International Journal of Asian Social Science

A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF ENGLISH TEXTBOOKS USED IN IRANIAN INSTITUTES

Parviz Alavinia

Department of English Language and Literature, Faculty of Humanities and Letters, Urmia University Urmia, Iran

Mansoor Siyadat

Department of English Language and Literature, Urmia Branch, Islamic Azad University, Urmia, Iran

ABSTRACT

Since most class activities revolve around the utilization of textbook, selecting an appropriate basis for teaching is one of the most important decisions a teacher is liable to make in shaping the content and nature of teaching and learning. The current probe appraised the practicality of a number of prevalent English course books in the Iranian context. To this aim, a total of 320 male learners from a range of different institutes across West Azerbaijan were asked to voice their opinions on various aspects of four English textbooks, i.e. American English File 1, American Cutting Edge 1, American Headway 1, and New Interchange 1. In line with the gained results, the researchers concluded that through using a convenient website related to a specific course book, the learners would be highly motivated and enjoy the English language learning process; indeed, the newly published book American English File 1 – with its up-to-date materials, beautiful coverage and pictures and a convenient website – was more preferred than its three counterparts by the learners participating in this research.

Key Words: American cutting edge 1, American english file 1, American headway 1, Iranian institutes, New interchange 1, Textbook evaluation

INTRODUCTION

"While the quality of ESL reading textbooks has improved dramatically in recent years, the process of selecting an appropriate text has not become any easier for most teachers and administrators" (Wen *et al.*, 2011). As one of the three fundamental facets of any educational context (the other two being learner and teacher), textbooks have always been regarded as a crucial basis underlying teachers' decision making on what to teach and how to teach, and for learners' general achievement. Thus, the selection of appropriate textbooks has been among the most important issues which have preoccupied the teachers' minds since long ago. To adopt Nunan (1988) words, materials and course books are among the most fundamental components "within the curriculum and more than

simply lubricate the wheels of learning. At their best, they provide concrete models for desirable classroom practice. They act as curriculum models and at their very best they fulfill a teacher development role" (p. 98).

In Iranian context, due to the ever-growing crave particularly among the young learners to acquire English, notions like textbook selection and evaluation have turned to fundamental everyday matters in both academic and non-academic arenas. Unlike universities and academes which follow a partially fixed schedule and hence use somewhat predetermined textbooks, in line with the general guidelines provided to them on the part of state-wide curricula, institutes and language centers in Iran enjoy a higher degree of versatility in their use of instructional materials. Therefore, based on the objectives stipulated by different institutes, a wide variety of adopted, adapted or purpose-designed materials are utilized by diverse language centers.

Faced with this vast multiplicity and diversity of English textbooks being taught across varied institutes, the researchers in the current study deemed it unfeasible to go about a fully comprehensive evaluation of all available textbooks taught for different levels of proficiency at disparate institutes across the country. Accordingly, only the elementary manuscripts of four fairly recent textbooks, i.e. *American English File 1* (first edition), *New Interchange 1*(third edition), *American Cutting Edge 1* (first edition) and *American Headway 1* (first edition) were chosen for evaluation, owing to the salience of elementary level at which learners make their first contact with a foreign language. As Palmer (1992) states, "if we take care of the elementary stages, the advanced stages will take care of themselves" (p.13).

In tandem with the main tenets of the current scrutiny the following questions were formulated:
1) What do male Iranian EFL institute learners think about the structure and contents of their textbook?
2) What are the strong and weak aspects of the textbook?
3) How do male Iranian EFL institute learners imagine the ideal textbook?

LITERATURE REVIEW

"Textbooks provide novice teachers with guidance in course and activity design; it assures a measure of structure, consistency, and logical progression in a class" (Wen *et al.*, 2011). Among the advantages using a textbook might provide for the learning context, Graves (2000) refers to the provision of a course syllabus, security for the students, ready-made material for teachers, as well as a firm basis for assessing students' learning, supporting materials which help facilitate the instruction task, and consistency within a program across a given level. Nevertheless, using course books, as Graves (2000) contends, might also bring about a number of setbacks among which he mentions the mismatch between the content and the learners' abilities, lack of attention toward all the essential components of language, insufficiency of the activities provided, inclusion of lockstep sequence and boring activities, use of outdated material and inappropriate timetable for course

completion. In this section, the authors are after providing a general overview of some of the recent empirical studies performed on textbook evaluation. To provide for a better organization of the research projects referred to, they have been put in the chronological order. In an early study on the implications of textbook evaluation for teachers, Burden (2008) maintains that even though evaluation might be "intended for formative development, many teachers do not gain any new knowledge as they question both the value of the information received and the overall content validity of evaluations as they are cross-curricular and used in all courses." It is, then, argued "evaluation should draw distinction between prescriptive, contextual, summative evaluation and collaborative approaches that show the richness and diversity of teaching while giving learners as well as ELT teachers more voice" Cited in Wen *et al.* (2011).

In another scrutiny, Sahragard *et al.* (2008) cast a critical look at the practicality of the third edition of New Interchange series. The results of their evaluation urged them to claim that despite its manifold positive aspects, the said course book suffers from a number of downsides, including the insufficiency of attention toward the role of learners' sensory experiences in the process of learning cited in (Alemi and Sadehvandi, 2012). In a survey over the usefulness of two ELT textbooks entitled *opportunities* and *New English File*, Kayapinar (2009) drew on the 134 teachers' views concerning the aforesaid textbooks. The final analysis of the gained results revealed the instructors' discontent with these two course books mainly in terms of their lack of adequacy for meeting the learners' needs and interests cited in (Alemi and Sadehvandi, 2012).

Tok (2010) went about the evaluation of another ELT textbook, known as *Spot On*, which is utilized in primary public schools in Turkey. To conduct the research, initially 46 English teachers were randomly chosen by the researcher, and then a five-point Likert type questionnaire was disseminated among them. The practicality of the aforementioned textbook was judged in terms of a number of salient features such as its tasks and activities, design and layout, language type, content and subject. Based on the obtained results, this course book was found not to be sufficient enough in addressing the learners' real needs. Conducting a post-use textbook evaluation with local teachers within the Hong Kong ELT context. in their evaluation of four ELT textbooks, namely *Top Notch, Interchange, Headway*, and *On your mark*, at the elementary level of proficiency, Raseks *et al.* (2010) resorted to Mcdonough and Shaw's internal and external evaluation criteria. In keeping with the findings of the study, several pros and cons were reported for each of the four series. Yet, the privileges ascribed to Top Notch outweighed those reported for the other three textbooks.

Highlighting the setbacks existing in the previous checklists in terms of issues such as reliability, validity and practicality, Mukundan. *et al.* (2011) offered their own version of textbook evaluation checklist which, as they claimed, was intended to alleviate the pitfalls prevailing with the former checklists. Making use of an in-depth evaluative criteria composed of both whilst-use and post-use phases, Nahrkhalaji (2012) went about mentioning some of the overriding merits and demerits of SLA textbooks. This study concluded with some guidelines for teachers regarding the adaptation

and adoption of teaching materials, as well as some recommendations concerning the process of development, evaluation, and application of language learning textbooks and materials.

In an attempt to scrutinize the pragmatic and communicative adequacy of New Interchange series in the Iranian ELT context, Soleimani and Dabbaghi (2012) administered a discourse completion test to 50 upper intermediate Iranian learners who had completed their studies with these books. Indeed, what these researchers strived to find was gauging the effect of these books on the learners' skills in coping with different interactive needs in varied real-life contexts. In line with the gained results, they held that the books had been practical in providing the learners with ample pragmatic input, and had prepared them well for dealing with diverse interactive needs in the society.

Finally, in another recent textbook evaluation project, Alemi and Sadehvandi (2012) conducted a probe into the efficacy of *Pacesetter* Series at four proficiency levels (starter, elementary, pre-intermediate, and intermediate). To this end, they gathered 64 EFL teachers' ratings on the practicality of the series through the administration of a questionnaire. Based on the findings, the fruitfulness of the series in meeting the communicative needs of learners was substantiated. Yet, the partial ignorance of speaking skill and the inclusion of extensive fragments from Western and European culture were unanimously underscored by the participants as the negative aspects of the said textbooks for Iranian learners.

METHOD

Participants

A total of 320 male learners participated in this study. The participants came from a range of different institutes across West Azerbaijan. Indeed, the target population of the study was quite diverse in terms of the participants' places of origin, in that a number of different cities were involved including Mohabad, Nagadeh, Bookan , Oshanavieh and Piranshahr. The required data were amassed through the administration of a questionnaire. The following table shows the number of the participants according to the specific textbooks they were studying:

Table-1. Number of Participants Based on the Specific Textbooks Used

The textbook	Number of the participants
American English file 1 (first edition)	85
American cutting Edge 1 (first edition)	75
Interchange 1 (third edition)	80
American Headway 1(first edition)	80

Instrumentation

Some of the questions of the Textbook Evaluation Tool (TET) were adopted from Cunningsworth (1995) checklist for this study. Textbook Evaluation Tool includes 50 criteria in 14 categories among which the researchers selected content, grammar, vocabulary, phonology, language skills, methodology, study skills, visuals, supplementary materials, content selection, grading and

recycling. The evaluation tool was used to show the participants' points of views regarding the textbooks studied for this survey. Furthermore, a four point Likert-type scale, ranging from 1 to 4, was used to show the participants' levels of agreement with a list of statements. Also, there were two open-ended sections in which the participants had the opportunity to write their own comments about the specific textbook. Participation in the survey and completion of the questionnaire was entirely voluntary. The time required to complete the questionnaire was approximately 25 minutes.

Data Analysis

The data from the questionnaire were computed on a percentile rank. The Statistical Package for Social Sciences was used to analyze the data collected for this study. Actually, the data were initially entered onto an excel spreadsheet, using variable labels and values. The excel file was then imported into SPSS and a master data file was built.

RESULTS

Tabulated Findings for All Questionnaire Items

The results of the survey seeking the learners' attitudes toward each of the four textbooks are presented in this section. To ease the process of reading, the outcomes gained for each of the survey questions (SQs) are reported in a separate table.

SQ1: *The selected topics are familiar to the learners.*

Based on the participants' reported views regarding this aspect of the textbooks, it seems that all four groups are rather positive about the topics incorporated in each of the four books.

Table-2. Participants' Attitudes Regarding SQ1

Which textbook?	1. The selected topics are familiar to the learners.				Total
	Agree	Partly agree	Partly disagree	Disagree	
American English File 1	73	10	2	---	85
American Cutting Edge 1	62	11	2	---	75
Interchange 1	65	10	5	---	80
American Headway 1	60	10	4	6	80
Total	259	41	13	6	320

SQ2: *The selected topics enhance learners' motivation.*

As is seen in Table 3, all four groups of participants showed a positive feeling about the enhancement of their motivation for learning English through the use of each of the textbooks.

Table-3. Participants' Attitudes Regarding SQ2

Which textbook?	2.The selected topics enhanced learner's motivation				Total
	Agree	Partly agree	Partly disagree	Disagree	
American English File 1	79	6	---	---	85
American Cutting Edge 1	70	4	1	---	75
Interchange 1	72	4	4	---	80
American Headway 1	65	5	3	7	80
Total	286	19	8	7	320

SQ3: *The topics and themes in the textbook are related to learners' needs and interests.*

All the learners' answers to this survey question belonged to the first two categories (Agree and Partly agree), except for *American Headway 1*. Based on the researchers' personal experience with the four textbooks, this result was not unexpected. The themes and topics in *American Headway 1*, especially the pictures in the book are out of date and they portray some photos of 20 to 30 years ago.

Table-4. Participants' Attitudes Regarding SQ3

Which textbook?	2. The topics and themes in the textbook are related to learners' needs and interests.				Total
	Agree	Partly agree	Partly disagree	Disagree	
American English File 1	74	11	---	---	85
American Cutting Edge 1	70	5	---	---	75
Interchange 1	65	5	10	---	80
American Headway 1	10	15	---	55	80
Total	221	36	10	55	320

SQ4: *Pedagogic texts and dialogs include new vocabulary and grammatical structures.*

Like the previous survey questions, most of the answers were spread among the first two options. This is indicative of the fact that the designers of the textbooks have paid close attention to this point and the grammatical points and new words have been brought in the conversations and reading texts.

Table-5. Participants' Attitudes Regarding SQ4

Which textbook?	4.Pedagogic texts and dialogs included new vocabulary and grammatical structure				Total
	Agree	Partly agree	Partly disagree	Disagree	
American English File 1	70	10	5	---	85
American Cutting Edge 1	66	8	1	---	75
Interchange 1	60	12	8	---	80
American Headway 1	61	13	6	---	80
Total	257	43	20	---	320

SQ5: *The materials in the book are up-to-date.*

The answers for this part were in some ways different.

The learners of *American English File 1* and *American cutting Edge 1* mostly ticked the first two options, while the other two groups focused mainly on the third and the last option. It shows that the content of these textbooks needs to be edited and replaced by newer subjects. For example, for natural disasters they can bring up materials about very recent phenomena, like Tsunami. Also, for the pictures of gadgets they can put the pictures of latest brands in their books to absorb the attention of the learners and make them more interested in subjects they are studying.

Table-6. Participants' Attitudes Regarding SQ5

Which textbook?	5. The materials in the book are up-to – date				Total
	Agree	Partly agree	Partly disagree	Disagree	
American English File 1	68	12	5	---	85

American Cutting Edge 1	70	4	---	1	75
Interchange 1	15	14	40	11	80
American Headway 1	10	8	52	10	80
Total	163	38	97	22	320

SQ6: *The paradigm used to introduce grammatical rules, is clear and simple.*

All of the participants' answers to this question centered around the first and second option for all of the textbooks. It seems that the learners are satisfied with the grammatical explanations of the textbooks. Thus, it appears that the grammatical points have been presented inductively in these text books and the examples sound interesting for inferring the rules.

Table-7. Participants' Attitudes Regarding SQ6

Which textbook?	6. The paradigm used to introduce grammatical rules, is clear and simple.				Total
	Agree	Partly agree	Partly disagree	Disagree	
American English File 1	70	15	---	---	85
American Cutting Edge 1	67	8	---	---	75
Interchange 1	68	12	---	---	80
American Headway 1	65	15	---	---	80
Total	270	50	---	---	320

SQ7: *New lexical items appear in the following units.*

For this alternative again all participants were found to have chosen the first two categories which confirm their positive views.

Table-8. Participants' Attitudes Regarding SQ7

Which textbook?	7. New lexical items appear in the following units.				Total
	Agree	Partly agree	Partly disagree	Disagree	
American English File 1	76	9	---	---	85
American Cutting Edge 1	69	6	---	---	75
Interchange 1	72	8	---	---	80
American Headway 1	70	10	---	---	80
Total	287	33	---	---	320

SQ8: *There is software for pronunciation practice.*

Along with the day to day progress of technology, it's easy and convenient to design softwares for improving the pronunciation of the learners. The format of the exercises can be of an interactive nature, in which the learners can record their voices and compare them with the original conversation in the book. By doing this, they will receive feedback about their correct pronunciation of the words and phrases. In view of the above-mentioned verities, it seems that the learners have felt this pitfall in textbooks and hence all their answers to this item concentrated on the last options. In effect, with the mere exception of *American English file 1*, which encompasses a number of interactive and amusing web-based exercises, the other three course books suffer from this drawback.

Table-9. Participants' Attitudes Regarding SQ8

Which textbook?	SQ8: There is software for pronunciation practice.				Total
	Agree	Partly agree	Partly disagree	Disagree	
American English File 1	---	---	---	85	85
American Cutting Edge 1	---	---	---	75	75
Interchange 1	---	---	---	80	80
American Headway 1	---	---	---	80	80
Total	---	---	---	320	320

SQ9: *The textbook uses authentic listening and speaking materials.*

The listening and speaking materials in the textbooks are well-designed, so it was predictable to see the learners tick the first two alternatives.

Table-10. Participants' Attitudes Regarding SQ9

Which textbook?					Total
	Agree	Partly agree	Partly disagree	Disagree	
American English File 1	65	15	5	---	85
American Cutting Edge 1	63	10	2	---	75
Interchange 1	60	10	10	---	80
American Headway 1	61	9	10	---	80
Total	249	44	27	---	320

SQ10: *The learners are encouraged to take some degree of responsibility for their learning.*

A good course book is designed in a way that the learners can assume the major role for acquiring language and the role of the teachers should be reduced to that of facilitator of the learning process. Since there are a lot of grammar exercises in *American Headway 1*, it seems that they call for a sufficient amount of participation on the part of the teacher, and the learners have a less active role in the classroom. That is why most of the learners of that textbook focused on the last two options. But the other three groups had a positive view about their role for learning the language. Therefore, their answers concentrated on the first two options.

Table-11. Participants' Attitudes Regarding SQ10

Which textbook?	SQ10: The learners are encouraged to take some degree of responsibility for their learning.				Total
	Agree	Partly agree	Partly disagree	Disagree	
American English File 1	66	14	5	---	85
American Cutting Edge 1	60	10	5	---	75
Interchange 1	62	13	5	---	80
American Headway 1	---	10	5	15	80
Total	188	47	70	15	320

SQ11: *The textbook is conductive to autonomous learning.*

Since English is a foreign language in Iran and the learners in most Iranian districts have almost no opportunity to speak with the native speakers outside the classroom, and the process of English language teaching and learning is just limited to the classroom, it is expected that textbooks cannot

be utilized by learners with ease, and they need to get help and guidance from teachers. Thus, the majority of learners chose the last two options and they showed that none of the textbooks are conducive to autonomous learning.

Table-12. Participants' Attitudes Regarding SQ11

| Which textbook? | SQ11: The textbook is conductive to autonomous learning. | | | | Total |
	Agree	Partly agree	Partly disagree	Disagree	
American English File 1	5	5	10	65	85
American Cutting Edge 1	4	3	23	45	75
Interchange 1	6	2	22	50	80
American Headway 1	5	6	19	50	80
Total	20	16	74	210	320

SQ12: *The visuals are reasonably well-produced and attractive.*

Beautiful pictures and videos can attract the learners as they pay more attention to pretty and attractive scenes and pictures with the combination of beautiful colors. *American English File 1* has got the most beautiful pictures and this fact is perceivable form the answers of the learners all of whom checked the first option on the checklist. Unlike *American English file 1*, in *American Headway 1*, there are a lot of pictures that cannot absorb today's learners and hence need to be completely revised and replaced by newer pictures and graphics. Thus, most of the learners of *American Headway 1* concentrated on the last two options; whereas the learners of the other two textbooks, i.e. *American cutting Edge 1* and *New Interchange 1* had a more positive view about the visuals in their textbook.

Table-13. Participants' Attitudes Regarding SQ12

| Which textbook? | SQ12:The visuals are reasonably well produced and attractive | | | | Total |
	Agree	Partly agree	Partly disagree	Disagree	
American English File 1	85	---	---	---	85
American Cutting Edge 1	70	5	---	---	75
Interchange 1	85	12	7	---	80
American Headway 1	---	10	55	15	80
Total	220	27	62	15	320

SQ13: *The text book provides communicative exercises that enable learners to do their communicative tasks in real life situations.*

All of the textbooks were found to be well-designed in this regard, as they allowed the learners to copy the different tasks in some real life situations. Particularly, the newer course books, i.e. *American English File* and *American cutting Edge* were thought to be more fruitful in this respect since they provided plenty of authentic materials and exercises. Most of the answers for this part focused on the first two options, which can be taken as evidence for the claim that learners are satisfied with the communicative tasks and exercises in their textbook.

Table-14. Participants' Attitudes Regarding SQ13

Which textbook?	SQ13: The text book provides communicative exercises that enable learners to do their communicative tasks in real life situations.				Total
	Agree	Partly agree	Partly disagree	Disagree	
American English File 1	73	10	2	---	85
American Cutting Edge 1	70	---	5	---	75
Interchange 1	70	10	---	---	80
American Headway 1	65	12	3	---	80
Total	278	32	10	---	320

SQ14: *The posters and flashcards accompanying the book are attractive and suitable.*

Unfortunately none of the textbooks have got flashcards and posters, and this can be taken as one of the weak points for all of the textbooks mentioned in this study. Other recently utilized textbooks such as *Top Notch* include a separate book for teachers named *Copy and Go* which includes interesting pictures, which can be employed to activate the visual memory of their learners in the best manner. Accordingly, it is predictable that all of the answers are liable to fall on the last option (see Table 15).

Table-15. Participants' Attitudes Regarding SQ14

Which textbook?	SQ14: The posters and flashcards accompanying the book are attractive and suitable.				Total
	Agree	Partly agree	Partly disagree	Disagree	
American English File 1	---	---	---	85	85
American Cutting Edge 1	---	---	---	75	75
Interchange 1	---	---	---	80	80
American Headway 1	---	---	---	80	80
Total	---	---	---	320	320

SQ15: *Item selection suits the level of the course.*

Most of the candidates in the current research study chose the first option for this survey question and it reveals that they had no problem with the item selection in their textbook.

Table-16. Participants' Attitudes Regarding SQ15

Which textbook?	SQ15: Item selection suits the level of the course.				Total
	Agree	Partly agree	Partly disagree	Disagree	
American English File 1	69	11	5	---	85
American Cutting Edge 1	65	5	5	---	75
Interchange 1	63	12	5	---	80
American Headway 1	66	10	2	2	80
Total	263	38	17	2	320

SQ16: *The number of the exercises in the workbook is suitable.*

Some parts of the workbooks of *American Headway 1* and *American cutting Edge 1* have been supported by an Audio CD and it can be regarded as one of the advantages of these textbooks. Yet, the learners ticked the first two options for all of the textbooks and it reveals their positive view about the textbooks.

Table-17. Participants' Attitudes Regarding SQ16

| Which textbook? | SQ16: The number of the exercises in the workbook is suitable. | | | | Total |
	Agree	Partly agree	Partly disagree	Disagree	
American English File 1	70	15	---	---	85
American Cutting Edge 1	65	10	---	---	75
Interchange 1	58	22	---	---	80
American Headway 1	66	14	---	---	80
Total	259	61	---	---	320

SQ17: *An interesting video activity supports each unit.*

Although in the videos of *American English File 1* and *American cutting Edge 1* you can find very new subjects and materials, the learners of the other two textbooks, i.e. *American Headway 1* and *New Interchange 1* didn't show such a positive view about their textbooks.

Table-18. Participants' Attitudes Regarding SQ17

| Which textbook? | SQ17: An interesting video activity supports each unit. | | | | Total |
	Agree	Partly agree	Partly disagree	Disagree	
American English File 1	66	14	5	---	85
American Cutting Edge 1	60	10	5	---	75
Interchange 1	4	16	56	14	80
American Headway 1	10	6	20	44	80
Total	140	36	86	58	320

SQ18: *Convenient software accompanies the students' book with different formats of questions related to each unit.*

Nowadays you can find a PC or a laptop in every house and by taking advantage of this asset in designing software for additional exercises in different formats like multiple choice, fill-in-the-blank, matching, etc. the learners are given the opportunity to practice more with the materials of a specific unit. Most of the learners like working with the computer, through which they can make more extensive use of their visual and auditory memory. Unfortunately, there is no software available for all textbooks mentioned above. As a consequence, most of the answers to this item concentrated on the last two options, with the mere exception of *American English File 1*, which benefits from a convenient website, where one can find a variety of exercises.

Table-19. Participants' Attitudes Regarding SQ18

| Which textbook? | SQ18: Convenient software accompanies the student's book with different formats of questions related to each unit. | | | | Total |
	Agree	Partly agree	Partly disagree	Disagree	
American English File 1	70	10	---	5	85
American Cutting Edge 1	---	---	---	75	75
Interchange 1	---	---	---	80	80
American Headway 1	---	---	---	80	80
Total	70	10	---	240	320

SQ19: *There are some techniques and procedures for retrieving the materials of each unit, like songs, games, etc.*

Unlike the other three textbooks, each unit of *American English file* includes a song using the vocabulary and expressions of that unit. The learners, especially the teenagers, are a great fan of music and games. By playing some music whose lyrics are related to that specific unit, they can have fun and enjoy the materials; and by repeating the songs, they can remember those materials for a longer period of time. Thus, *American English File 1* learners mostly focused on the first option while the other groups opted for the third and fourth options.

Table-20. Participants' Attitudes Regarding SQ19

Which textbook?	19. There are some techniques and procedures for the retrieving of the materials of each unit, like: songs, games , etc.				Total
	Agree	Partly agree	Partly disagree	Disagree	
American English File 1	79	6	---	---	85
American Cutting Edge 1	10	15	15	35	75
Interchange 1	12	13	25	30	80
American Headway 1	10	17	15	38	80
Total	111	51	55	103	320

SQ20: *The text book has grouping strategies: individual, pair, group and team work.*

Since every language is learnt by interaction, working in groups and pairs helps learners receive ample peer feedback. All four textbooks involved in the present study had some parts as pair work or group work, so the learners selected the first two options on the checklist.

Table-21. Participants' Attitudes Regarding SQ20

Which textbook?	20. The textbook has grouping strategies: individual, pair, group and team work.				Total
	Agree	Partly agree	Partly disagree	Disagree	
American English File 1	73	12	---	---	85
American Cutting Edge 1	69	6	---	---	75
Interchange 1	70	10	---	---	80
American Headway 1	73	7	---	---	80
Total	285	35	---	---	320

SQ21: *The grammar is taught in context, spiraling activities.*

When desiring to elicit the learners' ideas about grammar, one might notice that most of the learners don't like to work with grammar deductively. The learners are thought to learn the grammatical points by themselves when the instructor provides them with a lot of examples. Therefore, inductive method is likely to be more welcomed by the learners. Teaching grammar in context and repeating and reviewing the structures in their lessons help the learners acquire the structures much better and automatically use them in their speaking or writing. In this regard, the learners of all four textbooks had a positive view about the grammar used in their textbook.

Table-22. Participants' Attitudes Regarding SQ21

Which textbook?	21. The grammar taught in context, spiraling activities.				Total
	Agree	Partly agree	Partly disagree	Disagree	
American English File 1	70	5	6	4	85
American Cutting Edge 1	60	5	2	8	75
Interchange 1	70	2	---	8	80
American Headway 1	66	8	6	---	80
Total	266	20	14	20	320

SQ22: *The reading activities are presented with pre-reading, reading and post reading activities.*

For a better understanding of the reading texts, the learners need a kind of warm-up to be prepared enough for the main reading. In all of the textbooks, there are pre-reading activities in the form of questions and discussions. There are also post-reading sections for further exercises and checking the understanding of the learners. Hence, as expected, the answers fell on the first two options.

Table-23. Participants' Attitudes Regarding SQ22

Which textbook?	22. The reading activities are presented with pre – reading, reading and post – reading activities.				Total
	Agree	Partly agree	Partly disagree	Disagree	
American English File 1	70	15	---	---	85
American Cutting Edge 1	75	---	---	---	75
Interchange 1	66	14	---	---	80
American Headway 1	60	20	---	---	80
Total	271	49	---	---	320

SQ23: *There is a gradual progression of the writing tasks.*

At the end of each unit of the textbooks, there is a writing task about different subjects. A highly demanding productive skill, writing requires adequate background knowledge about a specific theme, a prerequisite which all designers of these four textbooks seemed to have taken into account and catered for through the provision of ample preparatory steps. Consequently, most of the learners in this research opted for the first option which indicates their satisfaction with the writing tasks in their textbooks.

Table-24. Participants' Attitudes Regarding SQ23

Which textbook?	23. There is a gradual progression of the writing tasks.				Total
	Agree	Partly agree	Partly disagree	Disagree	
American English File 1	76	7	---	2	85
American Cutting Edge 1	70	---	5	---	75
Interchange 1	66	12	2	---	80
American Headway 1	60	11	3	6	80
Total	272	40	10	8	320

SQ24: *There are authentic listening activities and natural interviews for learning natural language.*

Apart from the learners of *American Headway 1*, all the other groups ticked the first two choices on the checklist, particularly the learners who studied *American English File 1*. This can be taken as a kind of feedback for the publishers and writers of the textbooks to edit and change the materials and pictures of the books to draw the attention of the learners and motivate them to resume their study more avidly.

Table-25. Participants' Attitudes Regarding SQ24

Which textbook?	24. There are authentic listening activities and natural interviews for learning natural language.				Total
	Agree	Partly agree	Partly disagree	Disagree	
American English File 1	73	12	---	---	85
American Cutting Edge 1	66	9	---	---	75
Interchange 1	71	9	---	---	80
American Headway 1	10	12	38	20	80
Total	220	42	38	20	320

SQ25: *The textbook includes unit openers that elicit previous knowledge.*

In all four textbooks there are some unit openers that activate the background knowledge of the learners. In each unit the teacher is supposed to start the unit with some questions about the special theme of that unit and the learners take part in discussions with the teacher and their classmates. Since the participants' answers to this item centered around the first two options, it can be inferred that the textbooks in the current research include unit openers that give information to the teachers about the kind of knowledge their learners have about a unique subject of the units in question.

Table-26. Participants' Attitudes Regarding SQ25

Which textbook?	25. The textbook includes unit openers that elicit previous knowledge.				Total
	Agree	Partly agree	Partly disagree	Disagree	
American English File 1	74	6	2	3	85
American Cutting Edge 1	70	---	3	2	75
Interchange 1	69	11	---	---	80
American Headway 1	65	15	---	---	80
Total	278	32	5	5	320

SQ26: *The textbook offers cross-cultural comparison between foreign and domestic culture.*

In the textbooks studied, there is a section with different names which represents some cultural points about the American culture and gives the opportunity to the learners to compare their culture in that specific aspect, with their own culture. In *American Headway 1* there is a section named *Everyday English* in which one can find functional language and social situations and learners get to know some of the practical expressions and some cultural points in the USA. Similarly, in *New Interchange 1* there is a section named *Snapshot*, which represents interesting cultural points in different regions in the world and makes the learners compare their own culture with others. In *American English File 1*, *Practical English* section provides information about everyday language and some practical points about the various cultural points in different parts of the globe. And finally, in *American cutting Edge 1*, the learners can get familiar with different customs and real

life situations via the final parts of each module named *Real Life*. Accordingly, the learners mostly selected the first two options for this survey question.

Table-27. Participants' Attitudes Regarding SQ26

Which textbook?	26. The textbook offers cross – cultural comparison between foreign and domestic culture.				Total
	Agree	Partly agree	Partly disagree	Disagree	
American English File 1	85	---	---	---	85
American Cutting Edge 1	73	2	---	---	75
Interchange 1	70	10	---	---	80
American Headway 1	65	2	3	10	80
Total	293	14	3	10	320

SQ27: *The methods used allow students to talk more than the teachers.*

The management of the classroom depends mostly on the way the teacher interacts with the learners. Unfortunately the majority of teachers don't take this important fact into account and a lot of classes are led in a monotonous manner by the teachers. Thus, quite predictably, most of the learners selected the last two options for this questionnaire item.

Table-28. Participants' Attitudes Regarding SQ26

Which textbook?	27. The methods used allow students to talk more than the teachers.				Total
	Agree	Partly agree	Partly disagree	Disagree	
American English File 1	16	14	50	5	85
American Cutting Edge 1	15	7	46	7	75
Interchange 1	10	---	17	53	80
American Headway 1	22	---	12	46	80
Total	63	21	125	111	320

SQ28: *The textbook has a website for further exercises.*

The most common complaint that one can hear from the students is that most of the textbooks do not have a website for further exercises. Working on line is of interest to the vast majority of learners and they like to do some exercises on line and get a score for doing a specific exercise. To the researchers' disappointment, none of the textbooks utilized in the present study had a special website on internet, except for *American English File 1*. An outright majority of the learners in all groups believed that a vigorous way for learning English is when software and/or a website support the textbook materials of each unit (see Table 29).

Table-29. Participants' Attitudes Regarding SQ26

Which textbook?	28.The textbook has a website for further exercises.				Total
	Agree	Partly agree	Partly disagree	Disagree	
American English File 1	85	---	---	---	85
American Cutting Edge 1	---	---	---	75	75
Interchange 1	---	---	---	80	80
American Headway 1	---	---	---	80	80
Total	85	---	---	235	320

Findings for Research Question One

1) What do male Iranian EFL institute learners think about the structure and contents of their textbook?

The analysis of the first research question shows the following similarities and differences among the four groups of respondents:

Similarities

- The topics were familiar to learners.
- The topics enhanced learners' motivation.
- Pedagogic texts and dialogs included new vocabulary and grammatical structures.
- The paradigm used to introduce grammatical rules was clear and simple.
- New lexical items appeared in the following units.
- There was not any software for pronunciation practice.
- The textbooks used authentic listening and speaking materials.
- The textbooks were not conducive to autonomous learning.
- The textbooks provided communicative exercises that enabled learners to do their communicative tasks in real life situations.
- None of the textbooks had posters and flashcards.
- Item selections suited the level of the course.
- The number of the exercises in the workbook was suitable.
- The videos which support each unit were of interest to learners.
- There was no software available with different formats of questions for more exercises related to each unit.
- The textbooks had individual, pair and group activities.
- The grammar was taught in context, spiraling activities.
- The reading activities were presented with per-reading, reading and post-reading activities.
- There was a gradual progression of writing tasks.
- The textbooks included unit openers that elicited previous knowledge.
- The textbooks offered cross-cultural comparison between foreign and domestic culture.

Differences

- Most of the learners of *American English File 1*, *American cutting Edge 1*, and *New Interchange 1* thought the themes and subjects of their textbooks were related to learner needs and interests, while *American Headway 1* learners had a negative view about the subjects of their book.
- The learners of *American English File 1* and *American Cutting Edge 1* believed that the materials in the their books were up-to-date, whereas the other two groups, i.e. *American Headway 1* and *New Interchange 1* learners weren't satisfied with the materials in their books.
- The learners of *American Headway 1* were not encouraged enough to accept their role in

the process of language learning; the other three groups admitted their responsibility for acquiring a new language and they thought that their book gave them such an attitude.

- The visuals in *American English File 1*, *American cutting Edge 1* and *New Interchange 1* were attractive enough to motivate the learners, whereas the visuals in *American Headway 1* weren't admired by the learners in the research.

- In *American English File 1*, there was a song in each unit and some kinds of games could be found on the website or in the book itself. The other three textbooks included very few songs and games.

- Unlike the other three textbooks, there were scant authentic listening activities and natural interviews in *American Headway 1*.

- The methods used in *American Headway 1* provided fewer opportunities for the learners to take part in the conversations and discussions. Most of the activities were related to reading, writing, and working with grammar, while in other textbooks there were more interactive oral exercises and the learners were given more chance to participate in discussions and dialogs in pairs and groups.

- Unlike *American English File 1*, there was no website for the other three textbooks.

Findings for Research Question Two

2) What are the strong and weak aspects of the textbook?

The following features were referred to by learners as the strong and weak points regarding all four textbooks involved in the study.

American English file 1

Weak Aspects

a) Lacking a software for doing more exercises

b) No flashcards or posters

Strong Aspects

a) A convenient website

b) Beautiful pictures

c) Up-to-date materials

d) Using grammar in context

e) Authentic listening and speaking activities

f) Interesting exercises in the workbook related to each unit

g) Attractive videos

h) Beautiful songs

i) Abundant opportunities for interaction.

j) Good writing tasks

American Cutting Edge 1

Weak Aspects

a) No software for doing more exercises as homework

b) No specific website for doing online exercises

c) Low quality of printing

d) Scarcity of songs

e) Few games in the book

Strong Aspects

a) Interesting videos

b) Having vocabulary book at the end of the students' book

c) Providing a lot of interaction among the learners

d) Up-to-date materials

e) Great quality of the sound and the tone of voice of the speakers

f) A lot of pair work

g) Reasonable price

h) Good exercises in the workbook

i) Fascinating dialogs

New Interchange 1
Weak Aspects

a) Lacking software for more exercises

b) Unattractive photos

c) Lack of flashcards or posters

d) Lack of games and songs

e) Not having a website

Strong Aspects

a) Beautiful coverage

b) Absorbing videos

c) Good exercises in the workbook

d) Great quality of audio and video CDs

e) Interesting dialogs

f) Good pronunciation exercises

g) Communicative contextualized grammar

American Headway 1
Weak Aspects

a) Unavailability of a specific website to cover each unit

b) Boring pictures

c) A lot of focus on grammar

d) No software for doing more exercises for each unit

e) Unappealing layout

f) Paucity of cultural points

g) Letting the teacher act as the sole monotonous speaker

h) Lack of flashcards accompanying the book

i) Lack of games in the book

j) Boring videos

k) Allowing insufficient interaction among the learners

Strong Aspects

a) Beautiful songs with the lyrics text

b) Good exercises in the workbook

c) Reasonable price

d) Good texts about history

Findings for Research Question Three

3) How do male Iranian EFL institute learners imagine the ideal textbook?

The following statements are the different opinions of the learners about their ideal text book:

- The student book and workbook had better be packed in one book.
- Further exercises supported by a website are required.
- Supporting softwares for practicing pronunciation are called for.
- Beautiful and up-to-date pictures are to be included.
- High-quality and H.D videos had better be provided.
- Motivating materials are to be incorporated.
- The books should provide the opportunity for learning grammar in context and through giving examples (Inductive learning).
- A lot of interaction should be encouraged by the textbook.
- Flashcards are to be included.
- Information about different cultures ought to be provided.
- Video scripts along with audio scripts at the end of the book are desired.
- Beautiful songs in different genres are fancied.
- Good quality of the printing is clamored.
- Interesting jokes and stories are to be included.
- Oral repetition of the sentences and structures is to be catered for.
- Expressions of colloquial English are needed.
- Easy grammar is to be provided.
- The reading segments should be supported by pictures.
- Sufficient discussion time should be anticipated.
- The duration of the listening activities should not be very long.
- Natural interviews are to be incorporated.

Discussion

By considering the similarities among the textbooks, related to the first research question, the researchers could infer from the responses of the learners that all of the textbooks studied in this research did well with regard to working with the four language skills. Also, they were good sources of the comparison between the foreign and local cultures. Grammar was found to be taught inductively in the textbooks and the videos were related to the subject matter of the units and were

of interest to the learners. However, there weren't any visual devices like posters and flashcards for the textbooks and none of the textbooks were conducive to autonomous learning. Nonetheless, taking advantage of convenient software with various kinds of exercises with different formats was an important shortcoming of all the four textbooks used. By having a look at the participants' responses, it was obvious that most of the learners liked to practice different kinds of exercises on their PC screens and have fun with practicing their English. By designing interesting games with beautiful graphics and providing exercises with different formats, the learners will have more likelihood of encountering exercises which are not boring and will spend more time for doing them. The writers of *American English File 1* somehow compensated for the lack of a specific software, by designing an interesting website (www.americanenglishfile.com) in which various kinds of exercises with attractive graphics can be found. Among the textbooks studied in this research, *American English File 1* had the greatest fans due to its beautiful cover, interesting and up-to-date materials and its being accompanied by an interesting website. On the other hand, *American Headway 1* had a lot of defects, such as adopting a grammar-based, non-interactive approach and using inefficient visual material. Ultimately, among the manifold studies performed in the domain of textbook evaluation, the findings of the current study are thought to be more in line with the upshots gained by Raseks *et al.* (2010), who explored the adequacy of *Headway* and *Interchange* series along with two other packages, i.e. *Top Notch* and *On your mark*, and Soleimani and Dabbaghi (2012) who probed the communicative adequacy of *New Interchange Series*. In both studies the researchers came up with the partial insufficiency of comparatively older textbooks like *New Interchange* in preparing the learners for interactive needs in the society.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

The traditional way of learning English by sticking merely to the books as the only sources of learning has now been expired, and the learners like to have some kind of interaction in the form of writing, reading, listening and speaking by using their PCs or laptops in their home or at work. Today's learners will be absorbed by kinds of materials which bring more fun and entertainment to them. Moreover, many features of computers can assist the learners in learning English: they can work at their own pace, repeat, listen, record their own voice, and have support in writing and reading, and so on. Based on the findings of the current research and drawing on the learners voiced attitudes concerning all four textbooks utilized in the study, the researchers tend to conclude that *American English File 1* with its organization and presentation of structures and contents, which is further bolstered by the use of a convenient website, would create a higher motivation for learning and accordingly result in the acquisition of better English skills and knowledge, compared with its three counterparts, i.e. *American Cutting Edge 1*, *American Headway 1*, and *New Interchange 1*. Finally, the findings of the current study are expected to assist all instructional stakeholders such as teachers, textbook developers and institutional/academic administrators to come into closer terms with the vitality of conducting ongoing textbook evaluation and needs analysis surveys, and applying the upshots of such appraisals and reappraisals for the betterment of English course books and materials.

REFERENCES

Alemi, M. and N. Sadehvandi, 2012. Textbook evaluation: Efl teachers' perspectives on "pacesetter series". English Language Teaching, 5(7): 64-75.

Burden, P., 2008. Elt teacher views on the appropriateness for teacher development of end of semester student evaluation of teaching in a japanese context. System, 36(3): 478-491.

Cunningsworth, A., 1995. Choosing your coursebook. Handbooks for the english classroom series. Oxford: Heinemann.

Graves, K., 2000. Designing language courses. Canada. New bury House.

Kayapinar, U., 2009. Coursebook evaluation by english teachers. Inonu University Journal of the Faculty of Education, 10(1): 69-78.

Mukundan., Nimehchisalem. and Hajimohammadi., 2011. Developing an english language textbook evaluation checklist: A focus group study. International Journal of Humanities and Social Science, 1(12): 100-106.

Nahrkhalaji, S.S., 2012. An evaluation of a global elt textbook in iran: A two-phase approach. International Journal of Humanities and Social Science, 2(3): 184-191.

Nunan, D., 1988. Syllabus design. Oxford. OUP.

Palmer, H., 1992. The principles of language study. London. OUP.

Raseks, A.E., S. Esmae li, M. Ghavamnia and S. Rajabi, 2010. Don't judge a textbook by its cover: Textbook evaluation in the efl settings. The Journal of International Social Research, 3(14): 448-461.

Sahragard, R., A. Rahimi and I. Zaremoayeddi, 2008. An in-depth evaluation of interchange series (third edition). Porta Linguarum, 12(1): 37-54.

Soleimani, H. and A. Dabbaghi, 2012. Textbook evaluation: A reflection on the new interchange series. International Journal of Research Studies in Language Learning, 1(2): 19-32.

Tok, H., 2010. Tefl textbook evaluation: From teachers' perspectives. Educational Research and Review, 5(9): 508-517.

Wen, C., W. , H. Chien, L. and C. Chung, L., 2011. Thinking of the textbook in the esl/efl classroom. English Language Teaching, 4(2): 91-96.