An Analysis of English Textbook for Middle School Students in Iran Based on Tomlinson's Principles

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Abstract

This study investigated the alignment of the English textbooks "Prospect 1, 2, and 3" with Tomlinson's principles of differentiated instruction, based on the perceptions of middle school students in Iran. In this study, the mixed method research was utilized. A quantitative approach was employed, involving 88 students who completed a 16-item questionnaire. Descriptive statistics revealed that seventh-grade students had the lowest compatibility scores, while eighth graders had the highest. An ANOVA test showed significant variations in compatibility scores across grade levels, with Tukey HSD tests identifying significant differences between seventh and eighth, as well as eighth and ninth grades. Furthermore, in the qualitative part, according to the participants, three key points can enhance the standard of English textbooks. The findings underscore the importance of educational materials in fostering effective learning environments and the need for ongoing textbook evaluation and adaptation to meet diverse learner needs. This study contributes to understanding how textbook selection impacts student engagement and learning outcomes in English language education.

Keywords: English Prospect 1, 2, 3, Textbook Analysis, Tomlinson's Principles;

1. Introduction

In today's educational landscape, the use of appropriate teaching materials is essential for effective learning. As educators strive to meet the diverse needs of their students, material selection and assessment play a crucial role in ensuring the relevance and effectiveness of resources used

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in the classroom. This article explores the significance of material-based assessments and the impact they have on teaching and learning outcomes.

Material-based assessments and measurements are to be carried out by educators and instructors. Actually, textbooks and associated resources were created with teachers' and students' needs in mind. Even though the materials were well-established and produced, some of them might not be appropriate for the learners' needs, backgrounds, and community's social and cultural environment. Teachers could choose improper resources for students if they don't have measurements and evaluations (Dos Santos, 2017). According to a number of academics, these assessments and checklists fall into three categories: pre-, in-, and post-use evaluation forms (Cunningsworth, 1984; Ellis, 1997). Additionally, the checklists for material measurement and assessment always assist educators and teachers in comprehending the benefits and drawbacks from the viewpoints of the material users, which include students and teachers. Due to the nature of the applications, pre-use, in-use, and post-use checklists may alter slightly, but educators and teachers are free to modify the items to suit the demands of the moment. Regardless of the topic matter, the majority of textbooks and resources can be assessed using the checklists and assessment forms. For instance, the checklists were used in a number of earlier research to determine the suitability and efficacy of foreign language textbooks across the globe (Dos Santos, 2017; Dos Santos, 2020; Dos Santos, 2019). With the help of industry leaders, these studies used the checklist as a tool to assess the relevance and applications of the textbooks and related materials from the viewpoints of students, instructors, department heads, and school administrators.

The creation of instructional materials is essential to improve the quality of student learning in the educational setting. Textbooks are one of the key instructional resources. As vital instructional resources, textbooks are essential to the effective teaching and learning of English. They help teachers provide the best possible instruction in the classroom while fostering a positive learning atmosphere for the students. Furthermore, textbooks are invaluable tools that give students access to the vast range of materials to enhance their learning (Fidian & Sandy, 2020).

In the words of Cunningsworth (1984), textbooks are written by skilled and knowledgeable authors, and their material is usually evaluated through trial runs in real teaching settings before being released. O'Neill (1982) goes on to say that textbooks are advantageous for various reasons: first and foremost, their content usually meets students' needs, even if not made just for them. Secondly, they allow students to prepare for upcoming

learning opportunities and revisit past teachings. Moreover, textbooks provide top-notch resources at an affordable price, and appropriate ones enable educators to adjust and change content to better cater to students' requirements while promoting authentic engagement.

Numerous studies have underscored the importance of teaching materials and the needs of students (e.g., Grecu, 2023; Lavrenteva & Orland-Barak, 2023; Toledo-Sandoval, 2020; Karst et al., 2022; Ashkevar-Vakili, 2021). However, only a few have focused on analyzing school textbooks in relation to Tomlinson's principles. For instance, Rambe et al. (2020) examined an English textbook for second-grade senior high school students based on these principles, finding that it only fulfilled eight of Tomlinson's criteria.

In Iran's educational system, every student is required to complete courses in foreign languages, particularly Arabic and English. Unfortunately, teachers often have limited options for selecting textbooks and are compelled to use prescribed materials, which they may not fully endorse. This constraint can undermine effective language learning and lead many students to seek additional instruction at private language academies. To address these issues, a critical evaluation of language learning materials within the educational system is necessary.

According to Tomlinson (1998), learning materials should support language acquisition, highlighting the importance of textbooks in the teaching and learning process. Additionally, teachers must be adept at selecting and analyzing textbook content to enhance educational outcomes. In this study, the researchers aimed to evaluate the English course books—English for Schools Prospect 1, 2, and 3—used in an Iranian middle school from the students' perspectives, considering Tomlinson's principles. They also sought to discuss how these materials could be adapted for better learner engagement. The following research questions were formulated to guide this investigation:

1. Are English textbooks in middle schools standardized according to Tomlinson's principles?
2. How can the standard of English books improve in the perspectives of EFL learners?

2. Literature Review
2.1. Tomlinson Theory and Textbook

As stated by Tomlinson Historically, the goal of material developers has been to provide information that is consistent with their knowledge of efficient language learning strategies. They should ideally write textbooks, tell stories, express opinions, and give examples of how to use

language. Furthermore, when providing assistance, material developers should concentrate on three main questions, according to Tomlinson (2011): identifying the content that is appropriate for language learners, selecting the distribution methods, and investigating how it may be used to improve language learning outcomes.

According to their individual needs, textbooks are instruments designed to assist students in reaching their learning objectives (Cunningsworth, 1995). This implies that textbook methods and material should be adjusted to better meet the needs of students in order to help them achieve their learning goals. The most often used written instructional resource is the textbook. It is one of the many resources that teachers have at their disposal to help them teach students the core ideas of a subject.

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2.2. Principles by Tomlinson

According to Brian Tomlinson's principles, materials need specific qualities in order to be suitable for teaching and learning. Tomlinson (2011) puts forward sixteen guidelines for creating effective teaching materials. One of the initial criteria is:

  1. *Materials must make a significant difference*

This standard requires that materials engage learners in order to help them achieve their objectives. They ought to have a substantial effect on students' interest and focus. Materials can have this effect by:

- o Uniqueness: Utilizing exceptional subjects, visuals, and tasks.
- o Diversity: Including a variety of activities and sources in the materials.
- o An appealing display: Utilizing appealing colors and photographs to captivate learners' interest.
- o Appealing content: Ensuring the material includes local references and engaging subjects that are applicable to the students' needs. (Adapted from Tomlinson, 1998)

2. *Materials should make learners feel comfortable*

This principle highlights the importance of ensuring that materials create a feeling of comfort and security for students. This can be achieved in several ways, such as:

- o Incorporating texts and illustrations that complement each other.
- o Using content that is culturally relevant to the learners' backgrounds.
- o Providing adequate space for learners to write additional notes and reflections.
- o Including sufficient examples and explanations to clarify concepts.
- o Offering diverse activities to assess students' understanding effectively.

3. *Materials should aid in the growth of learners' self-assurance*

This principle states that materials and textbooks should support students' learning progression., helping them enhance their skills and fostering a sense of achievement. According to Tomlinson (1998), Students tend to feel at ease and confident when they see the resources as approachable and engaging. Self-confidence is a crucial individual characteristic that encourages greater participation in classroom activities. When students possess higher self-confidence, they tend to learn more effectively. Dulay, Burt, and Krashen (1982) pointed out, as cited by Tomlinson (1998, p. 9) "Learners who are calm and have confidence in themselves learn at a quicker pace." Numerous students feel comfortable and confident when the content is slightly more advanced than what they have already learned, instead of being too difficult.

4. *Learners should view the content taught as applicable and beneficial*

In order to learn effectively, learners must view materials as relevant and useful. English teachers have the ability to choose resources that are relevant to the particular subjects and assignments being taught to their students. Educators can improve the engagement and effectiveness of the learning process by making sure the materials are relevant to the learners' interests and real-life situations.

In order to learn effectively, learners must view materials as relevant and useful. English teachers have the ability to choose resources that are relevant to the particular subjects and assignments being taught to their students. Recent analyses highlight the need for such relevancy, as seen in the work of Mirzaei and Tabatabaei (2015) and Pirzad et al. (2021). Educators can improve the engagement and effectiveness of the learning process by ensuring the materials are relevant to the learners' interests and real-life situations.

5. *Materials should promote and support learners invest in themselves*

Materials that capture learners' interest and draw their attention will motivate them to be proactive in their learning. Tomlinson (1998) stated, one of the best methods to accomplish this goal is to ignite students' curiosity in a written or spoken piece, prompting them to examine its linguistic aspects in order to uncover new findings on their own. In addition, the effectiveness of teaching and learning English greatly relies on the commitment and dedication of learners towards the language. This principle implies that learners learn better by independently uncovering concepts and actively participating in their learning before joining class activities. Materials can facilitate self-investment by offering a variety of focus and activities options and by giving learners autonomy in selecting topics.

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self-investment by offering a variety of focus and activities options and by giving learners autonomy in selecting topics.

6. *Students need to be prepared to understand the concepts being presented*

According to Krashen (1985), as cited in Tomlinson, each learner absorbs new input based on their readiness to learn, which should include variations of features not previously taught. Therefore, materials should be designed to facilitate initial and ongoing assessments by teachers. To optimize learning, materials should adhere to the "i+1" principle, when "i" stands for knowledge that has been gained, and "1" indicates new information that is available for learning. The objective is to make sure that students fully understand previous developmental aspects before moving on to new ideas. As Kennedy (1973, p. 76) states, "it is crucial that learners take charge of their learning process. Since we cannot fully control how learners select and organize input, we must recognize that each learner has a unique thinking style and different approaches to exploration". For example, if a teacher intends to teach the present progressive tense, they must first ensure that students have a solid understanding of the previous tense, the simple present tense.

7. *Materials should provide learners with exposure to language used authentically*

Effective teaching resources frequently include real-life examples in diverse teaching methods, guidance, and tasks, like verbal and written materials. Guidance available in the materials can help accomplish this., instructions for activities, and opportunities for learners to engage in interviews with the teacher or listen to the radio. Authentic materials encompass a range of resources, such as real texts, magazines, videos, and photographs. The use of authentic materials positively impacts learners by making the learning process more interesting and motivating. Additionally, these materials provide cultural insights into the target culture and expose learners to real language as it is used in everyday contexts. High-quality materials, therefore, should not only be designed by teachers but also have the capacity to motivate and engage learners effectively.

8. *The focus of the learners should be on the linguistic characteristics of the input*

In this rule, learners should concentrate on the linguistic elements needed to draw general conclusions about the language functions

discussed in the main materials. However, it is essential to note that while these linguistic features should be highlighted, they should not become the sole focus of the materials. The objective is to support learners in recognizing and understanding the structures and patterns within the language while also maintaining a balanced approach to the overall learning experience.

9. *Materials should provide learners with opportunities to use language*

Learners must be given the opportunity to apply what they have learned in real-life situations. For effective English language learning, it is crucial to assess students' abilities in language use through communicative activities. These can include information or opinion gap activities, post-listening and post-reading exercises, as well as creative writing and speaking tasks. Moreover, learners should be encouraged to use language for communicative purposes rather than simply practicing it in teacher-controlled scenarios. Such interaction allows learners to internalize new language through the input received and offers them the chance to produce language as a constructive form of output (Sharwood-Smith, 1961). For instance, after teaching the past tense, a teacher might ask students to discuss the activities they engaged in the previous day. Alternatively, students could be prompted to retell stories or movies they have read or watched, providing practical opportunities for speaking practice.

10. *Materials need to consider that the beneficial impacts of teaching often have a delayed onset*

Acquiring a language does not happen quickly; instead, it develops slowly as time passes. To help students slowly learn a language, it is crucial to give them regular and abundant opportunities to use the language in meaningful conversations. The consistent exposure allows learners to internalize language patterns and structures, leading to more effective and lasting language acquisition.

11. *Materials need to take into account that students have diverse learning styles*

Language learning is a complex phenomenon that involves the intricacies of human cognition, and there is no one-size-fits-all approach. According to Gorji et al. (2023), English language quality of EFL learners could refer to various points that the most ones is learning style. Learners exhibit a variety of learning styles, including:

- Visual: Learners' individuals who favor reading written language.
- Hearing-related: students who benefit from hearing the language.
- Kinesthetic: Learners who thrive on physical activities, such as following instructions.
- Studial: Learners who pay close attention to linguistic features and strive for accuracy.
- Experiential: Learners who prioritize using the language for communication, even if they are unsure of grammatical correctness.
- Analytic: Learners Individuals who concentrate on specific parts of language and gradually acquire knowledge of them.
- Worldwide: Students who prefer to engage with larger chunks of language and respond holistically.
- Dependent: Learners who rely on teachers and textbooks for guidance.
- Independent: Learners who enjoy exploring and learning from their own experiences.

Recognizing and accommodating these diverse learning styles in instructional materials can enhance the effectiveness of language teaching and support each learner's unique journey.

12. Materials need to consider that learners have varying emotional attitudes

The attitudes of learners can differ greatly depending on the situation and time. Therefore, it is crucial to maintain students' motivation consistently, as effective learning relies heavily on motivation. An ideal learner develops a positive attitude toward their teachers, peers, textbooks, and the learning environment. To address these factors, materials should offer diverse activities and additional resources tailored to enhance motivation, helping to engage students and sustain their interest throughout the learning process.

13. Materials need to allow for a quiet phase when instruction first starts

The period of silence is essential for allowing learners to internalize grammar, vocabulary, and other language components, ultimately aiding their proficiency development. During this phase, comprehension occurs without the pressure to produce language immediately. Once the silent period has elapsed, learners often feel more comfortable transitioning from understanding to actively using the language.

14. Materials need to optimize learning potential by promoting intellectual, aesthetic, and emotional engagement, activating both right and left-brain functions

The principle highlights the significance of involving students. through various cognitive and emotional processes, thereby activating different areas of the brain. By involving learners at multiple levels—intellectually, aesthetically, and emotionally—educational materials can enhance the learning experience, promoting better recall and deeper understanding the material.

15. Materials should place less emphasis on controlled practice and instead prioritize language application

While it has been posited that spontaneous language performance is achieved through doing exercising Sharwood-Smith (1981) suggested that automaticity arises from regular practice, as proposed by Bialystok (1988). there is limited proof supporting the long-term effectiveness of controlled practice activities. Several researchers, such as Ellis, contend that controlled practice has little influence on the precision of newly acquired structures (Ellis, 1990) and minimal impact on fluency (Ellis & Rathbone, 1987). Even so, structured grammar exercises are still common in popular textbooks and are considered important by many teachers and students. Nevertheless, it is essential for materials to primarily emphasize meaningful language use and real-world communication to enhance learners' linguistic competencies effectively.

16. Materials should allow for feedback on outcomes, particularly focusing on the efficacy of language usage rather than correctness

The principle emphasizes effectiveness of communication is more significant than linguistic accuracy. When learners successfully achieve specific knowledge or objectives outlined in the textbook, it is vital to offer positive feedback that highlights the effectiveness of their language use. This approach encourages students to focus on the successful application of language in real contexts, fostering their confidence and willingness to communicate, rather than solely concentrating on grammatical correctness.

2.3. Textbook Evaluation

According to Atashpanjeh and Kolinia (2021), in any educational context, textbooks have always a crucial role. Furthermore, in revealing the weaknesses and strengths of the content in the textbook, evaluation has an important role (Talebiyan, 2022). Evaluation involves outlining, acquiring, and sharing data on the strengths of educational objectives,

plans, execution, and results. It aids in enhancing educational products during the process of development and evaluating the end product once finished. Tomlinson states that a textbook is one of the resources that teachers utilize to support students' learning. Tomlinson (2003, p. 15) defines materials evaluation as a process of assessing the worth (or future worth) of a collection of learning materials. This assessment mainly considers the requirements of the materials' users and includes personal assessments of their impacts (Tomlinson, 2003). Textbook analysis, as a method of research, requires making reliable and trustworthy judgments from data about their surroundings. It aims to offer information, fresh perspectives, presentations of truths, and tangible advice for decision-making. The goal is to achieve a concise and comprehensive overview of the phenomenon, resulting in concepts or categories that describe it (Fitriyani, 2013).

A review of studies on textbook evaluation in Iranian schools reveals a significant gap in evaluating these textbooks according to Tomlinson's criteria. Textbook analysis systematically examines text materials, including their structure, focus, and learning aids. Teachers may view the text as "sacred," following it without question, or dismiss it as useless. Krippendorff (2003) explained that textbook analysis is a method used in research to draw reliable and accurate conclusions about texts (or other relevant subjects) in relation to their contexts. This examination requires specific protocols. Textbook analysis can offer fresh perspectives, deepen researchers' comprehension of particular phenomena, or guide practical decision-making. It acts as a useful research instrument by using organized and unbiased methods to explain and measure events (Krippendorf, 1980, p.18). Furthermore, examining textbooks enables researchers to explore theoretical concepts and enhance their comprehension of the information. It is believed that by organizing words into fewer, content-related groups, classified words, phrases, and similar elements are thought to have the same meaning (Cavanagh, as cited in Fitriyani, 2013).

3. Methodology

This study aims to examine whether the textbooks "English for Schools: Prospects 1, 2, and 3" align with Tomlinson's theory and to identify how the standards of English books can improve. To achieve these goals, the methodology employed in this research is quantitative and qualitative study.

3.1. Participants

In quantitative phase, 88 students from Somaye Middle School in Isfahan, comprising 29 ninth-grade students, 26 eighth-grade students, and 33 seventh-grade students. The homogeneity of EFL learners was checked according to their school's scores. The students' ages range from 13 to 15 years. In qualitative phase, 14 students from quantitative phase were volunteered to answered the semi-structural interview.

3.2. Instrument

The primary tool utilized in this study is a questionnaire developed based on Tomlinson's principles, consisting of 16 items. Each item offers three response options: "Yes, completely," "Somehow," and "Not at all." A sample of the questionnaire is provided in the Appendix. Students needed 20 minutes to filling the questionnaire.

Furthermore, interviews with 14 individuals were semi-structured. Participants were invited to respond to three open-ended questions in Persian after providing their consent and demographic details, such as their age and gender, to ensure that their thoughts were accurately and clearly represented. The main goals of the interview questions were to find out (1) how the standard of English books that utilize at schools can improve.

3.3. Data Collection

After the homogeneity of participant confirmed the participants should fill the questionnaire that show the grade of standard of their English book according to Tomlinson's questionnaire. Upon collection, the completed questionnaires coded and entered into IBM SPSS Statistics version 27.0.1 for data analysis. This statistical software will facilitate the processing and examination of the data, enabling the researcher to derive meaningful insights from the students' responses.

About qualitative phase, the MAXQDA software (Version 2022) was used to analyze the textual data obtained from conducting the semi-structured interviews. This was done by using an inductive data coding approach since there was no predetermined theoretical framework for coding the data and the codes and themes were derived from the data itself (the frequency of codes is shown in Figure 1). This was done because content analysis is a popular method of analyzing textual data (Berg, 2001). In accordance with Gao and Zhang's (2020) steps for analyzing qualitative data, content, and thematic analyses were also conducted. These steps included: (1) cleaning the original data, which involved reading the data multiple times to ensure accuracy and removing errors and irrelevant responses; (2) coding the data, which involved generating

open codes; (3) generating themes, which involved comparing and grouping open codes under axial codes; (4) categorizing themes, which involved grouping axial codes and themes under selective codes or overarching terms; and (5) producing the report, which included a detailed report of the analyzed data. Braun and Clarke (2012) defined thematic analysis as involving the initial development of codes and the subsequent generation of themes from qualitative data, which is consistent with the codes and themes generated in this study. As a result, codes encompass both the latent and semantic meaning of the data that are relevant to the research topic, and themes are derived from the dataset in addition to the codes. These themes involve broader meaning patterns within the data and are utilized to display the qualitative results in a structural manner.

Figure 1. *The Frequency of Codes*

4. Results

In this part, the researcher discusses the results obtained by analyzing the data, which include both phases (Quantitative phase and Qualitative phase).

4.1. Quantitative Phase

4.1.1. Descriptive Results

To derive the descriptive statistics, the researcher first examined the dataset for any missing data or outliers. It was confirmed that there were no missing responses or outliers present in the collected data. Next, the questionnaire's reliability was evaluated through Cronbach's alpha, confirming the internal consistency of the items. The reliability results are showed in Table 1. This table indicates a Cronbach's alpha value greater than 0.7, reflecting excellent reliability for the questionnaire, which validates the data collection instrument used in this study.

Table 1. *Reliability Statistics*

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.877	16

Following the reliability analysis, descriptive statistics such as means, standard deviations, and frequency distributions were calculated for each item on the questionnaire in Table 2 and Table 3. These statistics provide insight into students' perspectives on the alignment of the textbooks with Tomlinson's theory.

Table 2. *The Normality distribution of Data*

	N	Skewness		Kurtosis	
	Statistic	Statistic	Std. Error	Statistic	Std. Error
mean	88	-.091	.257	.107	.508
Valid N (listwise)	88				

Skewness and kurtosis values fell within the range of -2 to +2, which considered acceptable for data normality (George & Mallery, 2010). As Table 2 revealed, the data is reliable and have normal distribution (-.09, 0.10).

According to Table 3, the mean assessed for each of three groups. The results show that the second group that refer to eighth grade in high school have higher mean rather than group one (the seventh grade) and the third group (the nineth grade). Therefore, the next step would be inferential part.

Table 3. *Mean of Each Group*

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
seventh grade	33	1.19	3.00	2.16	0.40
eighth-grade	26	1.90	2.95	2.39	0.32
ninth-grade	29	1.29	2.71	2.04	0.34
Valid N (listwise)	88				

4.1.1. Inferential Results

In addition to the descriptive statistics, inferential statistics will be employed to examine any significant differences in responses based on grade levels. With regarding to skewness and kurtosis scores the researcher will conduct appropriate statistical tests, one-way ANOVA, to explore whether the differences in perspectives among seventh, eighth, and ninth-grade students are statistically significant. The results of these inferential analyses will be presented in subsequent tables and figures, illustrating key findings and their implications for the study. Regarding to

the following table, the seventh grade has the lowest mean compatibility score, while the eighth grade has the highest, the standard deviations indicate that the scores are relatively close to the mean, with the eighth grade showing the least variability, and the confidence intervals suggest that the true mean scores for each grade are likely to fall within the specified ranges, providing insight into the reliability of the mean scores. Regarding the table 4, the ANOVA results indicate that there are significant differences in compatibility scores among the groups, as evidenced by the F-statistic of 6.660 and a p-value of 0.002. The variation between groups is substantial compared to the variation within groups, suggesting that the group means are not all equal.

Table 4. *ANOVA Results for Compatibility Score*

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	1.743	2	.872	6.660	.002
Within Groups	11.122	85	.131		
Total	12.865	88			

The table 5 presents the results of a Tukey HSD (Honestly Significant Difference) test for multiple comparisons of the "compatibility score" across different grade levels. The Tukey HSD test indicates significant differences in compatibility scores between the seventh and eighth grades, as well as between the eighth and ninth grades, with p-values of 0.000. The mean difference between the seventh and ninth grades is not statistically significant (p = 0.707). The confidence intervals for the significant comparisons do not include zero, further confirming the presence of significant differences in compatibility scores among the grades.

Table 5. *Multiple Comparisons Dependent Variable*

					95% Confidence Interval	
		Tukey HSD				
(I) grade	(J) grade	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig.	Lower Bound	Upper Bound
seventh grade	eighth grade	-.23438*	.09486	.041	-.4607	-.0081
	ninth grade	.11708	.09207	.415	-.1026	.3367
eighth grade	seventh grade	.23438*	.09486	.041	.0081	.4607
	ninth grade	.35146*	.09770	.002	.1184	.5845
ninth grade	seventh grade	-.11708	.09207	.415	-.3367	.1026
	eighth grade	-.35146*	.09770	.002	-.5845	-.1184

*. The mean difference is significant at the 0.05 level.

The Tukey HSD test results show that the eighth grade has a significantly higher compatibility score compared to the seventh and ninth grades, which are not significantly different from each other. The means for the ninth and seventh grades are grouped together, indicating they do not differ significantly, while the eighth grade stands out as a separate group with a higher mean score.

4.2. Qualitative Phase

Regarding the second research question (RQ2: How can the standard of English books that utilize at schools improve?) the qualitative analysis indicates that there were three divisions: more understandable, develop the content, and change to the institutes' books. The three categories (develop the content, develop more our cultures, and like the institutes' books) in Figure 2 clearly demonstrate that the most important point from students' point of view is "change the books in a way that become more understandable".

A participant, for example, clarified:

I think the level of students and the level of books are not match with each other. For example, we can see the grammar of English books that are confusing the students. It must change in a way that start with low level to high level. I think the content should be changed; I mean more understandable.

Another participant stated:

The level of books is not match with the level of students. so, it is better that the text of books changes in a way that be suitable for all of the students.

In addition to the first point, some of the students explained that the content of English books that use at schools should change. One of the participants explained:

It is appropriate but the content should be more. In my opinion, the authors should add some exams in the book that each day we solve them.

Another participant addressed:

In 7th grade all of the lessons are very easy but in 8th grade suddenly everything become hard. It should be in a way that appropriate for all of the levels.

The last point according to Figure 2 is about change the English books to institutes' books. For instance, one of the participants clarified:

When we open the school book, the first pages of the book are a text that many students cannot read from the text and do their homework. In my opinion, we should pay attention to the methods of teachers in

institutes and contents. It means that, it is better to change our books to the institutes' books.

Another participant explained:

The book should change like books of institutes. For example, like Family & Friends 1 and 2.

Figure 2. *Three Factors that can improve the Standard of English Books*
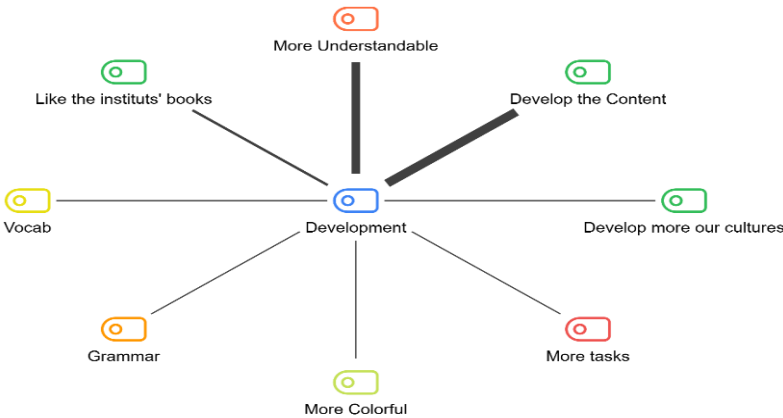
5. Discussion

This research endeavored to uncover the standards of English textbooks according to Tomlinson's principles and the factors that can improve these standards. Utilizing both quantitative and qualitative methods allowed for a comprehensive understanding of the textbooks' effectiveness in meeting educational needs.

The quantitative analysis revealed significant variations in compatibility scores across grade levels, with eighth-grade students perceiving the highest level of alignment between the "Prospect 1, 2, and 3" textbook series and Tomlinson's principles of differentiated instruction. Specifically, the Tukey HSD test results indicated that eighth-grade participants had significantly higher compatibility scores compared to their seventh and ninth-grade counterparts. This suggests that the textbooks may contain content and pedagogical approaches that are better suited to meet the diverse learning needs of older middle school students. Such findings are critical because they provide evidence that instructional materials can influence student engagement and learning outcomes, especially during transitional periods when students are developing more sophisticated cognitive skills.

These results align with existing literature regarding the crucial role of educational resources in shaping learning experiences and outcomes (Tomlinson, 2003). They also support the notion that as students' progress through their educational journey, their learning requirements evolve, necessitating changes in the instructional materials provided. The observed disparities in textbook compatibility across grade levels underscore the necessity for ongoing evaluation and adaptive strategies to ensure that instructional materials effectively cater to the cognitive, linguistic, and developmental trajectories of students at different stages of their education.

The qualitative analysis further underscored areas for improvement, with participants suggesting the need to "develop the content," "enhance cultural representation," and better align the textbooks with the institutes' requirements. These suggestions highlight a critical aspect of tailoring educational materials to not only meet academic standards but also resonate with the cultural and contextual realities of learners. These findings corroborate previous research that emphasizes the importance of textbook analysis in identifying the strengths and limitations of educational materials (Krippendorff, 2003; Fitriyani, 2013), and they provide valuable feedback for textbook developers and curriculum designers. This feedback can lead to revisions that would make textbooks not only more effective pedagogical tools but also more inclusive of diverse student populations.

The implications of this study are twofold. First, it underscores the need for conscious efforts to align textbook selection and design with principles of differentiated instruction. Textbook developers and curriculum designers should carefully consider the diverse learning profiles of students, integrating features and content that accommodate a range of readiness levels, interests, and learning preferences. This approach not only fosters an inclusive learning environment but also empowers students by recognizing their unique learning journeys.

Second, the study highlights the importance of ongoing professional development for teachers on the effective utilization of differentiated textbooks and supplementary resources. Educators need adequate training and support to bridge the gaps identified in this research, ensuring they can maximize the potential of the instructional materials available to them. Continuous professional development encourages teachers to implement innovative teaching strategies that capitalize on the strengths of the textbooks while addressing the varied learning needs of their students. For instance, according to Rafiei Sakhaei et al. (2023), the overall outcomes

of their study display that the innovative methodologies can enhance the motivation of EFL learners.

This study contributes to the limited research on textbook evaluation in Iranian schools based on differentiated learning theories. By applying Tomlinson's principles as an evaluative lens, it provides valuable insights into the strengths and limitations of the "Prospect" series in accommodating student differences. The findings serve as a foundation for future research and inform decision-making processes in the selection and adaptation of English language textbooks, ultimately fostering more inclusive and effective learning environments in Iran. Further investigations could explore the long-term impact of revised instructional materials on student performance and engagement, paving the way for evidence-based improvements in educational practices.

6. Conclusion

This study has provided valuable insights into the compatibility of the English textbooks "Prospect 1, 2, and 3" with Tomlinson's principles of differentiated instruction, as perceived by middle school students in Iran. Through a quantitative analysis involving 88 students from varying grades, significant differences in the perceived effectiveness and engagement of these materials were identified. Notably, the eighth grade emerged as the most positively received, demonstrating a higher compatibility score compared to the seventh and ninth grades, which showed no significant differences between themselves. These findings highlight the critical role textbooks play in facilitating language acquisition and student engagement, suggesting that the design and content of educational materials can significantly influence student motivation and learning outcomes.

As Tomlinson (2011) emphasizes, effective learning materials should cater to diverse learner needs, and this study reveals that the current textbooks only partially fulfill this criterion. The partial alignment indicates an opportunity for improvement, suggesting that textbook developers should consider integrating more varied instructional strategies and resources that address different learning styles and preferences. Furthermore, the qualitative analysis provided insights into the specific areas where the textbooks could be enhanced. From the perspectives of EFL learners, three main points emerged that could significantly elevate the standard of English textbooks: the need for more culturally relevant content, the incorporation of diverse learning activities, and better alignment with institutional requirements. These aspects are

vital for fostering a more engaging and relatable learning experience for students.

The implications of these results are twofold: they underscore the necessity for continuous evaluation of educational resources to ensure alignment with best practices in teaching, and they highlight the potential need for curriculum developers and educators in Iran to adapt or supplement existing materials to better meet the diverse needs of all learners across different grades. This adaptability is essential not only for enhancing student engagement but also for promoting equitable learning opportunities, ensuring that all students can thrive in their educational journeys.

Future research could build on this study by exploring qualitative aspects of textbook use in greater depth, investigating how teacher perceptions align with student feedback, and analyzing the impact of revised educational materials on student learning outcomes. Additionally, examining the role of professional development for teachers in effectively utilizing differentiated instructional strategies with the current textbooks could provide further insights. Ultimately, enhancing the quality of English language education in Iran hinges on a rigorous evaluation of pedagogical resources, ensuring that all students are equipped with the tools necessary for effective learning. By prioritizing the alignment of educational materials with differentiated instruction principles and actively involving educators and learners in the evaluation process, stakeholders can create a more inclusive and effective educational environment that supports the diverse needs of all students.

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