. In this confusing situation as (Stern, 1992) has mentioned, it is important for the teachers to make informed and proper decisions when they wish to pick a course book for their pupils. This is especially true in this age of computers and technology where learners look for higher standards in materials and presentations.

When we consider the important choices, teachers need to make all the time, Nunan (1991) claims that the process the teacher go through to choose their materials can be facilitated a lot by following the procedures of systematic materials evaluation to ensure that the materials correspond to the needs and interests of the learners they are intended to engage. This can also go with being in harmony with the institutional ideologies within the nature of language and learning.

TOMLINSON MODEL

To borrow Tomlinson's (2003) words, materials evaluation is a procedure involving the estimation of the value of a set of subject matters. In his opinion, there could be more than one type of materials evaluation. Tomlinson has put the most important types of materials evaluation in the following categories:



PRE-USE EVALUATION

It has to do with making correct predictions respecting the potential value of materials for the users. This kind of pre-use evaluation can be context-free. This evaluation is kind of impressionistic and includes a teacher leafing through a text to be used for teaching to derive a rapid impression of the potential value.

WHILST-USE EVALUATION

This kind of evaluation measures, as the name itself, implies, the value of materials while they are actually being used or being observed in this way. Compared with the previous methods, this particular evaluation can be more objective and reliable. In fact, the whilst-use evaluation takes the benefit of measurement and not a prediction. It is however very controversial what we might precisely be able to measure in a whilst-use evaluation, but the following can give a perspective in which the probabilities can be placed: Clarity of instructions, Clarity of layout, Comprehensibility of texts, Credibility of tasks, Achievability of tasks, Achievement of performance objectives, Practicality of the materials, Teachability of the materials, Flexibility of the materials, Appeal of the materials, Motivating power of the materials, and Impact of the materials.

POST-USE EVALUATION

Post-use evaluation is also another valuable way of class material measurement, but not many administered types of evaluation have tried to investigate the actual effects of the materials on the users. It can provide a measurement of the short-term effects as regards motivation, instant learning achievability, impact, etc. Furthermore, it can measure the long-term effects concerned with durable learning applications. The post-use measurement can respond to such questions:

- What do the learners know that were not aware of before gaining familiarity with the new materials?
- In what areas do they lack the knowledge in spite of the fact that the materials?
- What are the learners capable of doing which could not do before starting to use the materials?
- What are the things that the learners cannot do despite using the materials?
- To what degree have the materials been able to prepare the learners for the achievement tests?
- To what degree have the materials been able to prepare the learners for their post-course employment of the language?
- What kind of effects have the materials left on the confidence of the learners?
- What kind of effects have the materials left on the motivation of the learners?
- To what degree have the materials been able to help the learners become independent learners themselves?
- Did the teachers think that the materials were easy to use?
- Were the materials of any help to the teachers in covering the syllabus?
- Did the administrators think the materials assisted them in standardizing the teaching in their situation?

To put the above items in plainer words, the post-use evaluation can measure the actual outcomes of the accessible materials and also the data based on which issues about the use, replacement, or adaptation of the materials can be resolved by the people involved.

THE MODEL DEVELOPED BY REA-DICKENS AND GERMAINE

Rea-Dickens and Germaine (1992) are of the opinion that using materials in teaching should be pinpointed in the way below before being evaluated:

1. What do teachers perceive from the materials?
 - a) Is the textbook the sole source to which the teacher is confined or is there any other source such as a teacher's guide, video, listening tapes, and other stuff that are actually used by the teacher?
 - b) Does the teacher perceive any difference between more traditionally institutionalized materials meant for teaching/ learning purposes and authentic materials?
 - c) Does the teacher use materials produced by other teachers and also learners?
2. The relation between materials and the social context:
 - a) What are the likely roles are the materials likely to play?
 - b) What goals and objectives will the materials accomplish?
3. How are the materials to be used?
 - a) Will the materials be the sole resource for teaching?
 - b) Are they included in a series of several other resources?



CANDLIN AND BREEN MODEL

Candlin and Breen (1979) have identified two phases within material evaluation. The first stage concentrates on the usefulness of materials and the second one focuses on the selection and employment of materials in a manner sensitive to the language classroom.

PHASE ONE

The three vital aims recognized in evaluating the usefulness of materials are seen in the below list:

1. What learners need to learn should be consistent to what they will be able to do with the materials.
2. How language is learnt optimally should be consistent to the types of learning invoked by the materials.

These concerns point to the weaknesses of the materials regarding teachers' freedom to adapt the materials. In further analysis, it can reveal whether the materials would make the teacher take inappropriate roles and isolate classroom activities in the materials.

3. The following items form the basis of the conditions to indicate the usefulness of materials before evaluation:

- a) The contribution that the teacher makes to classroom work
- b) The resources that learners may have provided
- c) The contributions of the classroom.

PHASE TWO

Breen and Candlin (1987) has taken further steps to suggest the following questions to investigate into the usefulness of materials that are sensitive to the context of language learning:

1. How do the materials synchronize with the learners' understanding of language needs?
2. Do learners feel for themselves whether the materials can satisfy their language needs?
3. Do the materials refer to the learner feelings, values, and attitudes?
4. Do the materials attract the learners' attention?
5. Are the materials subcategorized by a principled manner?
6. Are the materials used continuously?
7. Can the learners divide and sequence the materials when they feel the need?
8. Do the materials have sufficient flexibility to accommodate the teachers' and learners' preferences?

ROBINSON MODEL

Robinson (1991) has distinguished three modes of material evaluation: a) Preliminary (prior to the classes), b) summative (at the end of the course), and c) formative (conducted while the course is being used). Robinson says that evaluation in this model can be performed by outsiders and insiders. A further distinction that she has indicated is between the process and product evaluation. The process points to the teaching and learning processes, strategies, decision-making, and administrative processes, whereas the product has to do with the learners' products such as examination scores, essays, and so forth. In this framework, the insiders are meant to be teachers, students, and course designers. Robinson provides a list of a number of tools used to perform evaluation: questionnaires, rating scales, interviews, records, checklists, and observation.

MCDONOUGH AND SHAW MODEL

To provide further examples, McDonough & Shaw (2003) investigated the criteria of evaluation for two phases: an outside evaluation that provides a concise "overview" of the materials from an external point of view (cover, table of contents, and the introduction), usually followed by a more comprehensive and detailed inside evaluation.

EXTERNAL EVALUATION

More precisely, they bring forward the external evaluation in this manner:

The evaluator attempts by external evaluation to check the organization of materials as expressed unambiguously by the author/publisher by observing the following items: the blurb or the claims expressed on the book cover, the table of contents and the introduction enabling the evaluator to see "what the books say about themselves". Examination on the outside is additionally very helpful to scan the table of contents which often acts as a "bridge" between what the materials may claim externally and what will actually be observed "inside" the materials. In this phase, it is advised to ask why the materials have been created. As stated by McDonough & Shaw (2003), the claims by the author/publisher about the materials can be biased at times and therefore are in need of critical examination to see if the claims are justified or not. When the "blurbs" and the "introductions" are evaluated, some comments might be expected on some/all of the following items:



The intended audience: it is necessary to know who the actual audience of the materials are, for instance, adolescents and teenagers aged 13 or adults. Motivating topics can have varying effects according to the age group they target.

The proficiency level: Most materials claim a particular level for their audience and relevant examples are false beginner or lower intermediate. This will be in immediate need of investigation as it could vary depending on the pedagogical context. The context in which the course materials are to be employed: it is logical to make certain whether the teaching materials are for teaching the learners of general English (EGP) or perhaps for teaching English for Specific Purposes (ESP). For ESP courses, it is important to know what degree of expert subject knowledge is assumed in the materials. How the language is presented or organized into units /lessons to be taught: Materials encompass some units / lessons and their relative lengths need to be considered when resolving how and if they will fit into a standard educational program.

The author's view of language and methodology and the relationship among the language, the learning process and the learner have to be considered as further steps. A question that arises here is the fact whether the materials are to be used as the main "core" course or as supplementary to it and also whether a vocabulary list/index is included? What visual materials does the book provide (photographs, charts, diagrams) and is it integrated into the text or is only there for cosmetic value? Is the material presentation and layout clear or cluttered? Is the material too culture and context-bound or culturally specific? Is it absolutely necessary to possess extra materials (audio/visual) so as to employ the textbook favorably? Would the inclusion of tests in the teaching materials (diagnostic, progress, achievement) be useful for the particular learners?

In this model, once this external evaluation or the "macro-evaluation" is completed, it is possible to go further with the internal and more detailed evaluations often referred to as "micro-evaluation".

INTERNAL EVALUATION

The essential issue in this stage of evaluation is to analyze the external evaluation and the degree to which the aforementioned factors in the previous stage correspond to the internal organization and consistency of the materials in the way they have been suggested by the author/publisher. To carry out an effective investigation of the materials, there is a need to ponder over two units (to say the least) of a book or set of materials. The outcomes help with the investigation of the following factors:

The presentation of the language skills in the materials and the grading and sequencing of the material are two important aspects of course book evaluation. This characteristic is very significant and can shape some further investigations as it is not always very clear what the evaluation principle is. In this way, some materials seem to be very "steeply" graded whereas others seem to have no grading at all. The relationship that was observed in this regard between the tests and exercises is to shed light on (a) learner needs, and (b) what is directly taught by the course material.

Here are some relevant questions that might help the teachers in this process: do you feel that the material is suitable for styles of different learning? Has there been any claim and provision made for self-study and is it justified?

Are the materials sufficiently "transparent" to motivate the students and teachers alike, or would you think that a student/teacher mismatch would be likely?

To sum up, what has been discussed so far, ought to be considered the truth of the criteria below: the presentation and treatment of the skills, the grade and sequence of the teaching materials, the skill types invoked by the materials, the test and exercise appropriacy, self-study provision and teacher-learner "balance" in taking benefits from the materials.

PURPOSES OF MATERIALS EVALUATION

As Tomlinson (1999) has made it clear, the objectives and the instruments for the evaluation, and also the evaluation types, as introduced above, may generally explain the reasons for evaluating materials. For instance, in the first place, if the evaluation aims to improve the materials, the evaluator should usually investigate the learners' problems during classroom observation sessions. Hence, the evaluation instrument depends on and varies according to the objectives of the evaluation. Tomlinson (1999) has also provided a list of the following reasons for evaluating materials:

1. To select a textbook for a course
2. To select materials to supplement a course book
3. To select materials from different sources in an eclectic manner.
4. As a basis for adaptation of materials to make them more suitable for a particular course.
5. As a basis for improving materials.



6. In order to edit materials produced by others.
7. In order to review proposed materials for a publisher.
8. In order to review published materials for a journal
9. In order to help teachers or trainee teachers develop their understanding of the methodology and/or materials writing.
10. In order to recommend a course book for an institution or a ministry of education.
11. As part of a research experiment.

Criteria classification is not performed in a uniform way among all evaluators and still, they are consistent within an evaluation. This classification assists the evaluator in grouping similar generalizations and next considering more specific issues within that category. The study has included the criteria listed below:

a) Physical aspects: This section elaborates on the emphasis laid on the presentational facets of the coursebook such as design, layout, print quality, etc.

b) Functional aspects: In this section, the emphasis is on learning objectives and whether the importance is attached to the four skills, and whether the activities are analytical or experiential.

Sheldon (1988, cited in Baleghizadeh & Rahimi, 2011) has also mentioned several reasons for textbook evaluation. He explains that the selection of a textbook points to an educational decision. These kinds of decisions oftentimes contain remarkable professional, financial, and even political investment. Teachers will become aware of available textbook contents through evaluation and recognize the strengths and weaknesses of each part.

Yet again, another reason for evaluation is put forward by Cunningsworth (1995) and Ellis (1997). They have produced the argument that evaluations can be viewed as a means of performing action research in addition to being a form of professional improvement and empowerment. Course evaluation can be used as a component of teacher training courses as well. In this way, future teachers become familiar with the crucial facets that they are looking for in textbooks.

METHODOLOGY

This study has been an attempt to investigate the perceptions of general English books among the Iranian University EFL Instructors.

THE BOOK UNDER STUDY

Considering the researchers' teaching experience as well as the positions of some general English books, as compared with the other sources, the following book was selected to be examined:

Title	Concepts and Comments
Author (s)	Ackert, P.,
Publisher	The Dryden press, U.S.A.
Date of publishing	2005
Imprint number	21
Number of pages	203
Intended audience	University students (not majoring in English)
Context	Islamic Azad University, Aliabad Katoul Branch, Golestan University, Gorgan Branch
Presenting & Organizing	25 Units
Core & Supplementary	Core
Vocabulary list/index	included
Visual materials	No colorful pictures
Layout	Clear and organized
Audio/video Materials	Audio CD not included
Tests	Nothing

This book has been selected for being known as a pioneering source in teaching general English at universities. Since its first publication in 1996, it has been reprinted more than twenty times and has been regarded as one of the most practiced books in Iranian universities and educational centers.



PARTICIPANTS

In order to carry out the research study, researchers selected a total of 38 (25 male & 13 female) EFL university instructors, aged 27-56, among some State as well as Islamic Azad Universities (Golestan University, Aliabad Katoul Islamic Azad University, Gorgan Islamic Azad University, and Engineering College of Golestan) all in Golestan Province, Iran.

INSTRUMENTATION

To make sure that the present study enjoys the needed appropriateness, the researchers employed the following instruments:

THE CURRICULUM BOOK

Concepts and Comments (Ackert, P., 2005) was the focus of the present study. The syllabus covered in this study was the same syllabus prescribed by the Ministry of Science, Research and Technology in Iran; consequently, it is tried by other EFL instructors in different universities and higher education centers in Iran.

THE QUESTIONNAIRE SURVEY

The employed questionnaire was a closed-ended questionnaire; it was an EFL textbook validated evaluation checklist; this checklist was divided into seven sub-headings, namely, Practical Considerations, Skills, Exercises & Activities, Pedagogic Analysis, Appropriacy, Supplementary Materials, and General Impression. The items of this part of the questionnaire were in the form of a five-point Likert scale: strongly disagree (SD=1), disagree (D=2), unsure (U=3), agree (A=4), and strongly agree (SA=5).

PROCEDURE

To meet the aim of the research project, researchers employed the following procedure: a total of 49 closed-ended questionnaires were distributed among 49 English language instructors in some public as well as Islamic Azad Universities all in Golestan province, Iran.

DATA COLLECTION

The questionnaires were distributed among the participants by the researchers during the Fall semester, 2014. It almost took 30 minutes to answer the items in the questionnaire by the participants. Altogether, 38 EFL instructors (25 male and 13 female) answered the questionnaires and sent them back to the researchers.

DATA ANALYSIS

The questionnaire items were analyzed through SPSS Version 20. This evaluation was done in order to help the curriculum developers, teachers, and educational administrators to be able to make sound decisions regarding the textbook selection and use.

DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION OF THE PARTICIPANTS

Table 1: Gender

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid Female	13	34.2	34.2	34.2
Male	25	65.8	65.8	100.0
Total	38	100.0	100.0	

Table 2: Marital Status

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid single	12	31.6	31.6	31.6
Married	26	68.4	68.4	100.0
Total	38	100.0	100.0	



Table 3: Level of Education

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid M.A	24	63.2	63.2	63.2
Ph. D candidate	6	15.8	15.8	78.9
Ph. D	8	21.1	21.1	100.0
Total	38	100.0	100.0	

Table 4: Descriptive Statistics

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation	Variance	Skewness		Kurtosis	
		Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Std. Error	Statistic	Std. Error
PRA	38	2.38	3.62	3.1546	.31494	.099	-.186	.383	-.207	.750
SK	38	2.00	3.50	2.7368	.39447	.156	-.057	.383	-.778	.750
EX	38	2.18	3.64	2.8278	.38731	.150	.231	.383	-.989	.750
PE	38	1.88	3.50	2.6645	.41722	.174	.275	.383	-.569	.750
AP	38	2.56	3.78	3.2515	.36958	.137	-.443	.383	-.893	.750
SU	38	1.33	4.33	2.8158	.67427	.455	.319	.383	.094	.750
G	38	2.17	4.17	3.1535	.57000	.325	-.096	.383	-1.078	.750
Valid N (listwise)	38									

PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Surprisingly, the universal copyright regulations are not followed by some publishers in Iran, so they can freely publish and distribute foreign books even without any kind of permission from the publisher or the writer and *Concepts and Comments* (2005) is no exception. So, this book is locally available and cost-effective for both English instructors and learners.

The physical appearance of the book is not interesting and appealing to the readers. Its low quality in printing makes it look boring that students hardly like to read it. It would have been better if it included some funny or colorful pictures. It is believed that images and pictures have an eye-catching impact on stimulating the learning process and hindering monotony (Cunningsworth, 1995). The plain texts, exercises and activities are often boring for the students. The kind and size of the fonts used are normal and appealing to the students and professors. It is acknowledged that the book has a clear and well-organized layout. No problems could be found in the text types, and on the whole, it has a good quality editing. Going carefully through the textbook, the researchers could not detect any errors and the revision and proofreading of the textbook are meticulously done. The size, weight and title of the book look appropriate.

Testing The First Hypothesis:

H₀: At least 60% of the participants believe that practical aspect of the book has not been considered.

H₀: $p \geq 60\%$

H₁: At least 60% of the participants believe that practical aspect of the book has been considered.

H₁: $p < 60\%$



Table 5: The Results of the Binominal Test on the First Hypothesis

	Category	N	Observed Prop.	Test Prop.	Asymp. Sig. (1-tailed)
Practical considerations	Group 1	<= 3	13	.3	.001 ^{a,b}
	Group 2	> 3	25	.7	
	Total		38	1.0	

a. Alternative hypothesis states that the proportion of cases in the first group < .6.

b. Based on Z Approximation

As table 5 indicates, 25 people, 70 %, rated the practical considerations to be effectively used in the book which is significantly higher than those 13 people (30%) who rated them to be ineffective. Regarding the obtained significant level, .001, the H_1 is accepted. As a result, with 95% certainty, we can conclude that the practical considerations have been effectively used in the book.

SKILLS

The Author of this book has claimed that she has tried to provide students with a series of high-interest reading passages. In this book, students are exposed to a couple of fresh engaging topics, vocabulary-building techniques, affixes, and reading strategies. Definitely, such a book can act as a springboard into reading comprehension and can pave the way for high-speed effective reading. The book provides adequate guidance for the learners in order to acquire the knowledge of reading skills.

Abundant exercises teach reading skills to the learners. There seems to be an imbalance between the objectives of the course and the four skills that learners should be practicing. Listening is the least practiced skill receiving no attention (no tape scripts, no CDs ...), and writing skill is done by asking learners to fill in the blanks! Speaking is only found in post-reading activities (oral questions) where they are usually skipped due to time limits. There is no balance between listening, speaking, reading, and writing skills development in the book. The integration of skills and the improvement of fluency skills are not paid enough attention to, either. The skills that are presented in the textbook do not include a wide range of cognitive skills so they are not challenging enough to learners. Overall, the results of the questionnaire imply that the coursebook under study is a useful and helpful reference book in contributing to reading skills and boosting the students' vocabulary domain.

Testing The Second Hypothesis:

H_0 : At least 60% of the participants believe that language skills have not been effectively practiced.

H_0 : $p \geq 60\%$

H_1 : At least 60% of the participants believe that language skills have been effectively practiced.

H_1 : $p < 60\%$

Table 6: the results of the binominal test on the second hypothesis

	Category	N	Observed Prop.	Test Prop.	Asymp. Sig. (1-tailed)
skills	Group 1	<= 3	30	.8	1 ^a , .0
	Group 2	> 3	8	.2	
	Total		38	1.0	

a. Based on Z Approximation.

As table 6 indicates, 8 people, 20 %, rated the skills to be effectively used in the book which is significantly lower than those 30 people (80%) who rated them to be ineffective. Regarding the obtained significant level, .001, the H_2 is rejected. As a result, with 95% certainty, we can conclude that the skills have not been effectively used in the book.



EXERCISES AND ACTIVITIES

The tasks and exercises in this book are supposed to promote learners' language development. They work on vocabulary items, guessing the meaning of new vocabularies, finding synonyms or antonyms, word forms, prepositions, context clues, and In addition, as the context of the reading presents, the meaning of new words is practiced in a clear format, so that it becomes easier for students to learn and remember them.

One of the main pitfalls of the book refers to the exercises for most of the students who would like to speak and communicate in the English language, but in every session, they have to read and do exercises without any change. This makes the situation a little boring. It seems in order for the book to be more attractive, it needs to cover a variety of exercises and activities.

The development of communicative competence of the students is almost not emphasized in this book, therefore, the exercises hardly move from controlled to free ones in order to enable students to step into the field of generating their own ideas. Exercises on pronunciation practice and sound patterns are not presented and practiced in the book; as a result, the phonological gaps between native and foreign language will not be filled, and students cannot easily recognize and follow standard sounds, stress patterns and intonation. In fact, there is no work on recognition and production of stress patterns and intonation. All in all, the activities in the book are neither too difficult nor too easy for the learners.

Testing The Third Hypothesis:

H₀: At least 60% of the participants believe that exercises and activities of the book have not been effectively used.

H₀: $p \geq 60\%$

H₁: At least 60% of the participants believe that exercises and activities of the book have been effectively used.

H₁: $p < 60\%$

Table 7: The Results of the Binominal Test on the Third Hypothesis

	Category	N	Observed Prop.	Test Prop.	Asymp. Sig. (1-tailed)
exercises	Group 1 ≤ 3	27	.7	.6 ^a
	Group 2 > 3	11	.3		
	Total	38	1.0		

a. Based on Z Approximation.

As table 7 indicates, 11 people, 30 %, rated the exercises to be effectively used in the book which is significantly lower than those 27 people (70%) who rated them to be ineffective. Regarding the obtained significant level, .000, the H₀ is accepted. As a result, with 95% certainty, we can conclude that the exercises have not been effectively used in the book.

PEDAGOGIC ANALYSIS

This book is no longer in the series of books which are methodologically in line with the present global theories. However, it does not comprise enough quizzes about achievement of the students. Some mechanisms for instructors to give regular feedback to learners in the book are provided as well, but they are not usually fully followed by instructors as the large numbers of students in the class and time constraint do not permit them to give students such feedbacks. If matching is done between the syllabuses of the course with the book, it can be observed that there is enough content being covered throughout the course. However; the time allocated to cover the content in the book is appropriate for fulfilling the objectives of the course. Unfortunately, the book is not enabling learners to use English outside the classroom since no part of the book delves into communicative activities and tasks.

Testing The Fourth Hypothesis:

H₀: At least 60% of the participants believe that the book has not pedagogically been analyzed.

H₀: $p \geq 60\%$

H₁: At least 60% of the participants believe that the book has pedagogically been analyzed.

H₁: $p < 60\%$



Table 8: The Results of the Binominal Test on the Fourth Hypothesis

		Category	N	Observed Prop.	Test Prop.	Asymp. Sig. (1-tailed)
Pedagogic Analysis	Group 1	<= 3	31	.8	.6	.004 ^a
	Group 2	> 3	7	.2		
	Total		38	1.0		

a. Based on Z Approximation.

As table 8 indicates, 7 people, 20 %, rated the pedagogic analysis to be effectively tried in the book which is significantly lower than those 31 people (80%) who rated them to be ineffective. Regarding the obtained significant level, .004, the H₀ is accepted. As a result, with 95% certainty, we can conclude that the pedagogic analysis has not been effectively tried in the book.

APPROPRIACY

On the whole, this book has suitable tasks and instructions for the students; it meets the long- and short-term goals specific to the learners and at the same time the material matches learner objectives. An extensive range of realistic text types is also included, such as Memory, Braille, Robots, etc., in order to offer a wide range of reading practices and more significantly, encourage reading with certain purposes. With the collection of authentic and real-life passages, learners are probably more driven to study and do practices in English. Generally, the results of the questionnaire imply that the coursebook under study is useful and helpful in contributing to reading skills and strategies and boosting the students' vocabulary domain.

Testing The Fifth Hypothesis:

H₀: At least 60% of the participants believe that the book is not appropriate.

H₀: $p \geq 60\%$

H₁: At least 60% of the participants believe that the book is appropriate.

H₁: $p < 60\%$

Table 9: The Results of the Binominal Test on the Fifth Hypothesis

		Category	N	Observed Prop.	Test Prop.	Asymp. Sig. (1-tailed)
Appropriacy	Group 1	<= 3	12	.3	.6	.000 ^{a,b}
	Group 2	> 3	26	.7		
	Total		38	1.0		

a. Alternative hypothesis states that the proportion of cases in the first group < .6.

b. Based on Z Approximation.

As table 9 indicates, 26 people, 70 %, rated appropriacy to be effectively considered in the book which is significantly higher than those 13 people (30%) who rated them to be ineffective. Regarding the obtained significant level, .000, the H₅ is accepted. As a result, with 95% certainty, we can conclude that appropriacy has been effectively considered in the book.

SUPPLEMENTARY MATERIALS

Concepts and Comments book is not accompanied with any audio-visual aids. However, as the audio-visual aids and workbook are not available in Iran, or are not released in the market, the only supplementary material available is the teachers' guide. The audio-visual aids and workbook would be of great help and support to both instructors and students if they were provided.

Testing The Sixth Hypothesis:

H₀: At least 60% of the participants believe that the book does not have enough supplementary materials.

H₀: $p \geq 60\%$



H₁: At least 60% of the participants believe that the book has enough supplementary materials.

H₁: p < 60%

Table 10: The Results of The Binominal Test on The Sixth Hypothesis

	Category	N	Observed Prop.	Test Prop.	Asymp. Sig. (1-tailed)
<i>Supplementary Material</i>	Group 1	<= 3	27	.7	.6 a, . . .
	Group 2	> 3	11	.3	
	Total		38	1.0	

a. Based on Z Approximation.

As table 10 indicates, 27 people, 70 %, rated supplementary materials to be effectively used in the book which is significantly lower than those 31 people (80%) who rated them to be ineffective. Regarding the obtained significant level, .000, the H₀ is accepted. As a result, with 95% certainty, we can conclude that supplementary materials have not been effectively used in the book.

GENERAL IMPRESSION

All in all, Concepts & Comments follows some clear objectives and instructions. As it was noted earlier, the major objective of the EGP course in Iran is to promote the reading skill. This course is offered throughout the Iranian universities in order to augment the students’ reading skills and strategies. It is intended to prepare them to fulfill their university discipline’s requirements; however, some of the students expect more than reading skill from the EGP course.

Nowadays, students want to develop not only their reading skills and strategies, but also, they intend to improve their writing, speaking, and listening skills. Since the EGP course can’t meet students varied wants, they get distrustful and develop negative feelings about it.

The course book considers the development of the reading skill as a process that if followed by learners can result in improved performance particularly in reading skill. Furthermore, since the book contains articles related to the multi-cultural contexts, it is largely appropriate for application in the EFL context. There is also some guidance provided for the students to be autonomous and assume responsibility for their own learning.

Testing The Seventh Hypothesis:

H₀: At least 60% of the participants do not have a kind of satisfactory impression on the book.

H₀: p ≥ 60%

H₁: At least 60% of the participants have a kind of satisfactory impression on the book.

H₁: p < 60%

Table 11: The Results of The Binominal Test on The Seventh Hypothesis

	Category	N	Observed Prop.	Test Prop.	Asymp. Sig. (1-tailed)
General Impression	Group 1	<= 3	16	.4	.6 .06 ^{a,b}
	Group 2	> 3	22	.6	
	Total		38	1.0	

a. Alternative hypothesis states that the proportion of cases in the first group < .6.

b. Based on Z Approximation.

As table 11 indicates, 22 people, 60 %, have got a kind of satisfactory impression on the book which is significantly higher than those 16 people (40%) who are dissatisfied. Regarding the obtained significant level, .006, the H₁ is accepted. As a result, with 95% certainty, we can conclude that generally the book is satisfying.



CONCLUDING REMARKS

EFL textbooks can play vital roles in the success of language programs. In fact, they are the realization of the specification of the means/ends processes in the curriculum planning. Sheldon (1988) recommends that "textbooks represent the visible heart of any ELT program". They provide the objectives of language learning; they function as a lesson plan and working agenda for teachers and learners. Cunningsworth (1995) and Ellis (1997) suggest, textbook evaluation helps teachers move beyond impressionistic assessments and it helps them to acquire useful, accurate, systematic, and contextual insights into the overall nature of textbook material.

Through the recent decades, a flourishing attempt has been made to develop textbook evaluation schemes and checklists. Yet the problem is that these results have not led to a wide use of the proposed schemes and checklists to carry out systematic and reliable evaluations. Although several reasons might be discernable in this regard, the fact is that mostly reasons other than the content and applicability of them are criticized, and they are rarely or never investigated for their strong and weak points.

Unlike the school settings in Iran, there is not one prescribed curriculum and textbook for the universities to follow as a standard benchmark. Despite the opportunities given to the faculty members to decide on the appropriate books for the classes which are in line with the objectives of the courses and the needs of the students, a guideline has not yet been provided that can be followed in deciding on this matter. Therefore, it is of paramount importance that textbook developers along with language instructors take into account more general features in their EFL textbooks by using appropriate checklists in order to come up with their favorable textbooks. Further research can also be done to get better results of in-use textbook evaluation through analyzing the teachers' journals, and classroom observations.

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