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Iranian EFL Teachers' Perspective towards the High School English Textbook, Vision3: An Evaluation Based on Communicative Approach

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Abstract

Textbook evaluation seems to be inevitable where textbooks are the main source of teaching and learning processes. This study aimed to investigate to what extent "Vision 3" (the last volume of the English book series entitled "English for schools") has the characteristics of a CLT syllabus based on teachers' points of view. To fulfill the objectives of this study, 60 male and female high school English teachers, teaching at different high schools answered an online questionnaire adapted from AbdelWahab (2013) which is a 3-point Likert scale checklist (i.e. poor, satisfactory, & good). The design of the scale enabled the researchers to evaluate the book in terms of four main criteria including; (1) physical and utilitarian attributes, (2) efficient outlay of objectives and supplementary materials, (3) learning/teaching content, and (4) language skills. The analysis of the data indicated that EFL teachers had a positive attitude towards the English textbook based on the CLT principles except for cultural considerations. The conclusion indicates that the book needs to be modified to include some aspects of cultural values about the target language culture. The results can guide the teachers, syllabus designers, textbook writers, evaluators, and curriculum designers in their planning and designing of future textbooks.

Keywords: communicative approach, textbook evaluation, vision 3

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1. Introduction

Learning a new language is definitely affected by numerous factors such as the teachers' skills, the learners' abilities, the environment in which the learning event is taking place, and more importantly, the textbooks. Textbooks play an important part in an English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classroom, and teachers must be knowledgeable about textbook assessment (Williams, 1994). English Language Teaching (ELT) content evaluation, and especially textbook evaluation involves determining the worth or possible worth of a set of learning materials (textbooks) by assessing their impact on the target audiences (Tomlinson & Masuhara, 2004). Torki and Chalak (2016) believed that textbooks are in fact effective resources for the presentation of materials, a source of ideas and activities, a reference source for students, and support for less experienced teachers who have yet to gain confidence.

According to McGrath (2002), textbooks are valuable because they establish the direction, content, and, to some extent, how the lesson should be presented. To be beneficial, all resources used in instructional settings must follow those requirements as well as weaker learners' interests and attention (Namaziandost et al., 2020). Accordingly, Khodabandeh and Mombini (2018) stated that textbooks specify language-based activities, and in this way, they bring cohesion into the classroom environment. Furthermore, textbooks are intended to bring consistency to the language teaching and learning process by equipping students with more practice through guidance, encouragement, and practical language-based exercises (Aghajani, 2018; Mares, 2003) and to encourage and expedite the learning process (Yazdizadeh et al., 2020). Another crucial point is that textbooks provide teachers access to fully prepared references to concentrate on language teaching, saving time and resources (Namaziandost et al., 2019).

Considering the approach through which the coursebooks are taught, Vongxay (2013) suggested, the global spread of English as an International Language (EIL) caused an emergent need for EFL students to communicate in English while "the traditional approach was seen no longer as serving the needs of EFL learners" (p.11). Therefore, ELT moved from the structural approach towards a Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) approach.

In Iran, the Ministry of Education is responsible for developing textbooks. In the case of high school textbooks, they developed a six-volume English textbook collection written by Alavimoghadam et al. (2014-2016) under the title of "English for Schools." The collection, as a continuum, includes two three-volume subsets called "Prospect" for junior high schools and "Vision" for senior high schools. All these books are based on the CLT approach. In the recent textbooks, shortcomings of the previous English textbooks have been taken into account. These books series have general principles: paying attention to all four language skills, using a variety of learning activities in the language learning process, focusing on language learning through experience, using rich, meaningful, and understandable materials in the development of educational content, promoting language learning through cooperation and collaboration in the classroom, providing appropriate corrective feedback to learners' errors, and emphasizing on emotional aspects in the process of language learning (Alavimoghadam et al., 2016; Hashemifardnia et al., 2018; Namaziandost et al., 2020).

In 2014, "Prospect", was under the evaluation of some researchers (Arablo, 2015; Kia-Ahmadi & Arabmofrad, 2015; Salehi & Amini, 2016). These researchers tried to investigate the strengths and weaknesses of these textbooks by evaluating and revealing whether they have been successful in achieving the predetermined goals or not. "Vision 1" was also the subject of some researchers' evaluation such as Ajideh and Panahi (2016), Namaziandost and Çakmak (2020), and Pouranshirvani (2017b) who attempted to analyze the book only from teachers' perspectives. Furthermore, Mallahi and Afraz (2018) as well as Pourhosein Gilakjani et al. (2020) evaluated "Vision 2" from teachers' perspectives.

1.1 Statement of the Problem

Considering "Vision 3", although there are very few inquiries carried out on the same textbook, such as Sabzalipour and Koosha's (2014) research, none of them worked with the same questionnaire in which the four skills are involved, and also the CLT approach has not already been taken into consideration in any of the previous investigations. It is also worth mentioning that since the textbook is only taught in Iran's schools, there is not any international research carried out on the book. The present study, therefore, was set to find out the advantages and disadvantages of this textbook, used in grade 12, by focusing on the EFL teachers' perspectives towards it. It also needs to be mentioned that CLT approach was focused on all through the current research. This study might be practical because the textbooks are recently modified, and not many studies have been conducted on them in Iran.

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2. Literature Review

2.1 Textbooks

Sheldom (1988) believed that "textbooks represent the visible heart of any ELT program" (p.237). So, they have to be developed carefully based on the needs of the learners because they play main roles in EFL education. For an educational program to be successful, Daoud and Celce-Murcia (1979) believed, it needs a careful selection of the textbook. Such a decision should be made carefully and systematically, not arbitrarily. They added that such a decision is sometimes the teachers' responsibility. However, even in countries where the choice of the textbook does not directly involve the teacher, teachers may be asked to submit reports on the usefulness of the textbooks they are already making use of. Some possible criteria and procedures are suggested for carrying out a sound selection of appropriate textbooks. However, selecting an appropriate textbook is not a wholly objective process. The point is that although many guidelines are suggested, the individual subjective judgments of the teachers are the central criteria.

Textbooks, in Tomlinson's (2008) perspective, can be considered as the reference point for teachers to manage their teaching progress, and provide a focus for teaching. As a result, their evaluation has an important value for the development and administration of language learning programs as stated by McGrath (2002). Tomlinson (2001) also contended that textbook evaluation is an applied linguistic activity through which teachers, supervisors, administrators, and materials developers can make sound judgments about the efficiency of the materials for the people using them. Besides, Cunningsworth (1995) and Ellis (1997) declared that textbook evaluation helps teachers move beyond impressionistic assessments and it helps them acquire useful, accurate, systematic, and contextual insights into the overall nature of textbook material. Textbook evaluation is also important for researchers. According to Zohrabi (2011), "material evaluation should be the top priority of any curriculum" (p. 214).

Of course, there has been a number of scholars working on textbooks' evaluation one of whom is Garinger (2002) who holds that teachers want visually stimulating materials that are well organized and easy to follow. Besides, Pouranshirvani (2017b) worked on the quality of the textbook features, stated that teachers are satisfied with as well as those they object against. Also, McDonough and Shaw (2012) emphasized the authenticity of the tasks in order to be able to increase the learners' motivation. In addition, Asadi and Kiany (2014) believed that the culture of English language countries is a point that has to be taken into account in textbook designing. The importance of meticulous work on the four skills of listening, speaking, reading, and writing are then highlighted in Salehi and Amini's (2016) inquiry. Moreover, there are some research carried out on the textbooks some of whose scholars are Ajideh (2016), Namaziandost and Çakmak (2020), and Pouranshirvani (2017b) who evaluated and analyzed "Vision 1', a book from the same series the present study focused on. In doing their research, these scholars took only the teachers' perspectives into account. In addition, Mallahi and Afraz (2018) evaluated the other book of the same series (i.e. "Vision 2") again only from the teachers' perspectives.

2.2 Communicative Approach

The communicative approach, according to Piepho (1981), engages learners in communicative processes as information sharing, negotiation of meaning, and interaction. Within such an approach, classroom activities are often designed to focus on completing tasks that are mediated through language or involve negotiation of information and information sharing. Littlewood (1981) separated "functional communication activities" from "social interaction activities" in the Communicative Language Teaching approach. Functional communication activities relate to tasks as learners comparing sets of pictures and noting similarities and differences, working out a likely sequence of events in a set of pictures, discovering missing features in a map or picture, one learner communicating behind a screen to another learner, and giving instructions on how to draw a picture or shape, or how to complete a map, following directions, and solving problems from shared clues. Communicative interaction activities then include conversation and discussion sessions, dialogues and role-plays, simulations, skits, improvisations, and debates (Richards & Rodgers, 2001).

Furthermore, materials have the main role of promoting communicative language use (Namaziandost et al., 2019). There are three kinds of materials currently used in CLT:

Text-based materials: In such materials, books look very different from previous language teaching texts. That is, a typical lesson consists of a theme, a task analysis for thematic development, a practice situation description, a stimulus presentation, comprehension questions, and paraphrase exercises (Nasri & Namaziandost, 2019).

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Task-based materials: In task-based materials, there are variety of games, role plays, simulations, and task-based communication activities to support CLT classes. They are in the form of one-of-a-kind items: exercise handbooks, cue cards, activity cards, pair-communication practice materials, and student-interaction practice booklets (Namaziandost et al., 2019). In pair communication materials, there are typically two sets of material for a pair of students, each set containing different kinds of information. Sometimes the information is complementary, and partners must fit their respective parts of the "jigsaw" into a composite whole. Also, there are drills and practice material in interactional formats (Richards & Rodgers, 2001).

According to Doughty and Long (2003), there is a list of eight principles that underlie CLT including task as an organizing principle; learning through doing; rich input which needs to be meaningful, comprehensible, and elaborated; authentic materials; promotion of cooperative and collaborative learning; focus on form; provision of error corrective feedback; and the consideration of affective factors of learning. These principles are assumed to help us in choosing teaching materials and learning activities (Anani Sarab et al., 2016; Nasri & Namaziandost, 2019).

Realia: Using "authentic," "from-life" materials in the classroom are in Richards and Rodgers's (2001) word, important in the CLT approach. The materials include language-based realia such as signs, magazines, advertisements, and newspapers, or graphic and visual sources around which communicative activities can be built such as maps, pictures, symbols, graphs, and charts. Different kinds of objects can also be used, such as a plastic model to assemble from directions. Today, CLT continues in the huge range of course books and other teaching resources based on the principles of CLT (Richards & Rodgers, 2001).

There are many inquiries carried out on CLT the latest of which are Christianto (2019), Nuby et al. (2019), and Toro et al. (2019) who investigated the approach in the context of the classroom, from teachers' perspective who worked with the approach, and its outcomes again from teachers' point of views. Toro et al.'s (2019) research made it clear that strategies such as modeling, pair and group work, as well as repetition are the beneficial ones frequently used by teachers. CLT is also said to be a very common approach to teaching (Christianto, 2019) and teachers are very optimistic about its effects on improving the students' English knowledge (Nuby et al., 2019).

2.3 Communicative Syllabus

Syllabus, in Richards and Schmidt's (2010) word, is a description of the contents of a course of instruction and the order in which they are to be taught. They also declared that language teaching syllabi can have their bases on such different criteria as grammatical items and vocabulary, the language required for different types of situations, the meanings that underlie different language behaviour, or the text types language learners need to master. Richards and Rodgers (2001) as well as Wilkins (1981) are the scholars who proposed a functional or communicative definition of language based on which it is possible to develop communicative syllabuses for language teaching. Wilkins's contribution was an analysis of the communicative meanings that a language learner needs to understand and express. Instead of describing the core of language through traditional concepts of grammar and vocabulary, Wilkins tried to demonstrate the systems of meanings that lay behind the communicative uses of language. He described two types of meanings: notional (concepts such as time, sequence, quantity, location, frequency) and communicative functional categories (requests, denials, offers, complaints).

Rapid acceptance of such principles by British language teaching specialists, curriculum development centers, and even governments gave prominence nationally and internationally to what came to be referred to as the Communicative Approach, or simply CLT. However, Wilkins's original notional syllabus model was criticized by British applied linguists as merely replacing one kind of list (e.g., a list of grammar items) with another (a list of notions and functions). It specified products, rather than communicative processes. On the other hand, some designers of communicative syllabuses have looked to task specification and task organization for syllabus design. Some have argued that only learners can be fully aware of their own needs, communicational resources, and desired to learn pace and path, and that each learner must create a personal, albeit implicit, syllabus as part of learning (Richards & Rodgers, 2001).

Celce-Murcia (1989), Li (1998), as well as Namaziandost and Shafiee (2018) believed that the CLT approach has been created by a theory of language as communication, and its aim is to develop learners' communicative competence. Torki and Chalak (2016) pointed to some of the characteristics of CLT such as the objective of language use for communicative competence, use of real-life communicative situations in classroom learning, emphasis on two-way communicative function, sufficient exposure to the target language, development of all four skills (listening,

speaking, reading, & writing), use of authentic materials, meaningful tasks, and group activities, and the attempt to create a secure, nonthreatening atmosphere. Moreover, Anani Sarab et al. (2016) stated that CLT methodologies appeared in the 70s and 80s mainly because of the feeling of disillusionment with the Grammar Translation and Audiolingual approaches to foreign language teaching. These decades were also the beginning of the widespread belief that there is no single method that can meet the differing needs of language learners. They were also coincident with "postmethod condition" (Kumaravadevilu, 1994) or "postmethod era" (Richards & Rodgers, 2001).

2.3.1 Elements of a Communicative Syllabus

A communicative syllabus needs to involve some essential elements for being practical and useful. Brown (2007, p. 156-157) listed the elements as:

"1. Goals for the course (and possible goals for the modules within the course).

2. Suggested objectives for units and possible lessons.

3. A sequential list of functions (purposes), following from the goals that the curriculum will fulfill. Such a list is typically organized into weeks or days.

4. A sequential list of topics and situations matched to the functions in number 3 above.

5. A sequential list of grammatical, lexical, and/or phonological forms to be taught, again matched to the above sequences.

6. A sequential list of skills (listening, speaking, reading, writing) that are also matched to the above sequences.

7. Matched references throughout to textbook units, lessons, and/or pages, and additional resources (audio, visual, workbooks, etc.) to be used.

8. Possible suggestions of assessment alternatives, including criteria to be tested and genres of assessment (Traditional tests, journals, portfolios, etc.)."

Communicative syllabus has been the subject of some studies one of which is Xaydarovna's (2020) investigation who considered communicative syllabus a critical issue for military students at the Military-technical Institute of the National guard of the Republic of Uzbekistan who need to speak English well. Also, Syamsuddin and Al Afgani (2019) attempted to design a communicative syllabus for a speaking course in the university within the main aim of developing learners' communicative competence. Regarding the present inquiry, the researchers focused on an English textbook that is taught in Iranian high schools in grade 12, written by Alavi Moghaddam et al. (2018). This textbook is entitled *English for schools: Vision 3*, and it includes speaking, reading, listening, and writing. The textbook was developed based on the components of the CLT approach and a communicative syllabus. Therefore, the purpose of the current research was to find out if the Vision 3 textbook is designed based on the communicative approach. To do so the research question is:

1. To what extent does "Vision 3" enjoy the features of a CLT-based syllabus?

3. Methodology

3.1 Design of the Study

Since the data collected in the course of the present research was in the form of pain classification on a 3-point scale of poor, satisfactory, and good, which is an ordinal form of data, the appropriate way of analyzing and presenting the outcomes was through descriptive statistics according to Nick (2007). He also stated that such a way of data representation is a way of quantitative data analysis. Consequently, the design of this inquiry can be claimed to be quantitative descriptive analysis through which the exact percentage of the participants' opinions regarding each item is presented.

3.2 Participants

Participants of this study were 60 English teachers, composed of 29 males (i.e. 48% of the teachers) and 31 females (i.e. 52% of the teachers) with the age range of 25 to 53 years, and a mean age of 39. Their teaching experiences ranged from 2 to 32 years with an average of 17. They were asked to carefully and honestly fill the online questionnaire of material evaluation adapted from Abdel Wahab (2013).

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3.3 Material

The textbook focused on throughout the present research was that of "Vision 3", which is a high school English textbook written by Moghaddam et al. (2018). The textbook includes a workbook, student book, audio CD, and also teacher's guide.

3.4 Instrument

A 40-item survey questionnaire specifically developed to evaluate textbooks was used to know teachers' perspectives on the new English textbook for the twelfth grade of high schools in Shahr-e Ghods, Shahriar, and Mallard English Group channel in Telegram, WhatsApp, and E-mail. The researchers turned Abdel Wahab's (2013) textbook evaluation checklist into an electronic questionnaire for the sake of the ease of data collection from a larger number of EFL teachers teaching at different high schools in different cities. The so-called textbooks' evaluation questionnaire consisted of two parts. The first part was designed to elicit some demographic information from the participants, including their age, gender, and teaching experience. The second part of the questionnaire included questions on the four main criteria of 1) Physical and utilitarian attributes; 2) efficient outlay of objectives and supplementary materials; 3) learning teaching content; and 4) language skills. The respondents were asked to put only a tick mark that represents their perceptions. In this study, a 3-points Likert scale (poor, satisfactory, and good) was utilized.

3.5 Data Collection

In order to evaluate the textbook from teachers' viewpoints, data were collected at the end of the educational year. In order to be better able to collect the necessary data, the researchers made an online questionnaire based on the original questionnaire adapted from Abdel Wahab (2013). Then, 60 experienced EFL teachers in Shahr-e Ghods, Shahriar, and Mallard English Group channels (Telegram, WhatsApp, and E-mail) were asked to fill the evaluation checklist. It took almost three weeks to gather the needed data. After collecting the data, the SPSS (Statistic Package for the Social Science) was utilized in the analysis section. For each criterion, the percentage of the participants' answers, mean, and standard deviation were depicted through percentage tables.

3.6 Data Analysis

In order to make sense of the data, that is, data analysis, the researchers enter all the participants' choices into the SPSS in the form of numbers according to their responses to the items of the questionnaire. Each item was then checked for the number of the participants who had chosen each of the three options of poor, satisfactory, and good. The results are reported in Tables 1-14 in the form of frequency and valid percent.

4. Results

4*.1 Demographic Characteristics of the Participants*

The participants of the current study were 60 teachers. The teachers were composed of 29 male (48.3%) and 31 female (51.7%) EFL teachers all of whom filled in the questionnaire. To describe the participants' responses to each item of the questionnaire, mean, standard deviation, and the percentage of each item were calculated the results of which are presented in some tables along with their detailed explanations. Tables 1 to 14 below are devoted to reporting the upshots.

4.2 Physical Attributes of the Textbook

To investigate the physical attributes of the book, the points are divided into three categories of general appearance, layout and design, and visuals each of which with some statements. The participants' perspectives about each statement are analyzed and the results are provided in Tables 1, 2, and 3. Besides, it has to be noted that all through the following tables F.R stands for the term "Frequency" and V.P stands for the term "Valid Percent."

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Table 1. Means, standard deviations, and percentages of the statements on the general appearance

	Mean	SD	Poor		Satisfactory		Good		N
			F.r	V.P	F.r	V.P	F.r	V.P	
1. The outside cover is informative and attractive.	.87	.56	14	23.3	40	66.7	6	10	60
2. The font size and type used in the textbook is appropriate.	1.75	.47	1	1.7	13	21.7	46	76.7	60
3. The textbook has sufficient number of pictures to make the situation more life-like.	1.52	.72	8	13.3	13	21.7	39	65	60

* F.r stands for Frequency.

** V.P stands for Valid Percent.

Upon checking item one in Table 1, it becomes clear that 14 teachers (23.3%) believed that the outside cover of the textbook is informative and attractive. Forty teachers (66.7%) said that the outside cover of the textbook was satisfactorily informative and attractive while only six teachers (i.e. 10%) stated that the quality of the so-called point was good. Considering the second item, there was only one teacher (i.e. 1.7%) who evaluated the font size and type used in the textbook as poor, 13 teachers (i.e. 21.7%) evaluated it as satisfactory, and the other 46 teachers (i.e. 76.7%) estimated it as good. Moreover, the textbook does not have a sufficient number of pictures to make the situation more life-like according to what eight teachers (i.e. 13.3%) stated. Moreover, the textbook has only a satisfactory number of pictures according to what 13 teachers (i.e. 21.75%) announced, and it has a good number of them as 39 teachers (i.e. 65%) declared.

Table 2. Means, standard deviations, and percentages of the statements on the layout and design

	Mean	SD	Poor		Satisfactory		Good		N
			F.r	V.P	F.r	V.P	F.r	V.P	
4. The textbook includes a detailed overview of the functions and structures that will be taught in each unit.	1.40	.76	10	16.7	16	26.7	34	56.7	60
5. The textbook includes a detailed overview of vocabulary that will be taught in each unit.	1.48	.65	5	8.3	21	35	34	56.7	60
6. The textbook is free of mistake.	.93	.71	17	28.3	30	50	13	21.7	60

There were ten teachers (i.e. 16.7%) who believed that the textbook poorly includes a detailed overview of the functions and structures that will be taught in each unit. Sixteen teachers (i.e. 26.7%), on the other hand, stated that it includes a satisfactory amount of them while the other 34 teachers (i.e. 56.7%) said that it involves a good amount of detailed overview of the functions and structures. The number of the teachers who believed in the poor inclusion of the detailed overview of vocabulary taught in each unit is 5 (i.e. 8.3%). There were 21 teachers (i.e. 35%) who agreed that the vocabulary load is satisfactory, and the rest of the teachers who were 34 (i.e. 56.7%) thought of the number of the vocabulary as good. In the idea of 17 teachers (i.e. 28.3%), the statement that "the textbook is free of mistake" can be estimated as poor, 30 (i.e. 50%) teachers evaluated it as satisfactory, and the other 13 teachers (i.e. 21.7%) believed in its goodness.

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Table 3. Means, standard deviations, and percentages of the statements on the visuals

	Mean	SD	Poor		Satisfactory		Good		N
			F.r	V.P	F.r	V.P	F.r	V.P	
7. The visuals are well produced, varied and attractive.	1.38	.76	10	16.7	17	28.3	33	55	60

The visuals are well-produced, varied, and attractive is a statement ten teachers (i.e. 16.7%) said is poorly correct, 17 teachers (i.e. 28.3%) said is satisfactory, and the other 33 teachers (i.e. 55%) believed is good.

4.3 Efficient Outlay of Objectives and Supplementary Materials

The second feature of the book checked through the questionnaire is that of efficient outlay of objectives and supplementary materials from two perspectives whose data are analyzed, and the outcomes are reported in Tables 4 and 5 below.

Table 4. Means, standard deviations, and percentages of the statements on the book objectives

	Mean	SD	Poor		Satisfactory		Good		N
			F.r	V.P	F.r	V.P	F.r	V.P	
8. The objectives are related to the learners' needs and interest.	1.18	.70	10	16.7	29	48.3	21	35	60
9. The objectives make a balance between the four main skills, listening, speaking, writing, and reading.	1.28	.80	13	21.7	17	28.3	30	50	60

The point that the objectives are related to the learners' needs and interest is a point ten teachers (i.e. 16.7%) said are poorly considered, 29 teachers (i.e. 48.3%) stated are satisfactorily taken into account, and 21 teachers (i.e. 35%) believed in their good quality. Thirteen (i.e. 21.7%) believed in the poorness of the statement that the objectives make a balance between the four main skills, listening, speaking, writing, and reading, whereas 17 teachers (i.e. 28.3%), said is satisfactory, and the rest 30 teachers (i.e. 50%) believed is good.

Table 5. Means, standard deviations, and percentages of the statements on the teaching aids

	Mean	SD	Poor		Satisfactory		Good		N
			F.r	V.P	F.r	V.P	F.r	V.P	
10. The activities allow students to talk more than teachers.	1.28	.76	11	18.3	21	35	28	46.7	60
11. Activities and exercises introduce the main principle of CLT.	1.32	.83	14	23.3	13	21.7	33	55	60
12. The activities used enable the learners to use English outside the classroom.	1.07	.80	17	28.3	22	36.7	21	35	60

Talking about the point that the activities allow students to talk more than teachers, 18.3% of the teachers (i.e. 11 teachers), believed that it is poorly taken into consideration, 35% (i.e. 21 teachers) believed is satisfactorily taken into account, and 46.7% (i.e. 28 teachers) said is taken into consideration to a good amount. Activities and exercises

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introduce the main principle of CLT is a statement announced as poor by 23.3% of the teachers (i.e. 14 teachers), satisfactory in the idea of 21.7% (i.e. 13 teachers), and good according to 55% (i.e. 33 teachers). Considering the power of the activities used to enable the learners to use English outside the classroom, 28.3% (i.e. 17 teachers) considered as poor, 36.7% (i.e. 22 teachers) regarded it as satisfactory, and the other 35%, (i.e. 21 teachers) as good.

4.4 Learning-Teaching Content

The next investigated dimension of the textbook is the learning-teaching content from three different perspectives and the upshots of the supposed investigation are provided in the following three tables.

Table 6. Means, standard deviations, and percentages of the statements on the subject and content

	Mean	SD	Poor		Satisfactory		Good		N
			F.r	V.P	F.r	V.P	F.r	V.P	
13. The textbook contains fun elements.	1.07	.86	20	33.3	16	26.7	24	40	60
14. The subject and content of the textbook is interesting, challenging and motivating.	1.08	.74	14	23.3	27	45	19	31.7	60
15. The topics provide a list of new or difficult words.	1.47	.65	5	8.3	22	36.7	33	55	60

Going through the details of the teachers' beliefs about whether the textbook contains fun elements, is poorly considered in the idea of 20 teachers (33.3 percent), satisfactory according to 16 teachers (26.7 percent), and good as 24 teachers (40 percent) stated. The subject and content of the textbook are interesting, challenging, and motivating is an item considered as poor by14 teachers (23.3 percent), as satisfactory by 27 teachers (45 percent), and as good by the other 19 teachers (31.7 percent). The topics provide a list of new or difficult words is regarded as poor by 5 teachers (8.3 percent), as satisfactory by 22 teachers (36.7 percent), and as good by 33 teachers (55 percent) who are, in fact, the majority of the teachers.

Table 7. Means, standard deviations, and percentages of the statements on the exercises

	Mean	SD	Poor		Satisfactory		Good		N
			F.r	V.P	F.r	V.P	F.r	V.P	
16. The exercises have clear instructions that explain how every exercise can be done.	1.58	.60	4	6.7	17	28.3	39	65	60
17. The exercises Tasks move from simple to complex.	1.43	.69	7	11.7	20	33.3	33	55	60
18. The exercises incorporate individual pair and group work.	1.42	.67	6	10	23	38.3	31	51.7	60
19. The textbook provides models for final achievement tests.	1.30	.80	13	21.7	16	26.7	31	51.7	60

The exercises have clear instructions that explain how every exercise can be done is poorly considered according to 6.7% of the teachers (four teachers), estimated as satisfactory by 28.3% of the teachers (17 teachers), and evaluated as good in the opinion of 65% of the teachers (39 teachers). Talking about whether the tasks move from simple to complex, it is a matter poorly taken into account by 11.7% of the teachers (7 teachers), satisfactorily considered according to 33.3% of the teachers (20 teachers), and well-considered as 55% of the teachers (33 teachers) stated.

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The exercises incorporate individual pair and group work is taken into consideration poorly as 10% of the teachers (six teachers) stated, satisfactorily according to what 38.3% of the teachers (23 teachers) announced, and well in the idea of 51.7% of the teachers (31 teachers). Approximately, 21.7% of the teachers (13 teachers) said that the textbook provides models for final achievement tests to a poor extent, 26.7% of the teachers (16 teachers) said is considered only satisfactorily, and the others, i.e. 51.7% of the teachers (31 teachers), believed is well taken into account.

Table 8. Means, standard deviations, and percentages of the statements on the social and cultural contexts

	Mean	SD	Poor		Satisfactory		Good		N
			F.r	V.P	F.r	V.P	F.r	V.P	
20. The content of the textbook is free from stereotypical images and information.	1.37	.73	9	15	20	33.3	31	51.7	60
21. The content presents different cultures.	.43	.72	42	70	10	16.7	8	13.3	60
22. The content discusses some well-known characters from different areas of the world.	.95	.72	17	28.3	29	48.3	14	23.3	60

The content of the textbook is free from stereotypical images and information is a matter which is poor due to what 15% (i.e. nine teachers) said, is satisfactory according to 33.3% (i.e. 20 teachers), and is good as 51.7% (i.e. 31 teachers) stated. The content presents different cultures well in the idea of13.3% (i.e. eight teachers), satisfactory as 16.7% (i.e. ten teachers) believed, and poor since 70% (i.e. 42 teachers) called it so. The content discusses some well-known characters from different areas of the world is a point considered as poor by 28.3% (i.e. 17 teachers), regarded as satisfactory according to 48.3% (i.e. 29 teachers), and thought as good by the other 23.3% (i.e. 14 teachers).

4.5 Language Skills

Language skills is another aspect of the textbook the researchers scrutinized using Mallahi and Afraz's (2018) questionnaire. The results of the so-called investigation are provided in Tables 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, and 14 below.

Table 9. Means, standard deviations, and percentages of the statements on the listening

	Mean	SD	Poor		Satisfactory		Good		**N**
			F.r	V.P	F.r	V.P	F.r	V.P	
23. The textbook has appropriate listening tasks with well-defined goals.	1.33	.79	12	20	16	26.7	32	53.3	60
24. The cassettes expose the students to the voices and pronunciation of the native speakers of English.	.77	.78	27	45	20	33.3	13	21.7	60

According to Table 9, the textbook has poor listening tasks with well-defined goals in 12 teachers' perspectives (i.e. 20 percent), contains satisfactory listening tasks and goals in 16 teachers' opinions (i.e. 26.7 percent), and includes good tasks and goals in 32 teachers' perspectives (i.e. 53.3 percent). Talking about whether the cassettes expose the students to the voices and pronunciation of the native speakers of English, 27 teachers (45 percent) said it is poor, 20 teachers (33.3 percent) believed it is satisfactory, and the other 13 teachers (21.7 percent) claimed it is good.

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Table 10. Means, standard deviations, and percentages of the statements on the speaking

	Mean	SD	Poor		Satisfactory		Good		N
			F.r	V.P	F.r	V.P	F.r	V.P	
25. Activities are developed to encourage student-student and student-teacher oral communication.	1.35	.79	12	20	15	25	33	55	60
26. There is sufficient material for spoken English (e.g. dialogues, role-plays, etc.) that help to deemphasize teacher's talk.	1.23	.83	15	25	16	26.7	29	48.3	60

Activities are well developed to encourage student-student and student-teacher oral communication according to 33 teachers (55 percent), only satisfactorily developed as 15 teachers (25 percent) stated, and poorly developed since 12 teachers (20 percent) announced it as being so. There is sufficient material for spoken English (e.g. dialogues, role-plays, etc.) that help to deemphasize teacher's talk is a statement considered as poor by 15 teachers (25 percent), regarded as satisfactory by 16 teachers (26.7 percent), and announced as good by 29 teachers (48.3 percent).

Table 11. Means, standard deviations, and percentages of the statements on the reading

	Mean	SD	Poor		Satisfactory		Good		N
			F.r	V.P	F.r	V.P	F.r	V.P	
27. Many of the reading passages are up-to-date, interesting and meaningful.	1.25	.70	9	15	27	45	24	40	60
28. The Length of the reading texts is appropriate.	1.55	.62	4	6.7	19	31.7	37	60.7	60

Table 11 shows that many of the reading passages are well up-to-date, interesting, and meaningful according to 24 teachers (40% of them), satisfactorily well up-to-date, interesting and meaningful due to what 27 teachers (45% of them) said, and poorly so as nine teachers (15% of them) stated. The length of the reading texts is not appropriate since four teachers (6.7% of them) said so, satisfactorily appropriate according to 19 teachers (31.7% of them), and well as 37 teachers (60.7% of them) believed.

Table 12. Means, standard deviations, and percentages of the statements on the writing

	Mean	SD	Poor		Satisfactory		Good		N
			F.r	V.P	F.r	V.P	F.r	V.P	
29. Some writings are easy for most of the students to deal with.	1.37	.75	10	16.7	18	30	32	53.3	60
30. Writings in the textbook are guided and controlled.	1.47	.70	7	11.7	18	30	35	58.3	60
31. Writing activities are suitable in terms of length, degree of accuracy, and amount of guidance.	1.47	.70	7	11.7	18	30	35	58.3	60

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According to the results reported in Table 12, some writings are not easy enough for most of the students to deal with according to 16.7 percent (i.e. 10 teachers), satisfactorily easy as announced by 30 percent (i.e. 18 teachers), and easy enough as 53.3 percent (i.e. 32 teachers) stated. The interesting point is that all the teachers had the same opinion about the two statements of "Writings in the textbook are guided and controlled" and "Writing activities are suitable in terms of length, degree of accuracy, and amount of guidance." That is to say, 11.7 percent (i.e. seven teachers) described the two points as poor, 30 percent (i.e. 18 teachers) labeled them as satisfactory, and the other 58.3 percent (i.e. 35 teachers) defined them as good.

Table 13. Means, standard deviations, and percentages of the statements on the vocabulary

	Mean	SD	Poor		Satisfactory		Good		N
			F.r	V.P	F.r	V.P	F.r	V.P	
32. The load (number of new words in each lesson) is appropriate to the linguistic level of students.	1.47	.70	7	11.7	18	30	35	58.3	60
33. The exercises for vocabulary are rich and adequate.	1.22	.76	12	20	23	38.3	25	41.7	60
34. There is specific method to teach new vocabulary.	1.15	.86	18	30	15	25	27	45	60
35. The sentences and examples use words that are known by learners.	1.40	.60	4	6.7	28	46.7	28	46.7	60

Considering whether the load (number of new words in each lesson) is appropriate to the linguistic level of students, 11.7 percent (i.e. seven teachers) pronounced it as poor, 18 percent (i.e. 30 teachers) categorized it as satisfactory, and the other 58.3 percent (i.e. 35 teachers) announced it as good. The exercises for vocabulary are not rich and adequate as 20 percent (i.e. 12 teachers) said, are rich to a satisfactory extent according to 38.3 percent (i.e. 23 teachers), and are rich enough as 41.7 percent (i.e. 25 teachers) stated.

Thirty percent (i.e. 18 teachers) said that there is not a specific method to teach new vocabulary, 25 percent (i.e. 15 teachers) alleged that there is only a method that can keep the teachers satisfied, and 45 percent (i.e. 27 teachers) believed that there is a good method available. The last statement about the vocabulary component of the textbook is that the sentences and examples use words that are known by learners. The point is that the statement is considered as poor by 6.7 percent (i.e. four teachers), as satisfactory by 46.7 percent (i.e. 28 teachers), and good by the other 46.7 percent (i.e. 28 teachers).

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Table 14. Means, standard deviations, and percentages of the statements on the grammar

	Mean	SD	Poor		Satisfactory		Good		N
			F.r	V.P	F.r	V.P	F.r	V.P	
36. The time allotted for teaching the material is sufficient.	1.45	.72	8	13.3	17	28.3	35	58.3	60
37. Grammar lessons are often derived from the listening and reading passages.	1.52	.62	4	6.7	21	35	35	58.3	60
38. The grammar examples are appropriate and interesting to the students' level.	1.47	.70	7	11.7	18	30	35	58.3	60
39. The grammar points are presented with brief and easy examples and explanations.	1.62	.55	2	3.3	19	31.7	39	65	60
40. Structures are designed to be taught inductively.	1.43	.64	5	8.3	24	40	31	51.7	60

Having a close look at Table 14 makes it clear that the time allotted for teaching the material is not sufficient enough as 13.3 percent (i.e. 8 teachers) stated, is satisfactorily sufficient according to 28.3 percent (i.e. 17 teachers), and sufficient enough as announced by 58.3 percent (i.e. 35 teachers). Talking about grammar lessons, 6.7 percent (i.e. four teachers) said that they are not derived from the listening and reading passages, 35 percent (i.e. 21 teachers) alleged they are derived from the so-called passages to some extent, and 58.3 percent (i.e. 35 teachers) believed they are often derived from the listening and reading passages.

The grammar examples are appropriate and interesting to the students' level is a statement evaluated as poor by 11.7 percent (i.e. seven teachers), as satisfactory by 30 percent (i.e. 18 teachers), and as good by 58.3 percent (i.e. 35 teachers). Moreover, 3.3 percent (i.e. two teachers) alleged that the grammar points are not presented with a brief and easy examples and explanations, 30 percent (i.e. 18 teachers) believed they are satisfactory, and the other 65 percent (i.e. 39 teachers) labeled them as good. Finally, 51.7 percent (i.e. 31 teachers) thought that structures are well designed to be taught inductively while 40 percent (i.e. 24 teachers) held that it is only satisfactorily so, and the rest of the teachers, i.e. 8.3 percent (i.e. 5 teachers) believed the design is poor.

5. Discussion

Since "Vision" (Alavimoghadam et al., 2018) has been compiled and added to the educational system a few years ago, there are not many studies conducted to evaluate the textbooks. To evaluate this book, the researchers considered one question which dealt with the teachers' attitude towards the book. To find the answer to the only question of the study, the book was investigated in four criteria (Appendix A). One of the most important starting points in evaluating any textbook is analyzing its general appearance. The result of the analysis revealed that teachers' perception of "Physical and Utilitarian Attributes" was positive in general. They mostly agreed with the font size and number of pictures to make the situation more life-like. Their positive answer confirmed the ideas of Cunningsworth and Tomlinson (as cited in Salehi & Amini, 2016) who emphasized a good balance between visual material and written text, Nunan (1999) who believed students' view of language is a combination of the way materials are organized and types of content and activities, and Sheldon (1988) who stressed the significance of mix of text and graphical material.

The results related to the layout and design of the book demonstrated that most of the participants responded to these aspects positively. They also agreed that the objectives of the material were well presented and organized. It can be claimed that their answers are in accordance with Garinger (2002) who holds that teachers want visually stimulating materials that are well organized and easy to follow, and therefore, matters such as layout, design, and organization should be taken into account. The results concerning this property are well confirmed by Pouranshirvani (2017b) whose investigation made it clear that the teachers were satisfied with the book's subject, content, exercises, and also the sections related to writing, vocabulary, grammar while they were dissatisfied with some points such as that the

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book does not include any cultural differences, different ways of communicating within different cultures, and different customs and traditions. Besides, the listening and pronunciation sections of the book were not satisfactory enough.

The second part of the questionnaire was an efficient outlay of objectives and supplementary materials. The results of the analysis revealed that teachers had a positive attitude to this part. The activities used in different parts of "Vision3" were analyzed in this part. Long (as cited in Litz, 2005) emphasizes the importance of this feature by arguing that student-student/social interaction will result in promoting learning. Concerning this aspect, teachers agreed upon the idea that "Vision3" is of a favorable status and provides a balance of variant activities that encourage students to practice communicatively. The findings are in line with the idea of Tomlinson (2003) about activities and tasks in textbooks generally and Pouranshirvani (2017b) in "Vision1" particularly.

Also, the variety of skills in the book was assessed. The results showed their agreement on the existence of an appropriate balance of four skills within different exercises. To them, it provides aids for the students to practice each skill in an integrative way along with other skills, hence, promoting students' interest in learning the language. In line with Pouranshirvani's claim (2017b), the findings concerning such a feature in material development are well supported by McDonough and Shaw (2012) who advocated that instructional materials should provide students with effective use of all four skills in the forms of authentic tasks to increase their motivation. They also gain support from Harmer (2007) who believed that skills need to be taught in an integrative way since in real communication, people employ language skills not in isolation, but in tandem.

Learning-teaching content is the third part of the questionnaire. Regarding the subject and content of the book, the teachers agreed that the book is realistic, challenging, and interesting concerning its subject and content. It provides students with sufficient variety that fulfills their needs resulting in increasing their motivation to learn the language. This result, in line with Pouranshirvani's idea (2017b), is supported by Richards (2001b) who insisted on the idea that the content of the textbooks should be sufficiently varied to meet different learning styles. Regarding the textbook's activities and tasks, the teachers' positive answers were in line with Richards (2001) elaborated that textbook's tasks should be flexible and suit students with different learning styles. So, they did mainly agree that there are sufficient instructions to explain how the exercise should be done.

In regard to the importance of socio-cultural factors in learning a foreign language, Williams (1994) argued that "learning a foreign language is far more than simply learning skills, or a system of rules, or a grammar; it involves an alteration in self-image, the adoption of new social and cultural behaviors and therefore has a significant impact on the social nature of the learner" (p.77). According to Khodabandeh and Mombini (2018), there are many issues to be considered by the teachers when using textbooks with cultural content like socio-cultural factors, students' requirements, stereotypes, generalizations, and intercultural interactions. But the findings of the current study showed that the teachers' attitudes were poor about item 21. It means that the content of the book does not deal with those L2 socio-cultural factors that create positive attitudes towards the target language community on the part of learners to learn their language. This result, in line with Asadi and Kiany (2014) who found that the culture of English language countries is ignored in the new textbook.

Also, it is in line with Seddigh et al. (as cited in Asadi & Kiany, 2014) who considered one of the pitfalls of the new textbook as teaching English with the Persian culture. The fourth part of the questionnaire was about language skills applied in this book. The teachers' attitude was almost positive about the listening skill. They believed that the textbook contains listening materials accompanied by tasks that help comprehension. The results showed that the materials for speaking skill are sufficient and related activities encourage students to oral communication. The findings showed that reading passages were up-to-date, meaningful, and interesting. Also, their length was appropriate.

The interesting point about writing skill is that the teachers had the same positive opinion about controlled and guided writing that are suitable in terms of length and degree of accuracy in the book. Teachers had positive attitudes about the vocabulary load in the reading passages and exercises with rich vocabulary. Also, the criteria in the grammar part were positive from the teachers' point of view. This results, in line with Thompson (1996) and Wu (2008), the two most common misconceptions of CLT are that it does not teach grammar and that it means teaching only speaking (Dailey, 2010). However, this is illogical since grammar is necessary for efficient communication and communication can be learned not only through speaking, but reading and writing as well (Dailey, 2010). More importantly, grammatical competence is an essential component of communicative competence which is an ultimate goal of communicative language teaching (Littlewood, 2013). These results are in line with the idea of scholars such as Salehi

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and Amini (2016) who argued that materials should enable the students in four skills (listening, speaking, reading, & writing).

6. Conclusion

The most important goal of this English book series was to develop learners' communicative competence, and therefore, the researchers set the present study based on CLT teaching approach. To this end, the following research question was posed: Q) To what extent does "Vision 3" enjoy the features of a CLT-based syllabus? Putting the outcomes derived from analyzing the data together, it can be said that "Vision 3" is based on the CLT approach since it tries to develop learners' communicative abilities, and also integrates the four language skills, teaches grammar inductively, and uses different communicative tasks to promote learning by doing. Its shortcoming, however, is its lack of target culture in the content. So, it needs some modifications to cover target language cultural factors. The results can guide the teachers, syllabus designers, textbook writers, evaluators, and curriculum designers in their planning and designing of future textbooks. As a suggestion for further study, only the teachers took part in this research and evaluated the book. It is recommended to run other inquiries investigating other features of the textbook based on the learners and learning needs in the EFL situation of Iran. It is also suggested to carry out other investigations comparing and contrasting "Vision 3" with other books in the series.

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Appendix A

Textbook Evaluation Form

Dear colleagues, please provide the following information.

1) Gender: male..... female.....

2) Teaching experience: -------- years

This study was conducted to find out the overall attitudes of high school teachers about evaluation of "Vision 3".

According to your personal idea, please rate the following items related to different features of the English textbook. Please choose one of the choices for each item.

Please Note: Poor = 0 Satisfactory =1 Good = 2

Physical attributes

A. General appearance

1. The outside cover is informative and attractive.

2. The font size and type used in the textbook is appropriate.

3. The textbook has sufficient number of pictures to make the situation more life-liked

B. Layout and design

4. The textbook includes a detailed overview of the functions and structures that will be taught in each unit.

5. The textbook includes a detailed overview of vocabulary that will be taught in each unit.

6. The textbook is free of mistake.

C. Visuals

7. The visuals are well produced, varied and attractive.

Efficient outlay of objectives and supplementary materials

A. Book objectives

8. The objectives are related to the learners' needs and interest.

9. The objectives make a balance between the four main skills, listening, speaking, writing, and reading

B. Teaching aids

10. The activities allow students to talk more than teachers.

11. Activities and exercises introduce the main principle of CLT

12. The activities used enable the learners to use English outside the classroom.

Learning-teaching content

A. Subject and content

13. The textbook contains fun elements

14. The subject and content of the textbook is interesting, challenging and motivating.

15. The topics provide a list of new or difficult words.

B. Exercises

16. The exercises have clear instructions that explain how every exercise can be done.

17. The exercises Tasks move from simple to complex.

18. The exercises incorporate individual pair and group work.

19. The textbook provides models for final achievement tests.

C. Social and cultural contexts

20. The content of the textbook is free from stereotypical images and information.

21. The content presents different cultures.

22. The content discusses some well -known characters from different areas of the world.

Language skills

A. Listening

23. The textbook has appropriate listening tasks with well-defined goals.

24. The cassettes expose the students to the voices and pronunciation of the native speakers of English.

B. Speaking

25. Activities are developed to encourage student-student and student-teacher oral communication.

26. There is sufficient material for spoken English (e.g. dialogues, role-plays, etc.) that help to de- emphasize teacher's talk.

C. Reading

27. Many of the reading passages are up-to-date, interesting and meaningful

28. The Length of the reading texts is appropriate.

D. Writing

29. Some writings are easy for most of the students to deal with

30. Writings in the textbook are guided and controlled.

31. Writing activities are suitable in terms of length, degree of accuracy, and amount of guidance.

E. Vocabulary

32. The load (number of new words in each lesson) is appropriate to the linguistic level of students.

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33. The exercises for vocabulary are rich and adequate.
34. There is specific method to teach new vocabulary.
35. The sentences and examples use words that are known by learners.

F. Grammar

36. The time allotted for teaching the material is sufficient.
37. Grammar lessons are often derived from the listening and reading passages.
38. The grammar examples are appropriate and interesting to the students' level.
39. The grammar points are presented with brief and easy examples and explanations.
40. Structures are designed to be taught inductively

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