

## Investigating Iranian EFL Teachers' Perspectives on Junior High School English Workbooks: A Gender Interaction Effect

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**Abstract.** The present study was an attempt to investigate Iranian EFL teachers' attitudes towards junior high school English workbook Prospect 2. It also intended to check the possible effect of gender on Iranian EFL teachers' attitudes towards junior high school English workbook. To achieve these goals, fifty EFL teachers from different high schools in Shiraz were selected based on non-probability, convenience sampling. A modified version of Workbook Evaluation Questionnaire developed by Ansary and Babaii (2002) was employed as the instrument of the study. In order to analyze the data, the researchers made use of descriptive statistics, such as frequency and percentage, as well as inferential statistics, such as independent samples t-test. The findings highlighted that Iranian EFL teachers generally had negative attitudes towards junior high school English workbooks, namely Prospect 2. In addition, the findings emphasized that there was no statistically significant difference in the mean scores of male and female teachers respecting their perceptions towards junior high school English workbooks.

**Keywords:** Materials evaluation, gender, Iranian EFL teachers' attitudes, workbooks

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Received: May 2022; Accepted: September 2022

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## 1. Introduction

As Tomlinson (2001) defines, materials can be anything used to ease the process of language learning. They may appear in the form of linguistic, visual, auditory or kinesthetic, and they can be shown in print or on cassette, CD-ROM, DVD or the internet (Tomlinson, 2001). There is a close relationship between language learning and materials, since good materials can improve the process of language learning. Materials are very fundamental and have a major role in teaching and learning all over the world (Khansir & Mohammadifard, 2015). Harwood (2010) mentioned that in teaching a second language the importance of materials is neglected in educational programs.

Materials evaluation, as Tomlinson (2003) mentions, is a process that contains measuring and analyzing the potential value of learning materials. It also includes making judgments about the impact of the materials on the learners using them (Tomilnson, 2003). Cunningsworth (1995) and Ellis (1997) noted that textbooks evaluation helps teachers to move above the subjective evaluation and helps them to obtain effective, precise, principled and contextual intuition into the entire nature of textbooks.

Course book packages marketing in English language teaching usually include a student's textbooks, workbooks, a teacher's guidebook, CD's, Videos, and test materials, from which textbooks and workbooks are the most necessary parts for English classrooms (Litz, 2005). Researchers have always considered the evaluation of materials as an important factor for increasing their efficiency. However, the fact is that mainly textbooks, and not workbooks, have been under investigation in the literature regarding materials evaluation in both EFL/ESL contexts. This is why the present piece of research has focused on evaluating workbooks as another important material in the process of language learning.

According to Eagley and Chaiken (1998), an attitude is a psychological tendency that is expressed by evaluating a particular entity with some degree of favor or disfavor. Kreitner and Kinicki (2004) define attitude as a learned predisposition to respond in a consistently favorable

or unfavorable manner with respect to a given object. Ajzen (2005) demarcates attitude as a disposition to respond favorably or unfavorably to an object, person, institution, or event.

As the literature implies, materials evaluation is of utmost importance in the process of language learning and teaching. On the other hand, as Baleghizade and Aghazadeh (2014), and also Abdollahi-Guilani, Yasin, and Hua (2011) have proposed, there is not correspondence between the students' needs and the content of Iranian ELT materials.

In addition, although workbooks construct one main portion of course book packages, they do not obtain enough consideration due to being understood as "extra exercises". Workbooks are often ignored by teachers and learners, and the reason is not clear enough, according to the literature. To find a reason for the lack of attention to workbooks from the part of teachers and students there is a need to shift from evaluating textbooks to workbook evaluation, at least in the context of Iran. High schools in Iran, are known as the places where students do not gain enough regarding English language. Since materials evaluation is closely related to finding educational problems, and since there is a need to evaluate workbooks, this study aimed at evaluating high school workbooks from the point of view of the teachers.

Therefore, because workbooks, despite being important in the process of language learning have been neglected in the literature, and there are few studies investigating ELT workbooks in the literature, this study tried to investigate the Prospect workbook which is in use in Iranian high schools. More specifically, the present study sought to investigate high school teachers' attitudes and opinions regarding workbook used in grade eight, i.e. Prospect 2. More specifically, the present study aimed at answering the following research questions:

**RQ1:** What are Iranian EFL teachers' attitudes towards junior high school English workbook?

**RQ2:** Are there any differences between male and female teachers' attitudes towards junior high school English workbook?

A null hypothesis was proposed for the present study as follows:

**H0:** There are no differences between male and female teachers' attitudes towards junior high school English workbook

## 2. Literature Review

### 2.1 Theoretical considerations

#### 2.1.1 Materials evaluation

As stated by Tomlinson (2003, p. 15), materials evaluation is “a procedure that involves measuring the value of a set of learning materials. Tomlinson (2003) added that evaluation emphasizes fundamentally” the needs of the users of the materials and makes subjective judgement about their effects. It might include questions such as ‘Do the reading texts sufficiently engage learners?’, which elicit responses containing a necessarily subjective value judgement (p. 15).

Concerning the reasons for materials evaluation, Cunningsworth (1995) recognized two reasons. The first was the intention to adopt new course books, and the second was to identify the strong points and weaknesses. In addition, Mukundan (2004, p. 12) also clarified that “there are two purposes for evaluation; the first purpose is to select the course book and the other purpose is to determine the effectiveness of the course books while they are used”.

Tomlinson (2003, p.18) proposed a materials evaluation scheme which intended “to evaluate the capability of the materials to promote learning in a particular context”. The scheme was supposed to evaluate the materials in relation to the following areas: “General Appearance, Layout and Design, Methodology, Activities, Language Skills, Language Content, Topic Content, Teachability and Flexibility, and Assessment” (p. 18).

As the main variable of the study, a workbook has been defined by several scholars. For instance, Kurt and Akdeniz (2002) described it as the “materials by which students are given transaction steps regarding what they are supposed to learn. Also, they include activities which give the students main responsibility in their own learning” (p.12). To put it differently, Kurt and Akdeniz (2002) added that workbook is designed to “help students gain scientific process skills such as setting

up experimental mechanism, recording data, interpreting the data, and so on so that they can conceptualize the concepts in their mind" (p. 12).

Moreover, Yalin (2004) explained it as "an education material which helps ensuring knowledge and ability to students in line with the acquisitions stated in education programs. Students should benefit from various additional materials in order to have a permanent learning" (p. 7). Besides, Yalin (2004, p. 8) maintained that these materials should "meet the demands of a good learning. Students have different learning styles and needs. Variety of materials will increase the chance to create a learning that meets the needs of different learning styles".

### **2.1.2 Attitude**

The second variable of this study was attitude which has been defined differently by many scholars. Thurstone (1931) was the first person who defined the term "attitude". As Thurstone (1931, p. 31) claimed, attitude refers to "the affect for or against a psychological object". In fact, Thurstone (1931) believed that attitudes entail "negative and positive aspects when mentioning that the affect towards something can be for or against" (p. 31). In other words, "if an individual shows clear affection for visiting museums, it can be inferred that her attitude is clearly for art, or attitudes are positive" (p.31). According to Allport (1954, p. 11) attitude is "a disposition that is learned to not only think but also feel and behave and directed toward a person or object". In fact, Allport (1954) mentioned that within this definition, attitude becomes learnable and involves more than only being for or against and it encompasses a cognitive element. Definitely, certain knowledge and reasoning about the person or object contribute to the formation of an attitude. In a way, this knowledge of ideas functions as the base that directs the feelings towards different entities, and usually ends with a reaction or behavior from an individual (p. 11).

Additionally, Rosenberg and Hovland (1960) defined attitude as three action parts:

- Cognitive referring to thought and beliefs,
- Affective indicating feelings towards the attitude object, and

- Readiness for action which indicates the behavior based on the given circumstances (p. 37).

In more recent definitions of attitude, scholars had almost similar descriptions of the term. For example, Kreitner and Kinicki (2004, p. 2) defined attitude “as a learned predisposition to respond in a consistently favorable or unfavorable manner with respect to a given object”, while Ajzen (2005) demarcated attitudes “as a disposition to respond favorably or unfavorably to an object, person, institution, or event” (p. 4). Moreover, Icek (as cited in Ishag, 2016, p.3) described that “an attitude is a disposition to respond favorably or unfavorably to an object, person, institution, or event”. Besides, he maintained that attitude is “a hypothetical construct that can be perceived through measurable responses that evaluate the attitude object as positive or negative” (p.3). Wittenbrink (2007) claimed that attitude is defined as global and enduring predispositions, whether favorable or unfavorable, towards a stimulus or class of stimuli.

### **2.1.3 Attitudes and language learning**

Generally, it is assumed that attitudes have an influential role in the process of language learning and teaching and a great deal of researchers agreed upon this idea. According to Sauvignon (1976), attitude is the single most important factor in language learning and learners’ attitude towards language learning is one of the main reasons which gravitate learners to study a language. Furthermore, Ellis (1994) hypothesized that learners’ attitudes have an impact on the level of L2 proficiency achieved by individual learners and are themselves influenced by this success. In addition, Gardner (1995) emphasized the role of attitudes in second language learning; while attitudes toward other school subjects are not necessarily related to achievement in these courses. In other words, the nature of language acquisition may be such that attitudes are implicated in achievement more than is true for other subject areas.

Moreover, as stated by Karahan (2007), positive language attitudes draw learners to have positive orientation towards learning English. In fact, Karahan (2007) believed that attitude can facilitate language learning process and improve students’ language success. On the other hand,

learners' negative attitudes may be strengthened by lack of success. Along with Scott, Bell, and McCallum (2009), negative attitudes towards a second/foreign language can have a negative effect on learners' specific skills, resulting in low achievements, for instance, in reading and spelling tasks.

Correspondingly, Fakeye (2010) claimed that there is a positive relationship between students' attitude and their English language achievement. In other words, Fakeye (2010) maintained that despite the fact positive attitudes ease language learning and are indispensable in language success, negative attitudes may hamper language success because it works as one of student's psychological barriers. This idea is consistent with the claim of Krashen (2006) in which he stated that negative attitudes would block students' affective filter, so that students cannot understand the input, and this causes failure in language learning.

## **2.2 Empirical research**

The empirical studies reported in the literature are regarding textbooks, and to the best of the researchers' knowledge, workbooks have been neglected. For instance, Sadeghi (2020) investigated teachers' attitude towards the third-grade secondary school new English textbook called "Prospects 3". A mixture of both quantitative and qualitative approaches was utilized. After analyzing the data, Sadeghi (2020) found that "with respect to this new formed ELT textbook, teachers had more positive attitudes towards aims and achievements, skills, and technical considerations of the book" (p. 59).

Shahmohammadi (2018) examined EFL teachers' perspectives towards the textbooks taught in Junior high schools in Iran. A mixture of both quantitative and qualitative approaches was utilized. Succeeding the analyses of the data, Shahmohammadi (2018) found that "pronunciation and task and activities are the aspects of the textbooks that are in need of more improvement and revision. Nevertheless, vocabulary was the most satisfactory dimension of the textbooks" (p. 201).

Hanifa (2018) attempted to assess two different English textbooks addressed to junior high school grade VII in Indonesia. Textbooks included KTSP textbook and curriculum 2013 textbook. Following the

analyses of the data, Hanifa (2018) found that both textbooks are quite satisfactory “as they are very affordable, contain interesting layout, attractive designs, and clear instructions, correspond to current ELT methodology, cover all language skills, and comprise a wide range of topics which are familiar and culturally appropriate for learners” (p. 171).

Zia and Afraz (2017) explored teachers’ attitude towards the third grade secondary school new English textbook called “Prospects 3”. By running a series of descriptive analyses, Zia and Afraz (2017, p. 94) found that “with respect to this new formed ELT textbook, teachers had more positive attitudes towards aims and achievements, skills, and technical considerations of the book”. They also found that “EFL teachers showed the least positive attitude towards Language type, since they believe that in many cases the language and register employed in the textbook, were inauthentic” (p. 94).

Ahour and Golpour (2016) explored the new version of Iranian EFL junior high school textbook (Prospect1) from the teachers’ perspectives. By running data analysis, they found that “teachers had positive perceptions toward this book because of its content and topic relevancy to learners’ needs” (p. 32). Nevertheless, Ahour and Golpour (2016) found that teachers “intensified some problems in their open ended questions such as insufficiency of teaching time during a week, not focusing on explicit presentation of some words and grammatical points, and not paying attention to some sub-skill strategies” (p. 33).

Ahmadi and Derakhshan (2014) examined EFL teachers’ perceptions towards Iranian high school textbooks (prospect 1). The sample consisted of 15 male and female teachers from different cities in Iran. Following the analyses of the data, they found that most teachers had positive attitude toward Prospect 1 textbook. They added that in prospect 1, enough attention has been paid to listening and speaking while less has been paid to reading and writing skills.

Seddigh, Akbari and Shirvan (2014) also conducted research on prospect 1 textbook which had been published for Iranian high schools in 2013. Nearly all participants declared that the new prospect book was much better than the old one. Participants, however, mentioned some



weaknesses in the new prospect textbook as follows: 1) paying less attention to grammar and writing, 2) lack of pronunciation practice, and 3) English being taught through Persian culture.

Azizifar and Baghelani (2014) scrutinized EFL teachers' perspectives towards different facets of the Top-Notch textbooks. By running the needed statistical analyses, Azizifar and Baghelani (2014) found that "although the majority of the teachers were highly satisfied with Top-Notch series, it also suffers from a number of weak points that require teachers' awareness and consideration" (p. 38).

Sabzalipour and Koosha (2014) tried to evaluate English textbooks which are taught in Iranian high schools from the perspective of teachers. The sample consisted of 271 English teachers from several high schools in Mazandaran. The mixed- methods approach a combination of both quantitative and qualitative approaches, was used in this study. By means of data analysis, it was found that "the teachers seemed happy with the textbooks and had positive attitudes towards the textbooks" (p. 224).

Riasati and Zare (2010) explored EFL teachers' perspectives towards the "New Interchange" textbook. The population of the study included 35 EFL teachers. By running the needed statistical analyses, Riasati and Zare (2010) found that teachers were satisfied with the content of the textbook. Nevertheless, Riasati and Zare (2010) enumerated some deficiencies of the textbooks as follows: 1) shortage of supplementary materials, 2) textbooks not based on Iranians' culture, 3) some items being far from learners' capacity of learning, 4) so many testing exercise, 5) lack of writing skills, and 6) teachers' guidebooks not suitable.

### **3. Method**

#### **3.1 Design of the study**

The current study was a quantitative study of non-experimental type, since the researchers used quantitative techniques for data collection and data analyses procedures, and no independent variable was manipulated. In other words, it was a survey-type research using checklists to investigate EFL teachers' attitudes regarding workbooks.

### **3.2 Participants**

The sampling procedure used in the selection of the participants was a non-probability, convenience sampling type due to the limitations in randomly selecting the participants. The population from which the participants were selected for this study included Iranian EFL high school teachers who were all native speakers of Persian. To conduct the study, 50 EFL teachers working at different high schools in Shiraz participated in this study. The sample consisted of both genders (14 male teachers and 36 female teachers) with at least about three years of teaching experience with prospect series. The main reason for the three years teaching experience precondition was for the researchers to ensure that they were adequately familiar with different teaching procedures so that the gathered data and the findings could be approached more reliably. The participants' age range was from 25 to 60 years.

### **3.3 Instruments**

In order to gather the required data, a modified version of workbook evaluation questionnaire developed by Ansary and Babaii (2002) was used. This checklist has not originally been made for the purpose of evaluating high school workbooks. Therefore, its validity for this purpose was checked through consulting three experts in the area of materials evaluation. They were PhD holders with at least ten years of experience in teaching in the area of materials development and evaluation.

The questionnaire consisted of part A and part B. Part A was used to gather demographic background such as age, gender, and years of teaching experience, and part B carried 30-point questions categorized into three sections, namely, practical considerations, general considerations, and language skills. The modified version of the questionnaire was in Likert scale format, comprised of "Poor", "Satisfactory", and "Very Good" for all 30 items.

The reliability of the questionnaire was established in a pilot study through Cronbach's alpha with 30 high school English language teachers, and reliability coefficient was found to be .72 which is considered as appropriate.

**Table 1:** Results of Cronbach's alpha for estimating the reliability of the questionnaire

Cronbach's Alpha	Cronbach's Alpha Based on Standardized Items	N of Items
.720	.725	30

### 3.4 Data collection procedures

The data for this study was collected through a modified version of workbooks evaluation questionnaire developed by Ansary and Babaii (2002). It was given to the 50 EFL teachers working at different high schools in Shiraz. The researchers distributed the questionnaire among the participants through WhatsApp, Telegram, and E-mail. The participants were asked to fill in the questionnaire electronically and send it to the researchers. Due to the Covid-19 Pandemic, the process of data collection took longer than usual.

Prior to the completion of the questionnaire, the researchers provided the participants with some information on the objectives of the research and on how to complete the questionnaire. With a specific goal to obtain dependable information, they were requested to fill in the questionnaires carefully, since the answers were meant to be kept confidential. They were told that there would be no compelling reason to reveal their names. Moreover, their questionnaires were coded numerically.

### 3.5 Data analysis

The quantitative data gathered through a modified version of workbook evaluation questionnaire was analyzed utilizing SPSS (Version 24), mainly for descriptive statistics such as frequency and percentage, as well as inferential statistics such as independent samples t-test.

## 4. Results

### 4.1 Results related to the first research question

In order to answer the first research question which was "what are Iranian EFL teachers' attitudes towards junior high school English workbooks?", the researchers utilized a questionnaire including 30 items. The

participants provided their responses to each of the items based on a three-point Likert scale.

Regarding Item 1 of the questionnaire, 34% (17 teachers) of the teachers reported that the book is not locally available, while 32% (16 teachers) of them claimed that it is not so. Besides, 34% (17 teachers) of the teachers stated that the book is satisfactorily locally available. For Item 2, more than half of the teachers (60%, 30 teachers) claimed that the workbook does not have interesting and attractive physical appearance, and just 8% (4 teachers) of them clarified it has interesting and attractive physical appearance. Moreover, 32% (16 teachers) of the teachers specified that the book has, to some extent, interesting and attractive physical appearance.

Regarding Item 3, 44% of the teachers (22 teachers) reported that they consented to the item declaring that the book includes acceptably an appropriate mix of graphics and text, while 42% of teachers did not accept this idea, claiming that book has a poor mixture of graphics and text. Besides, 14% of the teachers identified that the book has a very good mixture of graphics and text. For Item 4, more than half of the teachers (52%) stated that the layout of the workbook is agreeably clear and well-organized while 36% of them did not admit this idea, appealing that book has a poor layout. Also, 12% of the teachers recognized that the book has a very good layout.

Regarding Item 5, asking if the book is appropriate for local situation, 58% of teachers chose the option Satisfactory while 24% percent of them did not accept this item, taking the option Poor. In addition, 18% of the teachers selected the option Very Good. Regarding Item 6, more than half of the teachers (56%) reported that the book has satisfactorily an appropriate size, weight, and title and 16 percent of them did not accept this idea. Furthermore, 28% of the teachers acknowledged that the book has a very good size, weight, and title.

On Item 7, 58% of the teachers (29 teachers) described that the exercises of the book are not appropriate to the proficiency level of the learners, while 42% of them believed that they are satisfactorily appropriate to the proficiency level of the learners. For Item 8, more than half of the teachers (60%) held that the exercises and activities in the

book do not promote learners' language development, and 34% of them believed that they satisfactorily do so. Besides, just 6% of the teachers recognized that the book has a very good exercises and activities which promote learners' language development.

With respect to Item 9, 62% of the teachers (31 teachers) stated that there is a poor balance between controlled and free exercises, while 28% of them supposed that there is a satisfactorily balance between controlled and free exercises. In addition, only 0% of the teachers accepted that the book has a very good balance between controlled and free exercises.

On Item 10, 58% of the teachers (29 teachers) reported that the exercises and activities do not reinforce what students have already learned and do not represent a progression from simple to more complex, while 42% of them believed that they satisfactorily do so. Regarding Item 11, 62% of the teachers (31 teachers) stated that there is a poor variation in the format of the exercises and activities of the book, while 28% of them supposed that there is a satisfactorily variation in the format of the exercises and activities of the book. Additionally, only 0% of the teachers accepted that the book has a very good variation in the format of the exercises and activities so that they will continually motivate and challenge learners.

For Item 12, more than half of the teachers (64%) held that there are not activities for communicative interaction and the development of communicative strategies in the book, and 28% of them thought that there are acceptably so. Besides, just 6% of the teachers recognized that the book has some very good activities for communicative interaction and the development of communicative strategies.

With respect to Item 13, uttering that if the activities in the book are neither too difficult nor too easy for the learners, 52% of teachers took the option Satisfactory, while 36% percent of them did not accept this item, choosing the option Poor. In addition, 12% of the teachers selected the option Very Good. On Item 14, stating that if the instructions are adequately written, 58% of teachers picked the option Satisfactory, while 24% percent of them did not accept this item, electing the option Poor. In addition, 18% of the teachers selected the option Very Good.

For Item 15, the majority of the teachers (76%) stated that the

workbook does not meet the long and short-term goals specific to the learners, and 24 percent of them claimed that the workbook satisfactorily meet the long and short term goals specific to the learners. Regarding Item 16, the majority of the teachers (82%) were in agreement of the idea that the activities of workbook do not arouse learners' interest, while 18 percent of them did not accept this idea, indicating that the activities of workbook adequately arouse learners' interest. On Item 17, more than half of the teachers (60%, 30 teachers) claimed that all the skills presented in the textbook did not convey in the workbook, and just 8% of them clarified they did so very well. Moreover, 32% of the teachers specified that all the skills presented in the textbook fittingly conveyed in the workbook.

As for Item 18, just 16% of the teachers (8 teachers) reported that they consented to the item declaring that the skills presented in the workbook are in line with the textbook, while 44% of teachers did not accept this idea. Besides, 40% of them identified that the skills presented in the workbook are satisfactorily in line with the textbook. Pertaining to Item 19, more than two-third of the teachers (70%) indicated that there is not appropriate balance between different skills regarding the exercises, and only 2 percent of them (one teacher) did not accept this idea. Besides, 28% of the teachers stated that there is acceptably appropriate balance between different skills regarding the exercises.

Regarding Item 20, asserting that if new structures are presented systematically and in a meaningful context, 32% of teachers chose the option Satisfactory, while the rest of the teachers (68%) did not accept this item, choosing the option Poor. On Item 21, 62% of the teachers (31 teachers) stated that the meaning of new vocabulary is not presented in context, while 34% of them supposed that the meaning of new vocabulary is satisfactorily presented in context. In addition, just 4% of the teachers accepted that the meaning of new vocabulary is presented in context very well.

Regarding to Item 22, the majority of the teachers (82%) were in agreement of the idea that there is not sufficient work on recognition and production of individual sounds for pronunciation practice while 18 percent of them did not accept this idea, indicating that there is sat-

isfactorily sufficient work on recognition and production of individual sounds for pronunciation practice. For Item 23, more than three-fourths of the teachers (86%, 43 teachers) claimed that there is not sufficient work on recognition and production of stress patterns and intonation, while 14 percent of them did not admit this idea. Concerning Item 24, just 6% of the teachers stated that they agreed with the statement uttering there is a summary of new and reviewed grammar very well, while the majority of them (82%) did not accept this idea. Besides, 12% of the teachers stated that there is satisfactorily a summary of new and reviewed grammar.

With respect to Item 25, the majority of the teachers (86%) maintained that the skill and subskills of reading comprehension are not given sufficient attention in the exercises, while the rest of the teachers (14%) did not admit this idea, indicating that the skill and subskills of reading comprehension are satisfactorily given sufficient attention in the exercises. Pertaining to Item 26, asking if the skill of listening comprehension is given sufficient attention in the exercises, 80% of teachers took the option Poor while the rest of the teachers (20%) did not accept this item, selecting the option Satisfactory. For Item 27, more than three-fourths of the teachers (76%, 38 teachers) claimed that the skill of speaking is not given sufficient attention in the exercises while just 6 percent of them did not admit this idea. Besides, 18% of the teachers held that the skill of speaking is satisfactorily given sufficient attention in the exercises.

Pertaining to Item 28, declaring that if the skill of writing is given sufficient attention in the exercises, 46% of teachers selected the option Poor, while the rest of the teachers (54%) did not accept this item, electing the option Satisfactory. On Item 29, just 6% of the teachers stated that they agreed with the statement uttering the development of discourse and fluency skills is given sufficient attention in the exercises very well, while near to two-thirds of them (66%) did not accept this idea. Besides, 28% of the teachers stated that the development of discourse and fluency skills satisfactorily given sufficient attention in the exercises. Finally, concerning Item 30, highlighting that if audio-visual aids are accompanied and if they are of good quality, 80% of teachers

chose the option Poor, while the rest of the teachers (20%) did not accept this item, picking the option Satisfactory.

## 4.2 Results related to the second research question

The second research question of this study tried to scrutinize if there is a difference between EFL teachers' gender and their perspectives towards junior high school English workbooks. In order to do so, first, the normality of the distribution of the data was checked, and then an independent samples t-test was applied to analyze and compare the mean scores of male and female participants.

### 4.2.1 Results of the normality test

Before running the inferential statistics in order to answer the second research question, the researchers checked the normality of the distribution of scores in the questionnaire. Table 2 represented the results below.

**Table 2:** Results of the normality test

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Skewness		Kurtosis	
	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Std. Error	Statistic	Std. Error
Teachers' Attitude towards Workbooks	50	.4807	.19084	.280	.337	-.558	.662

As shown in Table 3, the data regarding teachers' scores in the teachers' attitude on workbooks scale was normal, because the ratio of the skewness and kurtosis were within the ranges of +/- 1.96. Consequently, it could be concluded that the sample was normal and the parametric tests could be used. Besides, the actual shape of distribution can be seen in Histogram format.

### 4.2.2 Results of independent samples t-test

Table 3 unveils the results of group statistics of male and female teachers and their perceptions towards junior high school English workbooks.



**Table 3:** Group Statistics of Male/Female Teachers on Their Perceptions Towards Junior High School English Workbooks

	Gender of the Teachers	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Teachers' Attitude towards Workbooks	Male	14	.4762	.16036	.04286
	Female	36	.4824	.20354	.03392

As illustrated in Table 3, there was almost the same mean scores in two groups with respect to their perceptions towards junior high school English workbooks as the mean scores of male teachers was  $\bar{x} = .47$ ,  $SD = .16$ , and the mean scores of female teachers was  $\bar{x} = .48$ ,  $SD = .20$ .

Furthermore, to assess the significance of the difference between two groups and their perceptions towards junior high school English workbooks, an independent samples t-test was also run. The results are depicted in Table 4.

**Table 4:** Independent Samples t-Test between Male and Female teachers on Their Perceptions Towards Junior High School English Workbooks

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means			
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference
Teachers' Attitude towards Workbooks	Equal variances assumed	.847	.362	-.102	48	.919	-.00622
	Equal variances not assumed			-.114	30.016	.910	-.00622

Table 4 indicates that there was not any statistically significant difference in the mean scores of male and female teachers respecting their perceptions towards junior high school English workbooks ( $t(48) = -.102$ ,  $p > 0.05$ ).

## 5. Discussion

### 5.1 Answer to the first research question

The first research question delved into the perceptions of Iranian EFL teachers towards junior high school English workbooks. In order to answer this question, the researchers analyzed the teachers' responses to

items of the questionnaire and calculated the descriptive statistics such as frequency and percentage with respect to each item.

Based on the results of the first research question, Iranian EFL teachers generally had negative perspectives towards junior high school English workbooks, namely Prospect 2, as they supposed that the Prospect 2 suffered from a number of weak points that require teachers' awareness and consideration. To put it simply, teachers were not satisfied with the Prospect 2 workbook and they made it clear that the current materials of Prospect 2 workbook could not meet students' needs and interests.

Although it is assumed that the physical appearance of a book is of great importance, teachers believed that the Prospect 2 workbook did not have interesting and attractive physical appearance. This is not in line with the notion of McGrath (2002, p. 13) who clarified that "students incline to make judgment a book by its cover. The students' willing and interest in studying the book will augment if the cover is attractive and the text is clearly organized". McGrath (2002, p. 13) maintained that "once the learners' interests, attention, and curiosity are attracted through attractive presentation, their motivation to the task will increase and as a result there is likely to be a better chance of learning".

Moreover, as for the level of the instructional materials, a majority of teachers accredited that the exercises of the book are not appropriate to the proficiency level of the learners. This is not in keeping with the idea of Diniyah (2013, p. 79) who claimed that "the extent to which the students can make use of a textbook depends on the appropriateness of the textbook to the level of the students concerned". Diniyah (2013, p. 79) added that the "level of difficulty of the grammatical features, the vocabulary to be taught, activities and exercises and the level of instructions should neither be below the student's level nor far beyond their proficiency level and developmental stages".

Concerning the appropriateness of the exercises for the four language skills, namely, listening, speaking, reading, and writing, a majority of teachers acknowledged that the Prospect 2 workbook did not give sufficient attention to activities and exercises related to these skills. Besides, they believed that Prospect 2 workbook did not include enough activities for communicative interaction and the development of communica-

tive strategies. This is not consistent with the idea of McDonough and Show (2003, p. 9) who upheld that “any materials should enable the students to see effective use of the four skills in an appropriate context because in this way we can involve the learners in authentic tasks and increase their motivation”.

Furthermore, a majority of teachers recognized that the exercises and activities of Prospect 2 workbook are not varied in format so that they will continually motivate and challenge learners. This is not according to the idea of Jones (as cited in Legesse, 2015, p. 17) who indicated that “it is essential that the activities in the course book have a variety of focus and pace and that the activities should be enjoyable to the students so that their motivation can increase”.

The findings of this study contradicted to the studies conducted by several researchers. For example, Sabzalipour and Koosha (2014) tried to evaluate English textbooks which are taught in Iranian high schools from the perspective of teachers. The sample consisted of 271 English teachers from several high schools in Mazandaran. Following the analyses of the data, they found that “the teachers seemed happy with the textbooks and had positive attitudes towards the textbooks” (p. 224).

Besides, Ahour and Golpour (2016) explored the new version of Iranian EFL junior high school textbook (Prospect1) from the teachers' perspectives. The sample consisted of 90 experienced English teachers from different junior high schools in different districts of Gilan. By running the analyses of the data, they found that teachers have positive perceptions toward this book. Likewise, Sadeghi (2020) investigated teachers' attitude towards the third-grade secondary school new English textbook called “Prospects 3”. Sadeghi (2020, p.59) found that “teachers had more positive attitudes towards aims and achievements, skills, and technical considerations of the book”.

## **5.2 Answer to the second research question**

The second research question inspected if there was any difference between Iranian EFL male and female teachers' attitudes towards junior high school English workbooks. To do so, the researchers calculated group statistics as well as independent samples t-test in order to ana-

lyze and compare the mean scores between the two genders.

In keeping with the results of the second research question, there was not any statistically significant difference between male and female teachers respecting their perceptions towards junior high school English workbooks. In fact, the results revealed that teachers' gender could not be acknowledged as a factor which influence their perceptions towards junior high school English workbooks, and the null hypothesis of the study was retained. Indeed, Iranian EFL teachers' gender did not go hand in hand with their perceptions towards junior high school English workbooks.

Even though theories claim that male and female are different, the result seemed to violate the norms. According to Abdul Nasir (2009, p. 15), this could be due to the fact that "teaching environment in the respective schools and institutes that treat male and female equally. Female teachers are not discriminated in terms of knowledge accessibility and opportunity to success". Hence, teachers are free to apply any style that suits them most as long as they guarantee desired learning outcome. Therefore, by considering this issue, it seems normal that both male and female teachers have almost the same perspectives towards junior high school English workbooks.

## 6. Conclusion

Generally, as it is seen in the literature, workbooks are often ignored by teachers and learners, and the reason is not clear enough. To find an authentic reason for the lack of attention to workbooks from the part of teachers and students, there was a need to shift from evaluating textbooks to workbook evaluation. Accordingly, this study tried to inspect Iranian EFL teachers' attitudes towards junior high school English workbooks.

Based on the findings of this study, Iranian EFL teachers generally had negative perspectives towards junior high school English workbooks, namely Prospect 2, as they supposed that the Prospect 2 suffered from a number of weak points that require teachers' awareness and consideration. To put it simply, teachers were not satisfied with the Prospect 2

workbook and they made it clear that the current materials of Prospect 2 workbook could not meet students' needs and interests.

In fact, Iranian EFL teachers assumed that the Prospect 2 workbook did not have interesting and attractive physical appearance; the exercises of the book were not appropriate to the proficiency level of the learners; the book did not give sufficient attention to activities and exercises related to four main language skills; it did not include enough activities for communicative interaction and the development of communicative strategies; and the exercises and activities were not varied in format so that they would continually motivate and challenge learners.

Moreover, it was concluded that teachers' gender could not be acknowledged as a factor which influence their perceptions towards junior high school English workbooks. Indeed, Iranian EFL teachers' gender did not go hand in hand with their perceptions towards junior high school English workbooks.

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