Research Paper

Evaluative Content Analysis of the Iranian EFL Textbook for Senior High School Second Graders: *Vision 2*

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Abstract

This study sought to evaluate the usefulness and desirability of the English textbooks for Iranian second grade students in senior high school, *Vision 2*. To this end, the extent to which the textbooks materials satisfy the prescribed curriculum was explored based on Littlejohn's (2011) evaluative framework. Employing stratified random sampling, a total of 12 private and public senior high schools (six girl students and six boy students) were selected randomly among all the schools located in the six education districts in Isfahan. To select the teacher participants, a convenience sampling method was employed and those who agreed to be surveyed took part in the study. The 20 teachers who participated in this study have been teaching *Vision 2* since the beginning of 2017 fall. The process of the content analysis deals with a deeply analytical content evaluation based on a framework containing different parts (objective description analysis, subjective analysis, subjective inference) done by a teacher committee. The results revealed that there is a need to adapt the materials to the target situation of use. Such adaptation needs to cover both design- and publication-oriented aspects of the materials. As a practical implication, the findings may urge the developers of the textbooks to launch a modification project relying upon the results of the systematic phase, therefore, it may enrich English teaching and learning material in Iranian high schools.

Keywords: *Analytical Evaluation, Content Analysis, Textbook Evaluation, Vision 2*

Introduction

Textbooks serve as the basis for much of the language input learners receive and the language practice that takes place in the classroom. However, in recent years there has been much of debate in ELT on the actual role of materials in teaching English. According to Ansari (2007), English teaching objectives are not completely well-defined and most of the students are not able to handle language learning problems. In the last six years, the new English textbooks have been published due to the changes that happened to the system of education in Iran. This series includes 6 books under the general name of *English for Schools* and is divided into two 3-volumes series titled *Prospect 1* to *3* for junior high school and *Vision 1 to 3* for senior high school level.

Evaluation of the teaching materials is a very important task that can help us judge and then find some ways to deal with, improve, or make changes. No doubt selecting and evaluating textbooks in the EFL context is of utmost importance. For Dudley-Evans and St John (2005), "evaluation is a whole process which begins with determining what information to gather and ends with bringing about change in current activities or influencing future ones" (p. 128). Sheldon (1988) stated two important reasons for evaluating coursebooks. First, the evaluation will help the teacher or program developer to make decisions about selecting the appropriate and efficient coursebook. Second, evaluation of the merits and demerits of coursebooks will familiarize the teacher with their weaknesses and strengths.

According to Ahour and Ahmadi (2012), textbooks easily provide knowledge to learners. However, it seems that many teachers encounter immense problems in terms of teaching English in Iranian high schools. Therefore, the major purpose of this study was to analytically evaluate the recently published English textbooks for senior high school students (*Vision2*) based on the criteria of an in-depth systematic materials evaluation from the perspective of a committee consisting of the researcher and four of her colleagues. The study also aimed to elucidate Iranian high school English teachers' expectations of the target materials perfectly suited to Iranian senior high school based on the criteria of an in-depth systematic material evaluation. The purpose is to rate the extent to which the materials, in general, live up to the goals of the curriculum.

However, in recent years there has been a lot of debate in ELT on the actual role of materials in teaching English. According to Ansari (2007), English teaching objectives are not completely well-defined and most of the students are not able to handle language learning problems and at last, are not proficient enough to communicate in a foreign language. Nowadays, evaluation and selection of materials that best fit the learners' needs are becoming more and more important for all levels in language teaching (Tosun, 2012). Evaluation of the teaching materials is a very important task that can help us judge and then find some ways to deal with, improve, or make changes. Besides, Tomlinson (1996) regarded material evaluation as another way of action research that develops our understanding of the paths in which the materials work. According to Jahangard (2006) evaluation of EFL materials currently taught at Iran public school requires a deeper and more exhaustive analysis and scrutiny by a group of experienced teachers. It is very important to understand what teachers believe and practice in their classroom (professional life) since these beliefs will influence their teaching (Raths & McAnich, 2003).

Because the primary users of textbooks are the instructors and learners, evaluation should be carried out while both parties are using the textbook to get their opinions about how the textbook works in the teaching learning situation. Accordingly, the findings of the study may

reveal how far the material match up to what the authors claim as well as the aims and objectives of L2 teaching programs.

Research Questions

The current investigation tried to address the gap in the studies by addressing the following research questions:

RQ1. What are the analytical descriptions of the recently published English textbook for senior high school students, *Vision 2*, based on the criteria of an in-depth systematic material evaluation?

RQ2. What are the Iranian high school English teachers' expectations of the target materials suited for senior high school students' needs based on the criteria of an in-depth systematic material evaluation?

Literature Review

Studies on Content Analysis and Textbook Evaluation

Evaluation is widely acknowledged as a powerful means of improving the quality of education. With the use of textbooks in the classroom as one of the main sources of teaching and learning, textbook evaluation has been emphasized as an important issue since the 1980s. Materials evaluation has been defined by Tomlinson (2003, p. 15) as "a procedure that involves measuring the value (or potential value) of a set of learning materials". An evaluation focuses mostly on the needs of the users of the materials and makes subjective judgments about their effects (Tomlinson, 2003). An evaluation may include questions such as 'Do the reading texts sufficiently engage learners?', that elicit responses containing a necessarily subjective value judgment. Content analysis also refers to any technique for making inferences by objectively and analytically identifying specific features of materials. It is an analysis of the written or visual contents of any documented material. Besides, it is a research instrument used to determine the presence of certain words or concepts within texts or sets of texts.

Evaluation and selection of materials that best fit the learners' needs are becoming more and more important for all levels in language teaching (Tosun, 2012). Alavi-moghadam and Kheirabadi (2016) summarized the situation of English textbooks in Iran after the Islamic Revolution and concluded "The graded English series" stayed in the circulation of the formal education system up until the Islamic revolution of 1979 when it was completely removed from the schools and replaced other series. The most well-known one is "Right path to English" which is still serving the education system and is planned to be replaced with the newly designed "English for School" series in the academic year commencing October 2013. The result of their study shows that although many teachers and practitioners participating in the research have found the new series a considerable step forward, it seems that the series faces some serious shortcomings. Mirzaei and Tabatabaei (2017), investigated and compared the effectiveness of the new and the old first grade Iranian junior high school English textbooks based on 30 EFL teachers' and 300 high school students' perspectives. In so doing, a textbook evaluation checklist and a questionnaire were used. The analysis of the results revealed that these books were nearly the same in terms of pronunciation and exercises; however, the old book was considered more efficient in terms of presenting grammar. Taking the rest of the items in the research instruments into consideration, the new book was more efficient. Taking the learners' perspective into account, there was no significant difference between the books as far as the presentation of new vocabulary items was concerned. Considering the other pertinent items, the new book was evaluated as more efficient.

Tayyebi, Hasani, and Mortazavi (2015) compared the Iranian EFL teachers' evaluation of high school English textbooks with that of the Top-Notch series. For this purpose, a questionnaire was randomly distributed among 70 Iranian EFL teachers of high school and English institutions. This questionnaire, in particular, was to evaluate twelve categories as follows: general appearance, design and illustration, accompanying materials, objectives, topic contents, language contents, social and cultural contexts, language skills, teachability, flexibility, teaching methods, and practice and testing. The results of the study were indicative of the presence of a significant difference between teachers' evaluation of high school books and Top-Notch series in favor of the Top Notch series. Only in the categories entitled objectives as well as social and cultural contexts the significant difference could not be observed. Torki and Chalak (2017) explored high school teachers' and students' attitudes towards Iranian high school English textbooks used in Iranian high schools. To fulfill the objectives, a questionnaire was administered to high school students and their teachers in Isfahan, Iran. The participants were also interviewed in terms of their attitudes towards CLT and its implementation in English textbooks. The descriptive analysis of the data indicated that Iranian teachers and learners in Isfahan had a positive attitude towards the English textbooks based on the CLT principles. The majority of participants stated that 80 percent of CLT principles were currently practiced in these textbooks; however, some changes might improve the quality of these English textbooks.

Some studies analyzed four internationally-distributed English textbooks based on Fairclough's (1989) CDA model. The result of this study showed that ESL learners and teachers are critical thinkers and have shown significantly positive attitudes towards power dominance, gender differentiation, and culture diversity while showing moderate attitudes towards religious and ethnic minorities, social inequality, and colonialism in the west (Ghorbani, 2011; Guilani, Yasin & Hua, 2011; Jahangard, 2007).

Moreover, some textbook evaluation studies have been carried out in Iran with their focus on needs (Alemi & Sadehvandi, 2012; Gholaminia Tabari, 2013; Aliakbari & Gheitasi, 2014; Rezaee, Kouhpaeenejad, & Mohammadi, 2013; Rahimi & Hassani, 2012). They evaluated textbooks regarding the role assigned to the language skills, the benefits of reading texts, the role of material development, and the efficiency of ELT programs in developing the language skills. They generally found that the learners' viewpoints are important in choosing appropriate textbooks and also the learners' attitude toward the textbooks determines their attitude toward the foreign language they learn. Besides, Mazdayasna and Tahririan (2008) study revealed that the "students' needs" were one very important factor that if not considered could bring about failure in different respects. None of the above studies worked on the newly published textbooks as it is the first years the books are administrated.

A few numbers of textbook evaluation studies have been carried out in Iran with the focus on the *Vision* series. Khodabandeh and Mombini (2018) evaluated the new English textbook entitled *Vision 1,* focusing on cultural aspects of the book. The quantitative data were collected through two questionnaires. They concluded that the book needs to be modified to include some aspects of cultural values to open a window into learning about the target language culture. Moreover, Pouranshirvani (2017) considered internal evaluation of the tenth grade's textbook (*Vision 1*) to see whether the book needs to be adapted (as it is the first time the book is administrated) from teachers' perspectives. It evaluated if all the language skills are covered for the new English textbook titled *Vision 1* Printed in 2016 in Iran by the Ministry of education. ELT materials evaluation in general addresses the systematic assessment of the value of materials related to their objectives and objectives of learners using them. Many teachers have had the

responsibility of evaluating textbooks. mostly, teachers have not been sure about what to base their judgments on, how to qualify their decisions, and how to report the results of their assessment. Teachers, students, and administers are all consumers of textbooks. Therefore, every single one of them may have conflicting perspectives and views about what a good or a standard textbook is (Ansary & Babaii, 2002, p. 3). So, to use the textbooks effectively, the practitioners need to evaluate the materials since evaluation plays a key role in education and can provide valuable information. In other words, if we accept the value of textbooks in ELT, we must be sure of the usefulness of the textbooks, and their appropriateness for the context and people with whom they are being used.

Methodology

Design

The purpose of this study was to evaluate the Iranian newly-developed senior high school English textbook, entitled *Vision 2* prepared by the Ministry of Education in 2017 for the second grade in senior high school. The study was grounded in descriptive survey design. The approach included an in-depth systematic analysis that dealt with a deeply evaluative content analysis. The researcher adopted a mixed analytical approach to content evaluation believing that the evaluation of a textbook in addition to getting feedback from various teachers and students who have used it as a teaching and learning source, entails browsing through the materials and then coming up with a judgment.

Setting

The systematic content evaluation of the textbooks, was directly led by a committee including the researcher and four (two males and two females) senior high school teachers enjoying at least five years' English teaching experience. Employing stratified random sampling, a total of 12 private and public senior high schools (six girl students and six boy students) were selected randomly among all of the schools that located in the six education districts in Isfahan. Accordingly, each pair of schools (one for boys and one for girls) belonged to a distinct education district. To select the 20 teacher participants, a convenience sampling method was employed and those who agreed to be surveyed took part in the study. The teachers who participated in this study have been teaching *Vision 1* since the beginning of fall 2016 and *Vision 2* since the beginning of fall 2017. The teacher participants, with an age range between 29 and 48 years old, all had the experience of English teaching in high schools for at least 5 years. A teacher committee comprised of the researcher and four of her colleagues who had at least 10 years of experience in teaching the textbooks.

Analytical Framework for In-depth Content Evaluation

Having reviewed a plentitude of content analysis frameworks, the researcher took advantage of Littlejohn's (2011) evaluative framework to conduct an evaluation of the materials under investigation. This framework embraces two major steps distinguishing an analysis of materials and an analysis of the proposed (target) situation of use. For material analysis, it features three successive steps include a) Objective description concerned with the physical nature of the material to provide an answer to the question of "*what is there?";* b) Subjective analysis intended to answer "*what is required of users?"* making deductions about the potential demands every task will make on teachers and students; and c) Subjective inference intended to yield conclusions about the basic tenets (aims, teacher's role, students' role, principles of sequencing, etc.) addressing the question *" what is implied?".*

Littlejohn's (2011) framework is required to embark upon an analysis of the target situation of use, evaluating the teachers, students, or institution's desirable status of the features portraying the two determining aspects of the framework (i.e., publication and design). A deductive comparison of the data gathered through material analysis from teachers' perspective enabled the researcher to fully evaluate the pedagogic worth of the instructional materials under investigation.

Instruments

The instruments employed to accomplish the objectives of the study included two distinctive schedules: Explicit Nature of materials schedule (EN) and Task Analysis schedule (TA). Objective description of the first schedule (EN) entailed determining a variety of features such as the target audience, date and volume of publication, the class time required to cover the materials, type of the materials (e.g., general vs. specific purpose, supplementary vs. the main course, etc.), and means of access to the materials (e.g., tables of contents, hyperlinks, etc.). It also focused on a variety of physical features representing publication quality (e.g., form, size, and colors) and the division of the whole book into units or lessons. Detailed analysis of the tasks throughout the extracts from *Vision 2* was carried out benefiting from TA Schedule.

To validate the questionnaires in terms of internal consistency, a pilot study was done on intact 20 English teachers. The Cronbach's alpha coefficients evaluated for the whole questionnaire as well as all the sub-domains were greater than .7, indicating an acceptable level of internal consistency for the instrument. Having built up a clear picture of the objective nature of the material, the content evaluation committee embarked upon task analysis, focusing on a variety of pre-determined task-based criteria such as turn-take status, focus, and mental operation of the tasks, as well as examining the form, source, and nature of the input and output of every particular task.

Materials

An instructional textbook, namely *"Vision 2"* written by Davari, Kheirabadi, Moghaddam, and Rahimi, (2017) served as the content of the current study. The book includes a total of three lessons taught four hours per week. Every lesson consists of different parts. Acknowledging Littlejohn's (2011) claim that "it is useful to analyze about 10 percent to 15 percent of the total material" (p. 186), one lesson out of the whole instructional content of each of the textbooks was extracted to be analyzed by the committee.

Data Collection Procedure

The procedure of data gathering entailed going through two distinctive phases. As the preliminary step, a committee comprised of five Iranian senior high school English teachers (the researcher and four of her experienced colleagues), armed with Littlejohn's (2011) evaluative framework, was appointed to evaluate the pedagogical worth of the textbook under investigation going through three successive stages. During the first stage, the members of the committee were requested to provide a general description of the book elaborating on the explicit and tangible aspects of the books taking advantage of the EN schedule to guide their analysis. Although at this level little disagreement was likely to arise within the committee, to reach the most valid data, the information was provided through collaboration between the committee members, while every individual feature was decided on by the majority vote. Then, the analysts were asked to record

the proportion of materials supposed to be analyzed in the subsequent sections, distinguishing the length and sequence of activities within the extract.

Going through the second stage, which lasted for 15 days, the committee members were faced with a gradual shift from the objective judgment of the materials to a deeper analytical level which entailed analyzing the tasks in detail. As the initial step in analyzing the tasks, the committee members divided the extracts of the two textbooks into separate tasks. To recognize how to distinguish every specific task, the committee had previously been informed that every particular task should be concerned with specific content, participation type, and process (Littlejohn, 2011). The committee members then embarked on task analysis taking advantage of the TA schedule. To provide adequate data on each of the three aspects of the analysis (i.e., process, participation, and content), the members discussed a variety of features as elaborated earlier in the analytical framework.

Finally, to draw an overall inference about the basic tenets that underlies the materials, the committee relied upon the findings achieved as a result of the two previous stages. Employing the data on the explicit nature (EN) of the materials (the preliminary step) and the detailed analysis of the tasks (the second stage), the committee members were appointed to infer general statements about different criteria representing either publication or design. These criteria included the headings enumerated in Table 1 below.

Table 1
Analytical Description Criteria based on Littlejohn's (2011) Evaluative Framework

Aspect of Analytical Description	Criteria
Publication	Place of materials
	Published Form of material
	Subdivision
	Subdivision of sections into sub-sections
	Continuity
	Route
	Access
Design	Aims and objectives
	Principles of selection
	Principles of sequencing
	Subject matter and focus of the subject matter
	Types of learning/teaching activities
	Participation
	Role of teacher in the classroom
	Role of students in the classroom
	Role of students in learning
	Role of Materials as a whole

Data Analysis Prpcedure

To find clear answers to the research questions, a descriptive-analytical method, including an interpretative (qualitative) data analysis method, was employed. Then, the committee's perception of the desirable materials based on the specific target situation of use was investigated. The qualitative results drawn from the systematic analytical description of the study were presented in the form of tables and textual interpretations yielded clear answers to the research questions of the study.

Results

Analytical Description of the Materials

The description objective of the material was provided by exploring the explicit nature of the textbook, with the aid of the EN schedule completed. Drawing on the data gathered through the objective description of the material (qualitative data from the EN schedule) and the detailed analysis of the tasks (qualitative data from the TA schedule), the committee decided on the criteria of the framework, each representing either publication or design element of the material. The committee's inferences regarding all the criteria formed the analytical description of the material. Table 2 presents the interpretative results drawn from the analysis of the textbook.

Table 2

Analytical Description of the Book Vision 2

Element	Criteria	Descriptions
Publication	Place of the materials	a one-year English curriculum for Iranian second graders
	Physical appearance	monolingual instructional materials, multicolored materials, black and white materials for teachers
	Subdivision of the materials as a whole	three "Lessons", covering four main skills and a variety of sub-skills
	Subdivision of the sections into sub-sections	Get Ready, Conversation, New Words & Expressions, Reading, Vocabulary Development, Grammar, Listening & Speaking, pronunciation, Writing, What You Learned

Publication	Continuity	inclusion of instructional materials mainly centered around the same topic an incremental (in terms of complexity) syllabus of skills and sub-skills Continuity throughout particular sections by using a/an written/oral source material as a basis of the activities
	Route	according to the specified pattern of presentation
	Access	"Lesson Map": listing of lesson titles and sub-sections
Design	Aims and objectives	Developing learners' linguistic and communicative competence Emphasizing learning by authentic language use Providing learners with comprehensible and culture-specific instructional contents
	Principles of selections	Tasks: both output-free language presentation activities, and output-based learning activities non-fiction discourse around topics of general knowledge and linguistic items carrying no specific massage Language: specific areas of grammar and topic-oriented vocabulary items
	Principles of sequencing	Tasks: movement from meaning-based activities to, form-, and form and meaning-based activities Content: movement from graphic and linguistic materials to extended written and oral discourse Language: incremental use of language
Design	Subject matters and focus of subject matters	Output-based language learning activities: Warm-up activities to produce graphic outputs (lines, circles, etc.) Vocabulary building activities containing a written unit of topic-related materials Reading activities including written and oral extended materials Listening activities including oral extended fictional materials speaking activities including written materials writing activities including written materials grammar activities including the written form of

		limited discourse Output-free language presentation activities: vocabulary activities including both oral and written form grammar activities including the written form of materials accompanied by tables to detail the use of grammatical structure in focus Pronunciation activities including written and oral sentences
Design	Types of teaching-learning activities	Tasks to draw attention to form, meaning, and both Two broad categories of activities: meaning-focused before the Grammar section, and form-focused or form and meaning-focused activities throughout the remaining sections. Decoding semantic meaning and selecting information All the learning tasks entail a scripted response.
	Participation	learning tasks for learners to work individually and simultaneously A few numbers of learning tasks entail pair-working by learners No task entails group-based participation All the presentation tasks require learners to concentrate on the materials as a whole class
	Teachers' role	following the pre-determined task directions managing class time devoting appropriate time to every particular activity. responsible for output monitoring
	Learners' role	Active participation in reproductive and receptive language practice Following the task directions Going through the prescribed syllabus
	Role of materials as a whole	the only source of instructional content Providing a pre-determined route for teaching and learning English

Teacher Expectations of the Target Materials

After a detailed analysis of the materials, the committee's perception of the desirable materials based on the specific target situation of use was investigated. The results are categorized based on every specific criterion of the study framework in Table 3 below.

Table 3
Teachers' Perspective on the Materials' Target Situation of Use

Element	Criteria	Descriptions
Publication	Place of the materials in the set	A basis for classroom work for highschool second-graders Part of a complete package including both printed and on-line materials Relevant supplementary materials
	Physical appearance of the published form of the materials	A medium-size multicolored book including visual aids for students Medium-size book including visual aids for teachers
	Subdivision of the materials as a whole	three units including various topics A standardized number of pages for each unit (15 to 20).
	Subdivision of the sections into sub-sections	Based on different language learning skills and sub-skills supposed to embrace four major parts, including one of the four language learning skills, and three sub-sections to develop sub-skills including grammar, vocabulary learning/development, and pronunciation instruction commenced with warm-up activities Every two or three units be followed by a review section
	Continuity	incremental presentation of vocabulary and grammar inclusion of materials around a particular theme
Publication	Route	under the presentation order
	Access	a listing of units/lessons a listing of new vocabulary items a listing of forms of language items in focus
Design	Aims and objectives	Developing learners' linguistic competence in language learning skills Providing comprehensive instructional content feeding with instructional materials to achieve success in the national university entrance examination in Iran Providing learners with authentic language
	Principles of selections	Tasks: Inclusion of both output-free output-based language learning activities Content: age/level-appropriate storylines and short fictional texts accompanied by an illustration Language: grammar areas accompanied by topic-related

		vocabulary
	Principles of sequencing	Tasks: moving from a form and meaning-based activities to activate learners' background knowledge via a narrative task to meaning-based, form-based, and meaning and form-based activities to use the newly-presented language Content: visually-aided linguistic items followed by a written and oral extended discourse Language: incremental use of language (simple to complex)
Design	Subject matters and focus of subject matters	a couple of output-free language presentation activity/s specific to the skill/sub-skill in focus two or three purposeful output-based learning activities to foster the learning of the language in focus
	Types of teaching-learning activities	drawing learners' attention to both form and meaning drawing learners' attention to form, meaning, or form and meaning-based activities designed taking account of mental operations equally. requiring learners to produce narrowly-defined language output (scripted response)
	Participation	entailing individual and simultaneous working by learners including a couple of tasks for pair and group working
	Teachers' role	Following the materials' route and directions Classroom management Decision-making Providing Corrective feedback (CF)
	Learners' role	Active participation in reproductive and receptive language practice Following the task directions Going through the prescribed syllabus
	Role of materials as a whole	Serving as the only source of English learning Providing a pre-determined route Providing learners with a comprehensible, stimulating, and engaging instructional content Acting as a source to achieve success in the national university entrance examination in Iran

Comparative Analysis of the Materials and the Teachers' Expectations

As the final step in determining the pedagogic worth of the textbooks under investigation, a detailed comparison was made between the underlying nature of the materials (as depicted in Table 3) and the teachers' views of appropriate materials for the learners and the context the materials are targeted at. Some of the criteria representing publication (i.e., the physical layout of the printed materials, route, and continuity) were found to be congruent with the teachers' expectations to the context of the study; however, most of them were found to be in either a partial disagreement (i.e., access, place of the materials in the set, and subdivision of the sections

into sub-sections) or a serious disagreement (i.e., subdivision of the materials as a whole) with the target situation of use.

Discussion

To lay the foundations for a systematic content evaluation of the textbooks under investigation, the first question delved into the analytical description of the materials based on Littlejohn's (2011) evaluative framework. Going through a three-level analytical process, the teacher committee agreed on the criteria representing either the publication or design of the materials. Based on the analytical description of the materials, the textbooks are recognized as the core instructional content of a one-year English course targeted at Iranian first- (*Vision 1*) and second-grade (*Vision 2*) senior high school students ranging in age from 16 to 17. The books are published in the form of durable medium-size multicolored textbooks accompanied by four-color workbooks and two-color teacher guide books (specific to teacher users). The books are also accompanied by a variety of supplementary materials which, except for the DVD, are not readily accessible to students. The only means of access to the materials of the textbooks are lesson maps including a listing of the titles, sections, and contents of every particular lesson.

Cunningsworth (1995) approach to detailed scrutiny of the syllabus and the sequence of the activities revealed that the principal objective of the materials was to provide an authentic, comprehensible, and culturally-appropriate source of communicative and linguistic competence development, focusing on all four language learning skills and employing a variety of content-oriented activities. Having categorized the tasks of a randomly-extracted lesson, the task analysis results reveal that the materials are selected taking account of two distinctive task types: a) output-free language presentation tasks whereby learners are expected to take notice of a particular language area without being expected to produce any kinds of responses and b) output-based language learning tasks, which require learners to produce an output taking advantage of the broadly-defined language. Dealing with all language learning skills and sub-skills, the output-based learning tasks were much more frequent than the output-free language presentation tasks concerned with grammar, vocabulary, and pronunciation areas. The abundance of the tasks providing room for language practice may symbolize the emphasis placed on language learning through language use. This result showed that the book has served its major purpose which is implicit language teaching through students' involvement in classroom activities.

The detailed analysis of the tasks also revealed that the inputs provided by the tasks mostly concerned a nonfictional theme and entailed outputs of linguistic nature (i.e., words, phrases, or sentences carrying no specific meaning). The language emphasized by the tasks fundamentally included the grammar and vocabulary areas in focus. As another finding regarding the design of the materials, the committee conclude that the tasks are sequenced based on their emphasis on form or meaning per se or both form and meaning. While the majority of the tasks presented before the grammar are mainly meaning-oriented activities, those presented after grammar presentations are either form-oriented or form and meaning-oriented. Placing great emphasis on meaning, the textbook developers endeavor to fulfill another purpose of the materials, which is to develop communicative competence through meaning comprehension. The sequencing seems to be done irrespective of the content of the tasks; nonetheless, the initially-presented tasks seem to be more visually-aided. The language of the tasks is sequenced incrementally in terms of both structural and lexical complexity.

Concerning the type of participation in the classroom, the overwhelming majority of the learning tasks scrutinized by the teacher committee were found to entail simultaneous and individual working by students. Although a small minority of the learning tasks entail pair-

working, no task is designed to foster group workings. The negligible emphasis placed on collaborative learning through pair/group work hinder communicative competence development which is one of the underlying principles of the materials.

The tasks were also found to require a multiplicity of mental operations including decoding the surface meaning of a predetermined input, extracting (selecting) information from a given text, hypothesizing, repeating a previously-provided input (either selectively or with transformation), applying general knowledge, and analyzing language forms. Nonetheless, the majority of the tasks entailed decoding the semantic/propositional meaning or selecting information. Although the heavy use of tasks which entail decoding the semantic meaning of a piece of language facilitates communicative competence, as one of the main aims of the materials, the learners are required to take advantage of a wider array of mental operations to fully develop linguistic competence, as another target of the materials.

Based on the results drawn from the task analysis, none of the output based language learning tasks require learners to produce output without being supplied with a script of the language of any kind (input). Additionally, the whole input supplied to students is provided by the materials per se. This result, which suggests that the textbooks are the only source of input the learners are supposed to receive, may signify the developers' intention to free teachers from the responsibility to provide the adequate teaching time and a consistent source of instructional content.

Given the specific route of the materials, it was inferred that the role of teachers is confined to following the pre-determined directions of the tasks. Nonetheless, the exclusive access of teachers to guidance and testing materials symbolizes their leading role in the classroom. Since peer correction is absent from the program (owing to no group-work consideration), teachers are supposed to be in charge of monitoring the outputs produced by students and providing corrective feedback accordingly. In addition to following the clear directions of the tasks, students are supposed to actively go through both receptive and reproductive processes of language learning, doing the output-free language presentation and the output-based language learning tasks respectively. The role of students in their learning process, therefore, is confined to following the prescribed syllabus of the materials. Given the specific context of the study (i.e., high schools) and the language proficiency level of the target students (i.e., mainly beginners), the findings concerning the roles of potential users (i.e., teachers and students) of the textbooks seem to be reasonable.

Cunningsworth (1995) found textbook evaluation helpful for adopting a new course book or identifying particular strengths and weaknesses in course books already in use and Riazi (2003) asserts that textbook evaluation can be conducted to select textbooks for a newly started language program, to identify the strengths and weaknesses of the books, and to retain, update and or substitute the books. To find clear answers to the second question, the study sought to elucidate the materials' desirable (target) situation of use based on a variety of considerations including the standards of the mainstream English curriculum of Iranian senior high schools. To this end, all the criteria representing either the publication or the design of the materials were discussed by the committee members. Having discussed the situations whereby the materials are ideally suited to the requirements of the high school curriculum, the committee members made subjective inferences about the desirable materials. The pair-wise comparison of the teachers' expectations and the nature of the materials (as reflected by the analytical description) led the committee to draw subjective inferences about the pedagogical worth of the textbooks. The findings are enumerated in the following paragraphs.

Having arrived at a decision quite similar to what has been taken into account by the developers of the textbooks, the teacher analysts (the committee's members) validated the route, continuity, and physical appearance of the textbooks. In other terms, the teacher committee confirmed the appropriateness of the pre-determined route of the materials; the topic-related and incremental type of language presentation, and the general attributes related to the physical appearance of the textbooks such as the size, the color scheme and range, and the printing quality of the materials.

On the other hand, the teachers contradicted the subdivision of the textbooks into a few numbers of lengthy lessons, believing that the inclusion of more lessons/units could add variety to the instructional content. To realize such wide-ranging content; however, they believed in a need for removing the redundant tasks or merging the repetitive ones. Accordingly, there was a partial mismatch between the teachers' expectations and the materials in terms of the subdivision of the materials into subsections. Additionally, although the place of the materials was perceived in much the same way as it was done by the developers of the textbooks, the teacher analysts believed that the equal distribution of the supplementary materials, except for those exclusive to teachers, should be emphasized more. Furthermore, from the committee's perspective, the content-based type of access to the materials should be accompanied by some listings of the target grammatical structures and vocabulary items.

By comparison with the publication-oriented criteria, the design-oriented ones were perceived more differently compared to the real nature of the materials; however, no aspect of the material seemed to be in contrast with the teachers' perspective. In other words, there was a mismatch between the materials and the teachers' expectations of the desirable materials in terms of a variety of design-oriented criteria. As the first instance, although the principles that underlie the sequencing of the materials were partially confirmed by the teacher analysts, they believed that the use of meaning-focused language presentation and practice in the initial sections of every lesson (i.e., sections before grammar) should be replaced with a simultaneous focus on new meanings and recycled rules, to lay the foundations for successful integration of language forms. Secondly, the committee proposed that the unsteady type of content sequencing, as recognized through content analysis, should be superseded with a gradual shift from visually-aided linguistic items, which require students to produce graphic outputs, (lines, circles, letters, etc.) to visually-aided sentences, which entail outputs of linguistic nature, and then, to extensive oral and written parts of the language, which require students to produce a limited-size oral/written discourse. The incremental sequencing of the language throughout the whole book, as well as every section and sub-section, was confirmed by the teacher committee.

In sum, considering the use of Littlejohn's (1998, 2011) evaluative framework as the basis of the evaluation of many well-established English textbook series (e.g., Top notch, Interchange, Mosaic), the findings of the present study revealed a whole qualitative procedure. This study, therefore, to the best of the researcher's knowledge, is quite a novelty of systematic content evaluation of Iranian high school textbooks based on Littlejohn's (2011) evaluative framework. Such novelty made it impossible to interpret the findings in light of the relevant literature.

Conclusion

The results drawn from the systematic evaluation revealed that there is a need to adapt the materials to the target situation of use. Such adaptation needs to cover both design- and publication-oriented aspects of the materials. To modify the publication-oriented aspects of the materials, the content-based access to the coverage of the textbook should be accompanied by

some listings of new vocabulary and verb forms intended to be covered throughout the book. Additionally, there is a need for equal distribution of the supplementary materials, to open up an opportunity for self-regulated learning. Furthermore, a slight increase in the number of lessons could add variety to the instructional content. Additionally, every two or three lessons need to be followed by a Review section. The design of the book needs to be adapted to the needs of the specific context and users of the textbook, focusing mainly on the principles that underlie the selection and sequencing of the materials.

Drawing on the findings, the inclusion of short-size pieces of the language of a fictional nature, instead of lengthy non-fiction passages could better suit the needs of adolescent users of the books. The sequencing of the materials is also recommended to follow a three-step direction including a) Meaning and form-focused activities to activate new meanings and reinforcing the previously-learned forms, b) Meaning-focused and form-focused activities to present new structures and vocabulary items, c) Meaning and form-focused activities to provide room for newly-learned language practice. The design was also found to need some modifications in terms of classroom participation and subject matters. The revised materials are proposed to entail adequate group work and a wide-ranging array of mental operations. The results also accentuated the necessity of modifying the purposes and objectives of the materials, putting special emphasis on linguistic competence development.

As a practical implication, therefore, the findings may urge the developers of the textbooks to launch a modification project relying upon the results of the systematic phase. Such a comprehensive project seems very likely to consolidate the pedagogical worth of the textbooks as the only source of English teaching/learning in the Iranian high school context. Given the significance of the appropriateness of the textbooks for the specific context of use, those who are in charge of the modification are recommended to take account of the needs, desires, and expectations of both teachers and learners, as the chief beneficiaries of the books. Although Iranian pedagogical policymakers and material developers in general and the developers of the textbooks, in particular, would be the most beneficiaries of the current study's findings, senior high school English teachers and students nationwide may also benefit indirectly from the modifications and amendments made according to their impression. In other words, the outcomes of the current study may ultimately profit users of the textbooks to take advantage of a reliable source ideally suited to their needs, desires, and interests.

Like any other study, the current study suffered from a multiplicity of limitations, the most noteworthy ones included the limited number of the teacher participants and the impracticality of a random selection of the participants (both teachers and students). Additionally, to thoroughly accomplish the systematic content evaluation, the teacher committee was required to spend long hours discussing, inferring, and decision making. Accordingly, the recruitment of more than four teachers (excluding the researcher) to serve on the committee was dismissed as impractical. Accordingly, future research is recommended to be carried out using randomly selected participant samples containing a bigger number of teachers and students. Specifically, the teacher committee which is in charge of the systematic content evaluation needs to be expanded. Given the fact that this research only evaluated the instructional content of two *Vision* textbook, to make any judgment regarding the series requires some other similar studies on other two ones. A similar investigation on Iranian Junior high school textbook series (i.e. *Prospect*), which acts as a prerequisite for *Vision* series, may lend itself to a comprehensive evaluation of the secondary education English textbooks too.

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