Research article

An Evaluation of Grade 12th English Language Textbook for Afghanistan: From Teachers’ Perspectives

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Abstract: Textbook evaluation is the only resolution for developing a standardized curriculum and syllabus in the area of teaching and learning. This paper aims to evaluate grade 12th English textbook entitled English for Afghanistan that has been recently introduced by the Afghanistan ministry of education. This paper also seeks to identify the general attributes and language teaching content of the selected book to see whether it fulfills the needs of grade 12th English language learners. The results of this study bring the attention of curriculum developers, book designers, and policymakers to provide equal priority to each language learning skill and make it appropriate for the age of grade 12th learners. A quantitative approach was used, and data was collected through the five scale Likert style checklist questionnaire adapted from the quantitative study of (Mukundan & Nimhechisalem, 2012). The finding indicates that most criteria of the checklist were aligned with the general attributes of the book, and to the most extent, the book satisfies the needs of grade 12th learners. However, due to its complexity, the book is not suitable for the age of the target students. Furthermore, it was also found from the evaluation of the content of teaching-learning criteria that most of the integrated skills of the English language, including reading, writing, and speaking, were broadly focused and favorable for students. At the same time, listening was not concentrated at all in the textbook.

Keywords: Evaluation, English Textbook, Teachers’ perspectives
Introduction

Teaching materials are models that help students learn better and accelerate the learning process in a standard way. According to Cunningsworth (1995), utilizing textbooks in the classroom is the primary resource for teachers, particularly for those who lack enough experience and effective lesson plans, even though such resources assist them in performing their developmental roles while involved in teaching (Nunnan, 1988). So, an evaluation is needed to have a better and effective teaching material.

Evaluation is used to find the quality of something for particular purposes (Robinson, 1991). In educational settings, there is a need to evaluate the teaching materials so that the way they are developed and designed can be shown. The significance of the evaluation of textbooks is that they provide a learning setting for learners as well as enough information to instructors. According to Mukundan (2009), the textbook evaluation also shows both the teachers and students the strengths and weaknesses of this significant learning material resource. While designing language course materials, the evaluation of EFL materials will help the syllabus and curriculum developers and designers to reconsider the main points and issues.

Public schools’ teaching materials and books are designed and developed by the Ministry of Education of Afghanistan. In 2010, the Ministry of Education of Afghanistan brought some changes in designing and developing news school books, mainly the EFL textbooks, based on the newly approved curriculum. Although the recently published English language learning textbooks are better designed and advanced than the previous old-fashioned ones, there are some critics about some features of the textbooks. One of the main questions on the textbooks is why the books lack listening sections, while it is one of the four skills in learning a new language. Therefore, this study is conducted to evaluate the 12th Grade EFL textbooks of public schools in Afghanistan. The need to assess this book is because this book is used nationwide in all public schools and even some private educational institutions as the upper-intermediate level EFL textbook, and there are some criticism and fierce debate, over the design of the book, especially from the teachers who teach this textbook. Thus, in this study, the handbook is evaluated from the perspectives of high school EFL teachers of Afghanistan.
Literature Review

A textbook is one of the main resources to support teaching and learning process in the classroom (‘O Neil, 1982). According to McGrath (2002) as cited Anjaneyulu (2014), “textbooks can set the direction, content and they can propose ways in which the lesson is to be taught”. A language book is a well-designed book for the linguistic improvement and communication skills of a language learner (Sheldon, 1987). A language textbook is evaluated to see whether it meets the needs of a student, the items in the book are related, language skill sections are fully adapted, content and the activity exercises are sufficient to a learner, etc. the efficiency of a book content information is provided by evaluation.

There is a need to effective and systematic evaluation of language textbooks for an appropriate textbook evaluation (Mukundan, 2003). Worldwide, there have many studies done on the school textbooks’ evaluation. However, these evaluations examine different purposes via various instruments. Amini & Salehi (2016) has evaluated English textbook of seventh grade of Iranian schools by name of Prospect 1. Their evaluation of the books was in terms of factors such as objectives, content, tasks and activities, language skills and physical appearance as well as the teachers’ needs. Based on the results found in the study, both teachers and students were in favor of the book, and there was no significant different between Iranian students and their high school teachers.

Aytug (2007) evaluated the English teachers’ attitudes towards the evaluation of the textbook New Bridge to Success for 9th Grade New Beginners. The findings of the study revealed that the researcher’s own observations of the textbook elements correspond to the teachers’ evaluations. On the other hand, there are a number of aspects wherein the participants’ responses reflect discrepancies when compared with the analysis of the textbook by the researcher. Also, teachers’ evaluations depicted agreement and disagreement considering the features of the textbook New Bridge to Success book.

In the study done by Kirkgoz (2009) Three English textbooks used in Turkish primary schools were evaluated. There was a remarkable balance observation between the students and teachers’ responses. Also, there was a consistency in the interview and questionnaire as the findings of the study has shown. The respondents were in favor of the good illustrations and beautiful design of
the books as well they positive views on the simple instructions of activities and examples, tasks and activities, vocabulary and of course the content.

The purpose of a language textbook evaluation is considering the appropriateness of the content and the methodology used for the specific context of language teaching (LittleJohn, 1998). According Ellis (1997), there are three steps for evaluating a book: First stage is pre-use evaluation. Pre-use evaluation of a book is evaluating the future potential efficiency of the book. Second stage is whilst-use or in-use evaluation. This stage of evaluation involves is measuring the book while using it or currently being used. The third stage is post-use evaluation. This stage examines the book after it has been used in a context to see its outcome in order to make a decision on the adaptation, modification, adjustment, and replacement of the material.

**Method**

This study was conducted based on quantitative research to evaluate grade12 English textbooks. Quantitative analysis is highly preferred in social since mainly testing the language because its finding is generalizable beyond the specific sample of a study (Berg, 2009). The collected data were analyzed using descriptive statistics.

**Participants**

Due to a high number of participants not access to the internet, convenience sampling was used to choose the necessary participants. The required data for this study were collected from 32 English language high school teachers, including both male 76.7% and female 23.3% from different schools of two separate provinces of Afghanistan. Participants' age ranged between 18 to 40 years, with 3.4% holding a baccalaureate degree, 13.3% holding a teacher training college degree, and 83.3% holding a bachelor's degree. Besides, a large number of the selected respondents, 56.7% had teaching experience between 1-4 years, 40% of them had teaching experience between 5-9 years, and only 4.3% of the respondents had teaching experience between 10-20 years.

**Instrument**

For evaluation of the grade12 English language textbook, this study used the five scales Likert style checklist questionnaire adapted from the quantitative research of (Mukundan & Nimahchisalem, 2012). This checklist contains 38 items and is a valid one because it was checked
already through a survey study conducted by the checklist as mentioned above developers. The selected checklist was formed with three major parts, namely demographic information, general attributes of the focused book, and language teaching content. The first part of the checklist requires the individual participant to indicate his/her gender, age, level of education, teaching experience, ex-participation in the textbook evaluation workshop/seminar, and practically evaluated a book. The second part of the adapted checklist search for the general information on the focused English textbook, such as its cover and sheets quality, attractiveness, suitability for students, methodology, supplementary and visual aids, and so on. The third part of the checklist evaluates language teaching content, particularly the four traditional language skills such as reading, writing, listening, and speaking based on some valid criteria. The answers for each item arrange from 0 to 4 that 0 indicates= unimportant while 4 represents= very important. The participants were required to choose one of the five boxes to show the preferred answer. It is worth mentioning that the authors of the present study simplified some of the items of the checklist because of the low English language proficiency of participants.

Materials

The book that was selected for evaluation of the present study was English textbook grade 12 entitled English FOR AFGHANISTAN written by S. Nematullah Mushtaq, Frishta Kazimi, Jamshid Zaynal, and Ghulam Rabani Ludin in 2011. The authors of this study chosen the book mentioned above are its new edition that has not been evaluated yet. Also, the selected book for evaluation consists of 177 pages and compiles 12 unites that each unit focuses on a single theme. In other words, the first few pages of the book, which were arranged alphabetically, provide both teachers and learners with general information such as authors of the book, Afghan national anthem, and the message of the education minister, teaching method, and the rationale for learning English and so on. Sequentially to the general information, the book starts with the first unit in which the first lesson is arranged by introducing its objectives, leads to the discussion, follow up the conversation part, proceeds to the grammar part, presents a reading text and ends with some exercises. Finally, it is concluded that each unit of the selected book sets and follows a similar classification as introduced previously.
Data Analysis

This study was aimed at finding out secondary school teachers’ perceptions about grade 12th English Textbook for Afghanistan. The obtained data from the teachers’ questionnaire have been descriptively analyzed through statistical procedures and techniques. This section includes interpretation of the collected data from the teachers’ perspectives about the general attributes of the textbook entailing methodology, syllabus, and suitability of learning, the physical layout of the book. Skills, activities, and exercises. The questionnaire utilized for this study is used to gaining views and attitudes of high school teachers’ regarding the grade 12th English textbook.

General Attributes of the textbook

The general attribute is an important dimension of the textbook evaluation because of comprises different aspects, namely: the book concerning the syllabus and curriculum, methodology, suitability to learn, physical and practical attributes, and possession of efficient supplementary materials, which are interpreted and illustrated below respectively.

Textbook in relation to the syllabus and methodology

As, it can be seen in figure 1 about the syllabus, curriculum, and methodology used in grade 12th English textbooks. The graph indicates that the majority of teachers claimed that the book matches the specification of the syllabus used in the textbook with (16% VI, 50% I, 25% FI, 3% LI, 6% U). Of course, The syllabus is a more detailed and operational statement of teaching and learning elements, which translates the philosophy of the curriculum into a series of planned steps leading towards more narrowly defined objectives at each level (Dubin & Olshtain, 1997). It is also believed that the textbook contained material from the curriculum of the school. However, the curriculum must be in a form that can be communicated to those associated with the learning institution, be open to critique, and should easily be transformed into practice. Furthermore, the activities used in the textbook are fairly utilized throughout the units with (28% VI, 31% I, 22% FI, 16% LI,3%U), In addition, the activities used in textbooks work well with different methodologies in English language teaching (ELT) with (16% VI, 47% I, 25% FI, 9% LI, 3% U). However, the methodology for textbooks should be adapted to the students’ and teachers’ attitudes, interests, and needs, as well as the subject matter being taught and educational content where it is taught (Ogden, 2004).
Figure 1: Textbook in Relation to the Syllabus and Methodology

Suitability to Learn

The data revealed the result from figure 2 about the suitability to the learning of the textbook. Most of the teachers argued that the handbook is not suited following the age of learners that with (16% VI, 31% I, 16% FI, 34% LI, 3% U). Some of the teachers believed that the book could not meet the needs of the learners with (19% VI, 34% I, 16% FI, 28% LI, 3% U) while some of the teachers claimed that the textbook is not as much exciting as the learner's esteem with (6% VI, 25% I, 22% FI, 31% LI, 16% U).

Figure 2: Suitability to Learn
**Physical Layout and Material Used in the textbook.**

The results display both from *figure 3* about the physical layout and materials used in the textbook. Most of the teachers decided that the physical design of the book is more attractive and impressive both to the learners and teachers, which is statistically (34% VI, 31% I, 21% FI, 3% LI, 0% U). The teachers further indicated that there are enough colorful text and visual materials illustrated in the textbook through all units and sections with (25% VI, 41% I, 25% FI, 9% LI, 0% U) and the books are durable and long-lasting with (9% VI, 41% I, 41% FI, 6% LI, 3% U). Amazingly the books are free of cost all over the country’s secondary schools by the government of Afghanistan with (25% VI, 28% I, 28% FI, 6% LI, 3% U). In contrast, most of the teachers declared that the textbooks for grade 12th lack supplementary materials mainly audio materials with (19% VI, 6% I, 16% FI, 22% LI, 38% U) which is considered one of the shortages in the context of the book.

![Figure 2: Physical Layout and Material used in the Textbook](image)

**Learning Teaching Content**

**General**

The data from *figure 4* display from the teachers’ perspectives about the general learning teaching content criteria of the textbook being used for evaluated grade 12th English textbooks in Afghanistan. The data from the first category of the graph indicate about interestingness of the...
tasks used in the textbook are interpreted as fairly interesting to the student from the teachers’ perspectives with (19% VI, 28% I, 34% FI, 19% LI, 0% U). The activities which are developed in the mentioned textbook are rated as (16% VI, 41% I, 25% FI, 13% LI, 6% U), it concludes that the designed activities in the textbook move from simple to complex. Besides, the objectives of each task used in each unit of the books are rated (22% VI, 41% I, 28% FI, 19% LI, 0% U), the data is interpreted in a way that objectives of the activities used in the textbook are achievable through the entire process of the book. About the cultural sensitives of the textbook, it is demonstrated that the cultural values of the country are followed in the textbook with (44% VI, 19% I, 22% FI, 16% LI, 0% U). The language used in the textbook is rated (25% VI, 28% I, 31% FI, 8% LI, 3% U), in which most of the participants claimed that the language used in the textbook are natural and real i.e., students and teacher grasp them with ease. Finally, it has been declared that the usages of the situations created in dialogue sound natural and real with (22% VI, 34% I, 31% FI, 13% LI, 0% U).

Figure 4: General Learning Teaching Content
Listening

It is observed in figure 5 about the listening skills and the activities used in the grade 12th English textbook in Afghan Context. The majority of the teachers claimed there are no appropriate listening activities with well-defined goals with (0% VI, 3% I, 0% FI, 19% LI and 78% U). Besides, Mcka (2019) stresses that listening is a soft skill that allows people to understand the information others convey to them. It is part of the communication skill set that includes speaking skills, also known as verbal communication and interpersonal skills. It is supposed that the tasks for listening used in the textbook are not efficiently graded according to the complexity of its skills (0% VI, 0% I, 0% FI, 3% LI and 97% U). Teachers assumed that activities used in the textbook for the supporting point of the listening skill are not authentic or close to the real language situations (0% VI, 0% I, 0% FI, 13% LI, 88% U).

Figure 5: Listening

![Listening Graph]

Speaking and Reading Skill

The data from figure 6 show results from the teachers’ perspectives about speaking and reading skills used in the grade 12th English textbook. For the speaking part, it is believed that the activities developed in the grade 12th English textbook lack sufficient meaningful communication skills in which learner further enhance their speaking expertise (16% VI, 22% I, 53% FI, 3% LI, 6% U). Still, the activities are fairly balanced between individual response, pair work, and group works with (31% VI, 28% I, 28% FI, 13% LI, 0% U). For the reading section, it is deemed that there is enough consideration for grading of texts that suit to the learners’ ability with (31% VI, 41% I,
16% FL, 13% LI, 0% U) and the text utilized throughout the units of the book is most interesting with (31% VI, 44% I, 19% FL, 6% LI, 0% U).

Figure 6: Speaking and Reading Skills

![Speaking and Reading Skills Diagram]

**Writing and Vocabulary Skill**

Data from *figure 7* indicate the criteria used for evaluating writing skills and vocabulary of the grade 12th English textbook. Most of the teachers viewed that the goal for activities used in the book are achievable with (13% VI, 41% I, 31% FL, 9 LI, 6% U) through which student can enhance their writing skill. They also claimed that the tasks used in the textbook are most interesting with (13% VI, 41% I, 34% FL, 6% LI, 6% U) in which learners can easily learn and utilize them in their daily life. On the other hand, it is believed that number of new words in each lesson is appropriate to the level of each unit with (38% VI, 19% I, 31% FL, 6% LI, 6% U). There is a systematic (simple to complex) distribution of vocabulary load across units with (31% VI, 25% I, 34% FL, 9% LI, 0% U), and words are effectively repeated throughout book with (19% VI, 31% I, 34% FL, 9% LI, 6% U).
Grammar and Pronunciation

The data from figure 8 display the results about grammar and pronunciation used in the textbook. Most of the teachers assumed that the spread of grammar throughout the textbook is achievable with (31% VI, 31% I, 31% FL, 6% LI, 0% U). The grammar used in the textbook is contextualized with (25% VI, 34% I, 28% FL, 9% LI, 3% U), the examples used for the purpose of grammar in each sections are interesting and fascinated with (25% VI, 47% I, 15% FL, 3% LI, 9% U), and the grammar is introduced and reworked identically throughout the book with (25% VI, 31% I, 28% FL, 9% LI, 6% U). Furthermore, believed that the pronunciation is contextualized in the whole textbook with (9% VI, 44% I, 22% FL, 22% LI, 3% U) and is the learner-friendly with no difficult process (22% VI, 19% I, 38% FL, 16% LI, 6% U)
Exercise

It can be seen in figure 9 about the results of exercises used in the grade 12th English textbook for Afghanistan. Most of the teachers believed that the exercises used in the textbook are learner-friendly with (16% VI, 38% I, 31% FL, 166 LI, 9% U), they are enough and adequate to the students’ performance with (16% VI, 31% I, 41% FL, 13% LI, 0% U), and such exercises help the student who is weak or strong (19% VI, 31% I, 34% FL, 13% LI, 3% U).

Results

Interpretation of research questions

2. What are the high school teacher’s perception about the general attributes of the grade 12th English text for Afghanistan?

In contrast, most of the teachers believed the textbook lack the suitability of the learner's age. In short, the textbook is not designed by looking to the age of the learner or it could be due to the complicatedness of the book. Furthermore, it is found that the physical layout of the book is more attractive in which efficient and visual text is utilized in the book. The textbook is long-lasting and free of cost all over the country's schools. But most of the teachers claimed that the textbook lacks supplementary materials such as audio that hinders students and teaching listening skills.
1. What are English teachers' perspectives toward the content of the 12th grade English textbook of Afghanistan schools?

This is a lengthy part of the evaluating process that encompasses the number of criteria chosen for the target textbook. It has been assumed that the general teaching content was significantly suitable throughout the book. However, the criteria used for listening skill and its related sub-elements have resulted that the grade 12th English Textbook for Afghanistan overwhelmingly lacks the listening skills, including activities and supplementary materials. In addition, there are fewer activities that could enhance meaningful communication among students in speaking skills. Texts used for reading purposes are graded and interesting to the level of the students.

The writing skill and vocabulary used in the grade 12th English textbook is sufficient for the students. The goal chosen for writing activities achievable and the texts used in the book is more interesting and comprehensible for the students. It is believed that new words are effectively presented from simple to complex.

The grammar in the book is systematically distributed, which was achievable and contextualized by using explicit and interesting examples. As mentioned earlier, the textbook lacks listening skills; therefore, pronunciation is not included in the book; instead, it is prescriptively used in the book, which is contextualized and learner-friendly beyond complexities. It is assumed that the exercises are learner-friendly, enough to students’ level and help high performers and lower students at the same.

Conclusion

This study was aimed at exploring high school teachers’ perceptions of the grade 12th English textbook in Afghanistan. Information gathered from the respondents on the bases of a checklist, they all agreed that the book includes most of the criteria of the checklist. Generally, they asserted that general attributes of the books, which include the methodology used, the suitability of learning, and the physical layout of the book, were effectively elaborated and attached in the textbook. Furthermore, they asserted the content of learning teaching criteria. They believed that most of the integrated skills of the English language, including reading, writing, speaking, and exercise, are positively exploited through each unit of the textbook, but the textbook lacks the listening skill and its supplementary materials and tasks. After conducting this research, it strongly
suggested, those textbook developers, policymakers, particularly the textbook development committee in Afghanistan, strive to include the listening skills and its supplementary material, which was neglected to be placed in grade 12th English textbook for Afghanistan.

References


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Conflicts of Interest
There are no conflicts to declare.

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