



A COMPARATIVE STUDY ON THE AUTHENTICITY OF THE NEW ENGLISH TEXTBOOK *PROSPECT 1* WITH THE OLD ONE *RIGHT PATH TO ENGLISH 1* TAUGHT AT JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOLS IN IRAN

Hossein Mahdavi¹, Seyed Jalal Abdolmanafi-Rokni^{2*}

¹(Department of English Language Teaching, Gorgan Branch, Islamic Azad University, Gorgan, Iran
& Department of English Language Teaching, Science and Research Branch, Islamic Azad University, Gorgan, Iran)

²(Department of English Language and Literature, Golestan University, Gorgan, Iran)



Article Info:

Article Received: 04/1/2015

Revised on : 26/2/2015

Accepted on : 28/3/2015

ABSTRACT

Using authentic materials is a wonderful way to expose students to the target language in foreign language classrooms. To know the attitudes of Iranian EFL teachers toward the authenticity of the newly published book and its comparison with the old one can be interesting. Thus, the present study was an attempt to compare Iranian EFL teachers' attitudes toward the authenticity of the newly published textbook 'Prospect 1' with the old one 'Right Path To English 1' taught at junior high schools in Iran. To gain this goal and purpose, a questionnaire was adapted from Almagro and Cañado (2007) and administered to one hundred and twenty Iranian teachers who were teaching English as a foreign language in Mazandaran province, Iran. The results showed that the majority of the teachers had more positive look at the authenticity of 'Prospect 1' than 'Right Path To English 1'. The teachers' reasons for the superiority of 'Prospect 1' were also examined in this study and their different views were gathered as well. Moreover, the results revealed different attitudes of EFL teachers toward the authenticity of 'Prospect 1' and 'Right Path To English 1'. These attitudes are various because the teachers expressed their attitudes toward authenticity of the two under study books in different manners. Further, the merits and demerits of using authentic materials in EFL classes were discussed in this study.

Keywords: *Authenticity, Attitude, Material Evaluation, EFL Teachers*



INTRODUCTION

There was no real educational system in Iran until the mid-nineteen century; education was associated with religious institutions. The clergymen were responsible for instructing the youth in basic literacy and the fundamentals of religion. Education generally was restricted to the sons of the economic and political elites because it was not necessary for the whole population to have the knowledge of reading and writing. In addition, the majority of people could not afford to pay for education (Abdollahi-Guilani, 2011).

However, due to a number of policies aimed at modernizing the country by the government, the educational system was expanded during Pahlavi era (1925-79). The education system was secular and was based upon the French model for many years. Its ultimate goal was to train Iranians for modern occupations in administration, management, science, and teaching languages (Abdollahi-Guilani, 2011).

After the Islamic revolution in Iran in 1979, most of the decisions made in educational settings have been based on the Islamic rules, and the attitudes toward textbooks in schools and universities had changed accordingly. Based on the notion that the main purpose of education is to instill the Islamic rules and values in the students, textbooks have been compiled according to the Islamic culture. The education ministry is responsible for publishing, developing and distributing textbooks in Iran (Dahmardeh, 2009).

The publication of the first English textbook for Iranian schools dates back to 1937 for about twenty years, and different textbooks such as 'Essential English' (Eckersley, 1952), 'Oxford' series (Hornby, 1954) and 'Modern English' (Dorry, 1950) were utilized at national level. Before utilization of 'Right Path To English' series written by Birjandi (1991), the 'Graded English' series had been used for several years (Golpour, 2012).

School subjects are compulsory in the Iranian curriculum and English is not an exception, but because of the lack of attention that has been given to research within this subject, it could be

argued that English has been neglected within Iranian educational system. Moreover, it seems that Iranian English teachers' ultimate goal is to prepare the students for standard tests, like nationwide university entrance exams, not to use English for communication. It was asserted that in countries like Iran there is an especial emphasis on achievement standards in school; as a result, there is an increased pressure on teachers to prepare their pupils to take language exams as fast as possible. It was continued by arguing that many teachers respond to this pressure by narrowing the curriculum and teaching to the test (Dahmardeh, 2009).

Considering the fact that the results of written tests at the end of every academic year is so important for the ministry of education, the vast majority of language exams and tests in Iran fail to assess real communicative language content, and teaching communicative skills becomes or remains a neglected component in many foreign language classrooms. Unfortunately, English teachers in Iran are rated based on the students' success in written test not on their abilities in using English for communication. Consequently, students' lack of success in communicating in English after studying it for seven years (three years in middle school and four years in secondary school) is the result. This is the way that English is taught in Iran. This was the reason why English teaching in school contexts has been under criticism.

English is considered as a foreign language in Iran, and the level of English proficiency is low in this country compared to many countries in Asia (e.g. Malaysia, Philippines and Singapore etc.) where English is considered as a second language. On the other hand, considering the progress in technology and the role of English in technology, willingness to learn English is rising these days, and most Iranian people would like to learn this language (Mojtahedzadeh & Mojtahedzadeh, 2012).

English plays a key role in transferring the material in developing countries like Iran because the learners rely on their teachers and instructors, and they believe that no one can help them in learning a



foreign language compared to their teachers. Language teachers, on the other hand, rely heavily on textbooks to achieve prescribed goals and objectives and to present their materials. Nooreenand Arshad (as cited in Ghaffarzadeh & Faraji, 2014) claim that materials and textbooks serve as one of the main instruments for shaping knowledge, attitudes, and principles of the students. Textbooks, in Iran, serve as syllabus and form the foundation for the content of lessons and the language skills the learners require. Therefore, this research was done on the first newly published textbooks.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Teaching English for several years in schools, the author and a numerous number of his colleagues always have encountered lack of interest among the students specially the first grade students in their English textbook and the only reason for studying was passing this subject. This bitter fact reveals that the book as the most important teaching materials in Iran had some serious problems and thus did not motivate the students. Students' motivation is rooted in their subjective experiences, especially those connected to their willingness to engage in lessons and learning activities and their reasons for doing so (Brophy, 2005).

Another fact that rings the bell is that the majority of students go to English institutes to study it besides their schools' books. Once more this fact also reveals the lack of an agent of motivation in schools textbooks. In Iran, although using out-of-the-schools system of learning English is going to be common among Iranian students, i.e. going to private language institutes for learning English, unfortunately the students who are living in the rural and underprivileged areas are deprived from this opportunity. Even students using this system must pass English in high schools and need the score of English course (YaghoubiKarnami, 2013).

In terms of speaking, a majority of Iranian students who have studied English at schools had a lot of problems and in some cases are not even able to speak with tourists who came from other countries. It seems that this problem is rooted in the

lack of authenticity in the hearing accompanies of the textbooks in Iran .When students come into contact with native speakers of the language, they meet serious problems in comprehension. They may be able to perform adequately themselves in speech, but they frequently cannot understand what native speakers say to them. The fact is that "they are not accustomed to hearing the language as it is produced by native speakers for native speakers" (Wilkins, 1979, p.47).

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

Some studies have been focused on evaluation of specific series. American (1987) has compared the first two books of Right Path To English Series and the Graded English Series. Based on his analysis, he stated that graded English suffers from two following defects: 1) the content is qualitatively insufficient and 2) the structural drills are quantitatively insufficient. The most important evaluation is that of Soodmand (2008) that has analyzed new interchange (third edition) textbook. He has done this analysis and concluded that this course book is rich in various aspects such as using authentic text, having good topics and different tasks and invaluable illustration.

However, much work has not been done on the authenticity of textbooks being used in school contexts; notwithstanding the fact that authentic materials are a great way to expose students to the target language in the foreign language classroom and that a bulk of research has emphasized the use of authentic materials in foreign language contexts. The researcher, therefore, decided to have a comparative study of the authenticity of the newly published book and the old one and analyze the results to classify some important points and to mention merits and demerits of the newly published book.

Hopefully, this analysis can be helpful for syllabus designers and curriculum developers, and especially for those who are responsible for the possible future modifications, based on the feedback they receive from different sources i.e. feedback providers, teachers being the most resourceful and



well-informed group. Therefore, the research questions are related to the issue of authenticity.

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

Teaching English in Iran, being based on textbooks, begins in the first grade junior high school, as it used to be, but in this academic year (2013-14) a new English textbook entitled 'Prospect 1' was published under the supervision of the Ministry of Education and is claimed to be based on CLT and to be a remedy to cover students' inability to communicate in English. One of the important features of CLT is authenticity of materials. As Larsen-Freeman (2011, p. 126) maintains, "to expose students to natural language in variety of situations, adherents of CLT advocate the use of authentic language materials". O'Neill (1990) believes that students feel more confident and secure when handling authentic materials as long as possible.

The question arising here is to what extent this book is, from teachers' perspective, more authentic than the previous book entitled 'Right Path To English 1' (Birjandi, & Soheili, 2011) having been taught for several years in Iran and having been criticized for its incapability to develop communicative competence in the students. Logic dictates that the newly published textbook must be more effective and efficient than the previous one in terms of authenticity as one of the main features of CLT. This research was conducted to see whether or not the newly published book is, in teachers' views, more authentic than the previous one in terms of context and real language use, the teacher, the student and contents.

This research is a comparative study of the authenticity of the text book 'Right Path To English 1' by Birjandi and Soheili (2011) which is used to be taught in Iran and the newly published textbook 'Prospect 1'. Based on this, the following research question was put forward by the researchers:

Is the new book 'Prospect 1' more authentic than 'Right Path To English 1' from junior high school English teachers' views?

METHODOLOGY

INTRODUCTION

This study aimed at evaluating the authenticity of the first grade English language textbook (Prospect 1) written by Alavi Moghaddam, Khadir Sharbian, Kheir Abadi, Anani Sarab, Forouzandeh, and Ghorbani (2014), and comparing it with the authenticity of the textbook 'Right Path To English 1' written by Birjandi, and Soheili (2011), which is used to be taught at that level in Iran, based on the attitudes of English teachers in Mazandaran province. "Materials should expose the learners to language in authentic use" (Tomlinson et al., 2001, p.13), so this study is focused on comparing the degree of authenticity of these two books.

Materials evaluation is an applied linguistic activity through which teachers, supervisor, administrators and materials developers can "make judgments about the effect of the materials on the people using them" (Tomlinson et al., 2001, p. 15). It is also of "an important value for the development and administration of language-learning programs" (McGrath, 2001, p. 1).

One of the main reasons for materials evaluation according to Cunningsworth (1995) and Alamri (2008) is "to identify particular strengths and weaknesses in course books already in use, so that optimum use can be made of their strong points, whilst their weaker areas can be strengthened through adoption or by substituting materials from other books" (p. 14).

For the reasons above, a survey was conducted in this study to elicit the views of a representative number of English language teachers in Mazandaran Province about the first grade English textbook for Iranian schools, both the new and the old one.

PARTICIPANTS

The population of this study included the senior high school English teachers in Mazandaran province. Out of them, 75 females and 45 male teachers were chosen, based on random sampling procedure, as the participants taking part in a poll, as required by the instrument of this research. They had



been teaching English, especially the two books under the study. Their teaching record ranged from a few years to the age of retirement. They were homogeneous in terms of culture, religion and mother tongue. Among the participants ninety seven teachers hold B.A and twenty one hold M.A degrees in English literature, TEFL, English translation and general linguistics. Two of them were doing their PhD in English.

The selected teachers in this study participated in the teaching workshop which was held before the academic year in order to familiarize them with CLT and to prepare them to teach the CLT-based book of 'Prospect 1'. The principals of CLT and compiling textbooks were the main focus of the course. So, the teachers were well informed about what CLT is and about the fact that authenticity of teaching materials has a special position in this approach. Some of the participant teachers are teaching only in school settings, some in both schools and English Institutes. Most of them were born in Mazandaran and are between 24-56 years old.

INSTRUMENTATION

The instrumentation, used to compare the authenticity of the two textbooks used in the first grade of high schools in Iran, included a questionnaire adapted from a checklist by Almagro and Cañado (2007). A number of changes, i.e. deleting, adding, explaining, however, were made to some items of the questionnaire by the researchers and some TEFL experts to meet the needs of the current study. Ultimately, the researchers came up with a final draft of 40 items that satisfied all his needs to compare the two books in term of their authenticity.

Content and face validity of the instrument were confirmed by five experts in the field of TEFL. The researchers asked them to scrutinize the questionnaire and see how suitable it was for the purpose of this research and whether the items were a good representative of all the information in each of the areas of the survey instrument. They, in turn, presented some invaluable recommendations and modifications, excluding some items and adding

some other items. The framework was left unchanged, though. The reliability of the instrument was calculated using Cronbach' alpha and was shown to be 0.89 which is statistically satisfactory.

There are forty items with four choices "1- The old book is better. 2- The new book is better. 3- There is no difference between them. 4- I have no idea". There are four sections in the questionnaire such as *context and real language use*, *the student*, *the teacher* and *the context*. The teachers stated their attitudes by filling the choice or ticking them. The attitudes toward the authenticity of the two textbooks which are going to be discussed and analyzed are presented under four subheadings which are as follows:

1. Context and real language use: Questions 1 to 4 are on attitudes toward *context and real language use* of the two mentioned textbooks.

2. The students: Questions 5 to 16 are on the attitudes toward the component of *the students*.

3. The teacher: Questions 17 and 20 are on the attitudes toward the component of *the teacher*.

4. Contents: Questions 20 to 40 are on the attitudes toward *contents* component which is divided in six subdivisions of Linguistic aspects, sociocultural aspects, Notional-functional aspects, Topics, Organization, and Activities.

CONTEXT AND REAL LANGUAGE USE

It is essential to determine whether, as Almagro and Cañado (2007) points out, *topic*, *function*, *channel*, and *audience* match the situation for which a text is going to be used in the ESP classroom or General English classes. Matching is after all, what evaluation is all about, as Hutchinson and Waters (as cited in Almagro & Cañado, 2007, p.7) stress: "Evaluation is basically a matching process: matching needs to available solutions". Considering a text as a model of production is only possible when we are sure that the students will want to produce texts with the same characters.

STUDENTS

We should consider the fact that a textbook's authenticity is useful or adequate for both the teachers and learners in the teaching-learning



process. To initiate, it is of the greatest importance that the learner should be taken into account when evaluating authenticity in textbooks. As Robinson (as cited in Almagro & Cañado, 2007, p.7) signals, authenticity is not synonymous with relevance; authentic material is only useful if it matches the students' level of communicative competence and the needs of their specialization. Materials should indeed be chosen not only in terms of how well and how far they develop the competence of the learner, but also on the base of the extent to which they mirror the performance data of the target situation. They should furthermore be assessed on how well they organize the learner for an authentic experience of language; on how far they keep the language user in authentic understanding, communication, and interaction; and on how they elicit an answer from the learner, activating his former knowledge, interest, and curiosity about language and structure.

TEACHERS

It must be born in mind that the textbook is only an instrument or tool which the teacher should be able to adapt to his specific context in order to match the needs of the learners.

CONTENTS

Eventually, in order to increase, a step further, the level of specificity of our evaluation, carrying out a complete analysis of authenticity in relation to all the variables having an influence on the content of the textbook seems necessary. Regarding the fact that language is learned in order to be used communicatively, it becomes necessary to take into account sociocultural or notional-functional elements of language along with linguistic aspects (such as the range and choice of lexicon and grammar, or the insertion of real excerpts of language) (Almagro & Cañado, 2007).

Obviously, those who are responsible for compiling the textbook must contemplate the topics related to authentic materials which are applicable from an academic or occupational viewpoint. They must also determine if the topics and units are adequate for the students' level of communicative competence. If these topics and units match their

learning needs and interests, they have both a linguistic and communicative purpose (Almagro & Cañado, 2007).

They also need to reflect upon the organization of the topics or units. In this sense, they should build lessons around content-based themes in the specific purpose area. As Schleppegrell (as cited in Almagro & Cañado 2007, p.8) recommends:

“Use a thematic organization that chooses particular topics and builds on them from one class to another, rather than random texts or unrelated topics. Understand that in “authentic” situations, understanding a new text comes from reference to the context and surroundings. Build such contexts into your units by referring to previous work and drawing on the frame of reference that learners already have.”

Finally, the activities employed to put these topics into practice should also be evaluated in terms of authenticity. In this respect, their usefulness both in the educational context and in the real situation should be analyzed.

RESEARCH METHOD

A survey was done to gather the information needed. This is a method of data gathering from samples which are representative of a population. Brown and Rogers (as cited in Alamri, 2008, p.142) state “surveys are any procedures used to gather and describe the characteristics, attitudes, views, opinions and so forth of students, teachers, administrators or any other people who are important to a study”.

DATA ANALYSIS METHOD

In analyzing the survey data, the rating took the form of Likert Scales. Rating scales were numerically coded as 1-The old book is better. 2-The new book is better. 3-There is no difference between them and 4-I have no idea. The mean and percentage of each question were calculated. The arithmetic means and the percentage of each statement were computed and the following set of computations was done:

**ANALYSIS ON A PER-CATEGORY LEVEL**

The data were interpreted on a per-category level. The analysis was on the basis of what class or type of characteristics are indicated in the group of questions. The overall mean of each category was computed and the extent to which each category was satisfied in the textbook in question was identified.

ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

All the participants of this study were informed about the purpose of the study before participating and taking part in stating their attitudes toward the authenticity of the two mentioned text books in this research. Furthermore, the teachers participating in this study were informed of the aims and the purposes of the study, that participating were voluntary and by their own choice and completely anonymous and the information and data gathered just to know their attitudes.

RESULTS OF PER-CATEGORY ANALYSIS

In this part, the results answer the questions asked in this research about the context and real language use of the text book, the students, the teacher, and the contents which is under six subheadings: linguistic aspects, socio-cultural aspects, notional-functional aspects, topics, organization, and activities.

Regarding the research question offered in this research "Is the new book 'Prospect 1' more authentic than 'Right Path To English 1' from high school English teachers' views?", the results obtained from the forty questions in this part are presented in the following table.

Table 1: Teachers' attitude toward the two books

Number of Respondents	Mean of respondents preferring the new book	Mean of respondents preferring the old book	Percentage of respondent preferring the new book	Percentage of respondents preferring the old book
120	78.23	6.4	62.63%	6.36%

As table 1 shows, among 120 teachers responding the questionnaire, only 6.36% of the teachers believed that the old book is more authentic than the new book. However, a majority of 62.63% of teachers believed that the new book is more

authentic, which is statistically significant. Therefore, the new book 'Prospect 1' is overall more authentic than 'Right path to English 1' in high school English teachers' views.

Table 2: Results of Teachers' Overall Attitudes toward 'Prospect 1' on item-by-item basis

A. CONTEXT AND REAL LANGUAGE USE		1	2	3	4
1	The textbook's contents can be usefully employed in the real situation.	4%	77%	3%	16%
2	The purposes of the material are authentic.	2%	74%	17%	7%
3	The contexts of the book are adapted with Iranian culture.	21%	61%	10%	8%
4	The authenticity of the contents is observable for all students.	5%	24%	22%	49%
B. THE STUDENT					
5	The student can clearly appreciate the utility of the textbook's objectives in real-life situations.	7%	83%	3%	7%
6	Its exercises and tasks have clear goals related to the students' real language situation.	8%	65%	19%	8%
7	The textbook is adequate for the students' level of communicative competence.	15%	67%	12%	6%
8	It allows the students to make use of their linguistic abilities and to put into practice their communicative competence.	10%	79%	4%	7%
9	It grabs the students' attention and make them want to communicate in	5%	86%	8%	1%



	the target language.				
10	It prepares the learner for an authentic experience of the language.	2%	83%	11%	4%
11	It generates authentic interactions, communication, and responses from the learners.	14%	63%	11%	12%
12	The textbook is relevant to the students' needs.	15%	68%	8%	9%
13	The textbook increases the students' motivation for learning.	5%	69%	17%	9%
14	The textbook makes the students be exposed to the real language.	8%	62%	14%	16%
15	The textbook enhances the sociocultural competence of the students.	6%	71%	14%	9%
16	The textbook covers all four skills of learning equally.	16%	45%	24%	15%
	C. THE TEACHER				
17	The degree of authenticity of the textbook matches the teacher's preparation.	4%	55	14%	27%
18	The textbook can be adapted by the teacher to meet the needs of his/her foreign language	7%	81%	8%	4%
19	It helps the teacher recognize students' personal differences.	13%	53%	25%	9%
20	The textbook helps the teacher localize its contents.	6%	48%	30%	16%
	D. CONTENTS				
	<i>D.1. Linguistic aspects</i>				
21	The selection and range of linguistic aspects is adequate for the students' level of communicative competence.	6%	46%	21%	27%
22	It includes up-to-date and relevant grammatical structures and lexicon.	11%	64%	18%	7%
23	They include stretches of real language produced by real speakers or writers for a real audience and conveying a real message of some sort.	3%	33%	13%	51%
24	The conversations and texts of the book promote students' textual competence.	6%	48%	30%	16%
	<i>D.2. Socio cultural aspects</i>				
25	The socio cultural aspects presented in the textbook can be used for academic rather than only for linguistic ones.	7%	48%	17%	28%
26	The textbook provides a cultural contextual support.	3%	63%	22%	12%
27	The textbook prepares the students for their responsibilities in the real life.	6%	69%	7%	18%
	<i>D.3. Notional-functional aspects</i>				
28	The functions presented in the textbook are related to the students' future needs.	4%	65%	14%	17%
29	The presentation of functions is complemented with linguistic and communicative exercises.	15%	7%	64%	14%
30	The variety in functions makes the textbook attractive for students.	5%	78%	7%	10%
	<i>D.4. Topics</i>				
31	The topics selected throughout the book are of the interest of the students.	6%	69%	8%	17%
32	The topics included in the textbook are valid from an academic point of view.	3%	63%	14%	20%
33	The units have linguistic and communicative purposes.	2%	73%	8%	17%
34	The units include authentic materials which match the students' learning needs.	6%	76%	11%	7%
	<i>D.5. Organization</i>				
35	The textbook has a thematic unity.	10%	72%	3%	15%
36	The lessons are built around content-based themes in the specific purpose area.	13%	44%	15%	28%



	<i>D.6. Activities</i>				
37	The activities presented are useful in the educational context and in the real language situation.	4%	66%	13%	17%
38	The activities presented in the textbook will reflect language use outside of the classroom.	2%	82%	7%	9%
39	The activities in the text book enhance the communicative competence of students.	2%	79%	7%	12%
40	The activities and exercises in the textbook are applicable for all students.	11%	52%	8%	29%

Note: In the following tables 1 stands for percentage of respondents preferring old book. 2 stands for percentage of respondents preferring new book. 3 stands for Percentage of respondents believing the books are not different. 4 Percentage of respondents, having no ideas.

The first category in this questionnaire refers to the context and real language use of which about 7.9 percent of the teachers believe that the old book is better while 59.16 percent of the teachers believed the newly published book is better, about 13.3 percent of the teachers believed there is no difference between this two books and 19.57 percent had no idea.

The second category in this study refers to the students of which about 9.09 percent of the participants believed that the old book is better, 70.06 percent believed that the newly published book is better, about 12.29 percent believed that there is no difference between them and 8.54 percent had no idea.

The third category in this study refers to the teachers of which about 7.5 percent of the participants believed that the old book is better, 59.16 percent believed that the newly published book is better, about 19.37 percent believed that there is no difference between them and 13.95 percent had no idea.

The fourth category in this study refers to the contents which are under six subheadings: linguistics aspect, sociocultural aspects, notional-functional aspects, topics, organization and activities. In relation to linguistics aspect 6.66 percent of the teachers believed that the old book is better, 47.29 percent of the teacher believed the new book is better; 15.83 percent ticked the third item which means there is no difference between the two books and 30.2 percent had no idea.

In relation to sociocultural aspects 5.52 percent of the teachers believed that the old book is better, 60.22 percent of the teacher believed the new book is better, 15.46 percent ticked the third item which means there is no difference between the two books and 18.77 percent had no idea.

In relation to notional-functional aspects 5.27 percent of the teachers believed that the old book is better, 69.16 percent of the teacher believed the new book is better, 11.66 percent ticked the third item which means there is no difference between the two books, and 13.88 percent had no idea.

In relation to the topics presented in the two textbooks 4.37 percent of the teachers believed that the old book is better, 70.20 percent of the teacher believed the new book is better, 10 percent ticked the third item which means there is no difference between the two books and 15.33 percent had no idea.

In relation to the organization of the lessons presented in the two textbooks 11.66 percent of the teachers believed that the old book is better, 57.91 percent of the teacher believed the new book is better, 9.16 percent ticked the third item which means there is no difference between the two books and 21.24 percent had no idea.

The last section of this questionnaire is about homework of which 4.58 percent of the teachers believed that the old book is better, 70 percent of the teacher believed the new book is better, 8.75 percent ticked the third item which means there is no difference between the two books and 16.66 percent had no idea.



DISCUSSION

The present study concentrates on exploring Iranian EFL teachers' attitudes towards the authenticity of the two Iranian textbooks for high school grade one 'Prospect 1' and 'Right Path To English 1'. It was done by asking the teachers to state their attitudes toward the authenticity of the two aforementioned books. To put it another way, this research was conducted to see whether or not the newly published book is more authentic than the previous one in terms of four components of *context and real language use, the teacher, the student and contents*, from English language teachers' perspective.

In terms of context and real language use, about 7.9 percent of the teachers believe that the old book is better while 59.16 percent of the teachers believed the newly published book is better. In terms of teachers, about 7.5 percent of the participants believed that the old book is better, 59.16 percent believed that the newly published book is better. In terms of students, about 9.09 percent of the participants believed that the old book is better, while 70.06 percent believed that the newly published book is better. Finally, in terms of contents, about 5.46 percent of the participants believed that the old book is better, while 62.46 percent believed that the newly published book is better. The results are statistically significant and this could be due to the changing of the textbook. Some important reasons for this change are:

The old textbook did not appeal the students in terms of either the content or the appearance. The conversation section was so mechanical that both the teacher and the students wished to skip it. There was no sign of presenting the listening and writing practice. The vocabulary was not presented within a context along with appropriate illustrations. Nor the textbooks included anything about the culture of English speaking countries. For instance, all the names or the situations raised in the textbooks were Iranian (Abdollahi-Guilani, 2011).

Moreover, the old textbook have been remained unchanged for years, and the following

limitations made the teachers be really look forward to the coming of the new book:

- The students think that it is not necessary for them to look for answers because they can just copy and paste from the old books.
- The teachers do not require making new questions for the test, because they seem to use all the questions in the past years.
- The need to being updated is not felt on the part of the teachers.

Few studies have been done in this area in Iran (Jahangard, 2007; Abdollahi-Guilani, 2011, Golpour 2012; YaghoubiKarnami, 2013; Ghaffarzadeh & Faraji, 2014). Jahangard (2007) compared four EFL textbooks used in the Iranian high schools by the Ministry of Education and his study seemed similar to this study in some extent. The results of his study indicated that book four (pre university) had better features in comparison with the three other textbooks. Considering that these books and the old book in this study, teachers' ideas in this study (only 6.63 percent preferred the old book) confirmed Jahangard's results about the old book.

Abdollahi-Guilani (2011) study was based on Dougill's (1987) textbook evaluation checklist and the feedback received from the teachers' and the students' responses, showed that the Iranian textbooks lack the authenticity of natural English in terms of content and presentation. The feedback received from the teachers' responses in this study about the authenticity of the old book (6.63 percent preference), confirmed Abdollahi-Guilani's results about the authenticity of Iranian textbooks.

Golpour (2012) worked on the listening recording of 'Right Path To English' series for junior high school in Iran. His finding revealed that the scripts and recordings of series have not been provided by using of origin texts, so they cannot be regarded as authentic ones. The feedback received from the teachers' responses in this study about the authenticity of the old book (6.63 percent



preference), confirmed Golpour's results about the authenticity of Iranian textbooks.

Yaghoubi Karnami (2013) in his study collected and categorized the interests and views of the students as to what they expect to be included in the to-be-developed textbooks. The results showed that they would like *authentic materials*, eye-catching appearances, a part for free discussion, and numerous other cases to be incorporated in the textbooks. The feedback received from the teachers' responses in this study about the authenticity of the new book (62.63 percent preference), confirmed Yaghoubi's students preference about using authentic materials in comprising Iranian textbooks.

Ghaffarzadeh and Faraji (2014) discussed about the level of authenticity of Prospect1 (Iranian English book in first grade of junior secondary school) in two major category of social and linguistic aspects. Based on the results of their study the emphasis of authenticity of 'Prospect 1' was on intercultural concepts and the other three important factors were neglected in fact. But this research included other aspects of authenticity and is more comprehensive than Ghaffarzadeh and Faraji's research. The most participants agreed to the authenticity of the new book.

The newly published textbook claiming to be based on CLT compiled as a remedy for students' inability to attain full competence in using the English language and for their incapability to interact with confidence. One of the fundamental principles of CLT is keeping a balance in presenting a variety of language skills and the integration, and presentation of all the four language skills (Abdollahi-Guilani, 2011) which the old book was, however, short of offering some of the skills. On the contrary, the new book presents the integration and presentation of all the four language skills reasonably.

The presentation of vocabulary in the new book with appropriate illustration is another reason for the book to be appealing to both teachers and students. This way is based on CLT to some extent. The best way to teach the vocabulary is to present them within a context along with appropriate

pictures. It can cause the process of learning more authentic (Dahmardeh, 2009). The above mentioned reasons in favor of the new book and against the old book were enough to convince teachers to choose the new book as more authentic.

CONCLUSION

This research is a comparative study in which a newly published textbook was juxtaposed to its previous counterpart by the teachers to compare them in terms of authenticity, as one of the most essential components of CLT. Although most researches having been conducted about the authenticity and using authentic materials in textbooks have shown different and often contradictory views about various issues related to authenticity, one thing which was unanimously shared by all is exposure to "real language and real life"; in other words, all people recognize the benefits that students can get from being exposed to the language through authentic materials.

Language teaching is not just dealing with tasks and activities to prepare the learners to overcome the problems they will meet in real life. It is also necessary to expose learners to conditions in which the integration of language skills and the development of cognitive style occurs (Abdollahi-Guilani, 2011). The finding of this study showed that majority of the teachers in Mazandaran province declared their ideas in favor of the newly published textbook, 'Prospect 1', in exposing learners to such conditions.

When compiling textbooks it is better to include texts based on needs analysis of the young learners. Being mentally attracted to the content, learning other related things to it become easier for the learners because the content is appealing to them and they can learn language less stressfully (Abdollahi-Guilani, 2011). The finding of this study showed that majority of the teachers in Mazandaran province declared their ideas in favor of the newly published textbook, 'Prospect 1', in terms of considering the needs of young learners in providing appealing content.



One of the main reasons for using authentic materials in the classroom is, the learner will not encounter the artificial language of the classroom but the real world and language how it is really used. The role of the teacher is to prepare him, giving the awareness and necessary skills so as to understand how the language is actually used (Berardo, 2006). The finding of this study showed that majority of the teachers in Mazandaran province declared their ideas in favor of the newly published textbook, 'Prospect 1', in not using artificial language of the classroom and helping learners to understand how the language is actually used. Having made a distinction between authentic and non-authentic material and evaluated the use of them in the classroom, it is worth taking into consideration Davies who wrote:

"It is not that a text is understood because it is authentic but that it is authentic because it is understood. ...Everything the learner understands is authentic for him." (Davies 1984, p.192)

It was also shown that most teachers acknowledge that the new book surpasses the old one regarding the components of authenticity specified by the questionnaire. So we can be content that the future students can gain more from this book and will be communicatively more proficient by studying this book at high school settings.

PEDAGOGICAL IMPLICATIONS

Hopefully, this analysis can be helpful for syllabus designers and curriculum developers, and especially for those who are responsible for the possible future modifications, based on the feedback they receive from different sources i.e. feedback providers, teachers being the most resourceful and well-informed group.

This research and study is the first step to know Iranian teachers' attitudes toward the authenticity of textbooks and comparing the textbooks in this field. This study can be valid and also valuable repeat and also replicate other related studies on the topic in the future.

Throughout this study, the researcher has been pointing out the attitudes of Iranian EFL teachers toward authenticity. Authentic materials provide teachers with a never-ending source of inspiration and possibilities that has the power to keep the job interesting and rewarding for a long time.

More investigation into the phenomena of authenticity can help the researchers to understand why it is a common and unavoidable phenomenon in EFL classes. The results of this study support the outcomes of the previous studies done by other researchers.

REFERENCES

- Abdollahi-Guilani, M. (2011). Authenticity of Iranian English textbooks for schools. *English Language and Literature Studies*, 1(2), 25-30.
- Alamri, A. (2008). *An evaluation of the sixth grade English language textbook for Saudi boys' school*. (Unpublished master thesis). King Saud University, Saudi Arabia.
- AlaviMoghaddam, B., KHadirSharbian, Sh., Kheir Abadi, R., AnaniSarab, M. R., Forouzandeh, E., & Ghorbani, N. (2013). *Prospect 1*. Iran Textbook Publisher: Tehran.
- Almagro, A. & Cañado, P. (2007). Authenticity in the teaching ESP: An evaluation proposal. *Journal of the Slovene Association of LSP Teachers*, 1(1), 137-161. Available at www.sdujsi.edus.si/.../2005.../Perez_Almagro.htm.
- Berardo, S.A. (2006). The use of authentic materials in the teaching of reading. *The Reading Matrix*, 6(2), 60-69.
- Birjandi, P. (1991). *Right Path to English*. Tehran, Karaj.
- Birjandi, P. & Soheili, A. (2011). *Right path to English 1*. Iran Textbook Publisher: Tehran.
- Brophy, J. (2005). *Motivating students to learn*. Michigan, Michigan State University.
- Cunningsworth, A. (1995). *Choosing your course book*. Macmillan, Heinemann: London.
- Dahmardeh, M. (2009). *English language teaching in Iran communicative language teaching*. (Published doctoral thesis). Warwick University. Retrieved September 12, 2014 from <http://go.warwick.ac.uk/wrap/2728>.
- Davies, A. (1984). Simple, simplified and simplification: what is authentic? In Alderson, J.C. & Urquhart, A.H. (1984) *Reading in a Foreign Language* (pp.181-198). London, Longman.
- Dorry, G. N. (1950). *Games for Second Language Learning*. New York: McGraw-Hill.
- Dougill, J. (1987). Not so obvious. In L. E. Sheldon (Ed.), *ELT textbooks and materials: Problems in evaluation and development* (pp. 29-36). Oxford: Modern English Publications.



- Eckersley, C. E. (1952). *Essential English for foreign students. Book 4*. London: Longmans, Green.
- Ghaffarzadeh, M. & Faraji, M. (2014). A content analysis of the new Iranian English textbook's authenticity. *Enjoy Teaching Journal*, 2(1), 1-6.
- Golpour, F. (2012). Iranian junior high school English series (Right path to English) weighted against material evaluation checklist. *International Journal of Applied Linguistics & English Literature*, 1(7), 170-179.
- Hornby, A. S. (1954). *Oxford Progressive English for Adult Learners. Book One*. London: Oxford University Press.
- Jahangard, A. (2007). The evaluation of the EFL materials taught at Iranian public high schools. *Karen's linguistics issues*. Retrieved October, 2008 from <http://www.3.telus/linguisticsissues/by month.html>.
- Larsen-Freeman, D. (2011). *Techniques and principals in language teaching (3rd edition)*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- McGrath, I. (2002). *Materials evaluation and design for language Teaching*. Edinburgh University Press: Edinburgh.
- Mojtahedzadeh, M. & Mojtahedzadeh, R. (2012). The role of English language teaching and learning in Iran. *International Journal for Quality research*, 6(2), 125-130.
- O'Neill, R. (1990). *Why use textbooks?* Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Soodmand, A. (2008). Interchange weighted against a checklist. Unpublished article.
- Tomlinson, B. (2001). Materials development. In R. Carter, & D. Nunan (Eds.), *The Cambridge guide to teaching English to speakers of other languages* (pp. 66-71). Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.
- Tomlinson, B. et al. (2001). ELT Courses for Adults. *ELT Journal*, 55(1) 80-101.
- Wilkins, D. A. (1979). *Notional syllabuses: taxonomy and its relevance to foreign language curriculum development*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- YaghoubiKarnami, M. (2013). *Let's hear our students' voice before developing a textbook for them: What do our high school students want us to be included in their prospective English textbook?* Paper presented at The 1st National Conference on Emerging Horizons in ELT and Literature, IA University – Ahar Branch.