



## **Iranian University Learners' and Teachers' Views on Adopted and Locally-Developed English Language Teaching Textbooks**

**Abbas Zare-ee**

University of Kashan, Iran, [abbaszarei72@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:abbaszarei72@yahoo.co.uk)

**S. Yahya Hejazi**

University of Tehran, Iran, [hejazi\\_yahya@hotmail.com](mailto:hejazi_yahya@hotmail.com)

Teachers need evidence-based data to select, adapt, adopt, and effectively use textbooks. The present survey compared Iranian university English-as-a-Foreign-language (EFL) teachers' and learners' views on locally-produced textbooks and adopted ones. 119 undergraduate university EFL learners and 36 EFL university teachers were selected through stratified random sampling from several Iranian universities. The participants completed an 81-item general-purpose textbook evaluation checklist developed for the purpose of the current study, once for local and once for international EFL textbooks. The survey revealed that all the mean ratings for adopted textbooks on all evaluation sub-sections were higher than those for locally-developed textbooks. The results also indicated that, for both teachers and learners, locally-developed and adopted (international) textbooks received the highest ratings on content, grammar, appearance, and learning activities while they received the lowest ratings on language skills (reading, writing, speaking, and listening). Mann-Whitney U test results showed that teachers rated locally-developed EFL textbooks significantly lower than their students only when they evaluated these types of textbooks as a whole. Teachers also rated adopted textbooks statistically significantly higher than learners in most evaluation sub-sections. Implications for EFL instruction at the tertiary level are discussed.

**Keywords:** materials development, textbook adaptation, textbook production, EFL teachers, textbook evaluation

### **INTRODUCTION**

Language teaching materials are an integral part of every language education program. Experts consider teachers, learners, and materials/textbooks as the three main elements in any language teaching and learning situation (Hutchinson and Waters, 1987; Richards, 1998). The last element, i.e., the textbook, has received much attention in recent academic research. In fact, teaching materials play important roles in providing

**Citation:** Zare-ee, A., & Hejazi, S. Y. (2018). Iranian University Learners' and Teachers' Views on Adopted and Locally-Developed English Language Teaching Textbooks. *International Journal of Instruction*, 11(3), 291-308. <https://doi.org/10.12973/iji.2018.11321a>

learning stimuli, organizing the teaching-learning process, embodying the nature of language and learning, reflecting the nature of the learning tasks, facilitating teachers' job, and providing models for correct and appropriate language use (Hutchinson & Waters, 1987). "Instructional materials generally serve as the basis of much of the language input that learners receive and the language practice that occurs in the classroom" (Richards, 2001: 251). ELT materials, as McKay (2012) believes, have traditionally aimed to provide students with correct grammatical and lexical items as well as the culture of inner circle countries, i.e. the United States, the United Kingdom, and Australia. Materials provide students with a good supply of language, explanations, and tasks and break learning up to manageable chunks, thus giving learners a sense of achievement (Charles & Pecorari, 2016). Materials are, therefore, vital resources for both language learners and teachers.

Materials used in Teaching English as a Foreign Language (TEFL) take a variety of forms. McGrath (2013) lists several types of materials, namely, textbooks, commercial materials such as reference and supplementary books, teacher-prepared materials, games, and realia. Adopting a broader perspective, Tomlinson (2001: 66) defines materials as "anything which can be used to facilitate the learning of a language. They can be linguistic, visual, auditory or kinesthetic, and they can be presented in print, through [the] live performance or display, or on cassette, CD-ROM, DVD or the Internet".

Of the various forms of materials used in TEFL, textbooks seem to be the most commonly used ones, justifying why the present survey delimits its focus on textbooks alone. Charles and Pecorari (2016: 81) maintain, "Textbooks form a key element of teachers' practice and students' classroom experience". Similarly, Richards (2014) states that in spite of recent technological advances, textbooks are still widely used by language teachers worldwide. They are the foundations of curricular practices in many schools (Richards, 1993) to the extent that they are considered 'the school syllabus' (Appel, 2011). In addition, they provide a road map for teachers in terms of teaching goals, contents, and methods (Richards, 2014). For teachers and learners, the textbook provides "the general content of the lessons and a sense of structure that gives coherence to individual lessons, as well as to an entire course" (Richards, 2014: 19).

Because of the centrality of materials in TEFL in general and the key role of textbooks in particular, much research has addressed the role of textbooks. The value of textbooks in language courses has been the subject of much debate among researchers (Richards, 1985; Nation & Macalister, 2010; Charles & Pecorari, 2016). What probably encapsulates much of the debate on the role of textbooks is the binary view on the (un)necessity of textbook use for language teaching purposes, namely, the 'pro-textbook view' and the 'anti-textbook view', to use Charles & Pecorari's (2016) terms. The former view considers textbooks as absolutely necessary and emphasizes several key factors necessitating their use. The latter, on the other hand, regards textbooks as unnecessary or takes a negative view of them. Differing perspectives on textbooks have also been introduced by Allright (1981) who explains two key positions regarding the exact role of textbooks in classroom, namely, 'deficiency view' and 'difference view'.

The former assumes that published materials are supposed to compensate any deficiency on part of the teacher and syllabus. The latter, on the other hand, considers a primary role for textbooks due to the fact that they have been developed by experienced materials developers. Crawford (2002: 82) maintains that Allright's perspectives undermine teachers' roles to "classroom managers, technicians, or implementers of others' ideas". If we assume that textbooks are essential and beneficial, one very important next question would be what type of textbooks are to be used by teachers when they have a wide variety of locally-produced and/or adopted EFL textbooks to choose from. The perceivable gap in the reported line of research is the neglect of teachers' and learners' preferences for different types of textbooks. In other words, there is little evidence to show whether locally-produced textbooks or adopted ones are preferred by learners and teachers.

In other words, any claims on the appropriateness or inappropriateness of either adopted or produced materials must be based on objective textbook evaluation. Richards (2005: 18) states that "educational publication is after all, a business, and the challenge for materials writers is to meet educational objectives and standards while at the same time meeting market requirements". Thus, objective data needs to be collected to make sure one is not sacrificed at the expense of the other. A comparison of evaluation data on developed and adopted materials can facilitate decision-making for teachers who have access to both types of textbooks. The consumers of EFL textbooks (learners and teachers) may have preferences for adopted and/or locally-developed materials which should be discovered. To explore these preferences, the present survey was designed to address the following research questions:

1. How do Iranian university EFL learners and teachers evaluate locally-developed EFL textbooks?
2. How do Iranian university EFL learners and teachers evaluate adopted EFL textbooks?
3. Is there any statistically significant difference between university EFL learners' and teachers' evaluation of locally-developed EFL textbooks?
4. Is there any statistically significant difference between university EFL learners' and teachers' evaluation of adopted EFL textbooks?

## **REVIEW OF THE RELATED LITERATURE**

### **The Anti-Textbook View**

Experts who advocate the anti-textbook view present different arguments. For example, Prabhu (1987) thinks that already published textbooks cannot be effective due to the fact that they fail to make teaching matched to the learners' current knowledge. Allright (1981) maintains that textbooks exclude learners from the dynamic process of curriculum design. Harwood (2005) believes that textbooks lack authentic academic language, and textbook developers might not possess adequate theoretical and practical background knowledge in linguistics and pedagogy, making them commercial products concerned with marketing issues rather than pedagogical validity. These may be some of the reasons why EFL teachers including experienced teachers of English for Specific

Purposes (ESP) sometimes prefer to use materials from a wide range of commercial or authentic sources, instead of formally-prescribed textbooks (McGrath, 2013). Even some well-known language teaching methods of the 1960s and the 1970s discourage the use of textbooks. Community Language Learning (CLL), for example, relies highly on student-generated materials. Similarly, Total Physical Response (TPR) and Silent Way (SW), as two other examples, use oral materials in early stages of language learning.

It should be interesting to know that, in some countries, the anti-textbook view has found its way into national policies. In Singapore, the Ministry of Education has replaced ELT books in primary schools with shared reading of Big Books providing “a context for target language items and a stimulus to discussion and writing” (McGrath, 2013: 16). For young learners with limited language proficiency, experts consider formal, coursebook-based instruction as inappropriate (e.g., Ghosn, 2017). Textbooks have also been criticized for shortcomings such as failure to offer appropriate and realistic language models (Porter & Roberts, 1981), contextualize learning activities (Walz, 1987), facilitate cultural understanding (Kramersch, 1987), and achieve equity in gender representations (Graci, 1989).

The main claims of the anti-textbook view have been succinctly summed up by Tomlinson (2012). In his view, textbooks are superficial and reductionist, disempower teachers and learners, fail to cater for diverse needs of learners, impose syllabus and teaching approaches, and remove initiative and power from teachers. He thinks that global materials cannot cater for the needs of particular individuals in specific contexts. In fact, large institutions and Ministries of Education in Turkey, Oman, Bulgaria, Namibia, etc. have recently realized the importance of developing materials locally for their own learners (Tomlinson, 2012). McGrath (2013) points out a number of criticisms leveled against textbooks. First, they cannot support whole person learning; in other words, they fail to take into account learners' both affective and cognitive aspects and are “more concentrated on linguistic and analytical aspects of learning” (Tomlinson, 2003). Second, global textbooks, written based on the anglocentric view of the world, spread western values, leading to cultural imperialism. Third, they cannot represent authentic language use. Fourth, they fail to offer a realistic picture of minorities, gender issues, and political agendas. Fifth, textbooks marginalize teachers to the extent that “less and less appears to be left to the teacher to decide and work out” (Hutchinson & Torres, 1994: 316), downplaying their role to mere technicians.

### **The Pro-Textbook View**

The second view of the textbook, the pro-textbook view, makes a strong case for their use in language classes. Primarily, they are very beneficial to the language teacher. “Textbooks can stimulate teachers' professional development, providing suggestions for new approaches and activities” (Charles & Pecorari, 2016: 79). Tomlinson (2012) points out that textbook are essential in that they are cost-effective and time-saving. They help standardize teaching in many institutions. In decision-making for material use in EFL classes, most teachers would probably prefer to rely on a textbook because, as Harwood (2005) contends, textbooks are developed based on rigorous research and expert judgment. They provide teachers with still another resource (McGrath, 2013) in

addition to all what has been made available through advances in information communication technologies.

Surprisingly, “the textbook not only survives, but it thrives” (Hutchinson & Torres, 1994: 316). In fact, it serves as a structuring tool helping the teacher plan for and manage the unpredictability of the classroom context as a communicative event; moreover, it can provide ample opportunities for teachers and learners to negotiate. Also, it serves accountability purposes for all stakeholders and helps both learners and teachers become aware of the expected standards (Hutchinson & Torres, 1994). Suitable textbooks help inexperienced teachers deal successfully with different learners (Crawford, 2002) and provide them with a valuable source of information and support and a means for professional development (Donoghue, 1992).

The success or failure of any English language teaching syllabus is highly dependent on textbooks. After the specification of learning objectives in the syllabus, a good textbook can “put flesh on the bones” (Nunan, 1991: 208) of that syllabus. Textbooks can “suggest the intensity of coverage for all syllabus items, allocating the amount of time, attention and detail particular syllabus items or tasks require” (Richards & Rodgers, 1986: 25). In addition, they are a source of information for language, generate interest in learners, and support learning (Dudley-Evans & St John, 1998; Cunningsworth, 1995). For short, McGrath (2013: 22-23) highlights some of the main advantages of textbooks:

1. They reduce the time needed for lesson preparation.
2. They provide a visible, coherent program for work.
3. They provide support [for untrained or inexperienced teachers linguistically and methodologically].
4. They are a convenient resource for learners.
5. They make standardized instruction possible.
6. They are visually appealing, cultural artefacts.
7. Coursebook packages contain a wealth of extra material.

#### **Adopting, Adapting, and Developing Textbooks**

Iranian EFL teachers face different options in selecting materials for EFL classes. Many are forced by their institutions to teach textbooks produced locally or nationally for the intended group of learners. These are teachers employed by the Iranian Ministry of Education who can exercise almost no control over their textbook choice (for more details, see Atai, 2013). Some choose materials from a wide range of commercially produced and internationally marketed textbooks available in their teaching context and use them without any change. These are usually part-time teachers working in private language institutes run by the private sector of Iranian Language Education. The private sector has, of course, been under a barrage of criticisms from both officials (Ministry of Education 2002) and independent researchers (e.g. Hayati & Mashhadi 2010). The third group uses available materials with major or minor modifications to suit their contexts and purposes. They are usually some administrators of private language schools or private tutors. In other words, Language education programs in Iran employ materials adapted, adopted, or developed by local experts. For high schools, general pre-

university EFL courses, and most ESP courses, the Ministry prescribes textbooks for the whole nation. As Nation and Macalister (2010) point out, the school or Ministry of Education might require teachers to closely follow the assigned books with minimal adaptation so as to achieve standardization in quality and quantity of education. The philosophy seems to be that the teacher either lacks the necessary expertise in adapting the textbook or “is convinced of the high quality of the course book” (Nation & Macalister, 2010: 160). Since these published materials are meant to reach a wide, national audience, it is highly improbable that they cater for the needs of particular groups of learners in different corners of the country (Charles & Pecorari, 2016).

The private language education sector in Iran mainly adapts ELT textbooks to make internationally-produced textbooks suitable for the Iranian non-governmental teaching context. Changes are mainly superficial and include adding, deleting, modifying, simplifying, reordering, and changing culturally inappropriate content (see Charles & Pecorari, 2016). Textbooks are sometimes adapted by changing the sequencing of the content, format, and presentation and by adding or omitting monitoring and assessment stages in the curriculum (Nation & Macalister, 2010). Internationally produced materials by well-known publishers such as Oxford University Press, Longman, Cambridge University Press, and Pearson are seriously criticized by authorities at very high levels of curriculum evaluation hierarchy (e.g. Supreme Council of Cultural Revolution) for neglecting cultural, religious, economic, and social aspects of the Iranian society. The alternative solution proposed and supervised by the Council has been the development of suitable(?) materials by the Organization for Researching and Composing University Textbooks in the Humanities (SAMT). The highest level of freedom in the selection and adaptation or adaptation of EFL teaching materials is enjoyed by university staff working at the English departments of universities.

Most practitioners in TEFL would agree that EFL textbooks need to be adapted to be made usable for a particular classroom. Changes usually call for “responding to the environment, taking account of needs, or putting principles into practice” (Nation & Macalister, 2010: 161), and aligning them to the state-of-the-art knowledge in applied linguistics. For example, a textbook might lack activities successfully used by the teacher before or not be based on teachers' intended teaching and learning principles. Also, time constraints, content unsuitability for students' age, proficiency level, and exclusion of the type of language, skills, discourse, or strategies the students need are among other reasons why textbooks are adapted (Nation & Macalister, 2010). Moreover, already published textbooks cannot be effective due to the fact that they fail to make teaching matched to the learners' current knowledge (Prabhu, 1987). As Graves (2000) believes, adaptation could also be performed by the teacher at the levels of unit or syllabus. Islam and Mares (2003) consider adaptation as an indispensable process in language teaching since the teacher always adapts materials either consciously or unconsciously even when he “selects the book, knows every student in the class well, and is using materials specifically designed for the context they are in” (p. 86).

Regarding textbook adaptation purposes, McGrath (2002) provides two reasons. First, it helps tailor materials to specifically address the interests and needs of learners as well as

teachers' capabilities. Second, it aims to modify inherent deficiencies of the textbook such as linguistic inadequacies, out-of-datedness, and lack of authenticity and variety. Nation and Macalister (2010) believe more professional, experienced teachers usually reject the use of a single textbook for a class. Having a comprehensive view of the elements of curriculum design process, experienced teachers want to exercise more freedom in terms of content, presentation, and assessment and prefer to adapt materials (Nation & Macalister, 2010). We doubt that the freedom intended by these scholars is given to a large portion of experienced English language teachers in the country because of the requirements of a highly centralized system.

At the tertiary level, Iranian EFL teachers sometimes decide to write materials for their own classes. Experienced private tutors who attract most of the customers in their locality may also develop their own materials. Some highly professional language institutes with branches all over the country (e.g. ILI or Iran Language Institute known very well as Kanoone Zabane Iran) also develop their own materials. Howard and Major (2004) believe, teachers develop new materials for several reasons such as contextualization, timeliness, individual needs, and personalization. They argue that teachers design new materials to better cater for their specific learning context and students' particular needs, interests, and learning styles. Teachers who develop their own materials can develop tasks tailored to the needs of their students and enhance their own knowledge and skills in academic discourse, learning, and pedagogy (Charles & Pecorari, 2016).

Development of materials for a particular context that is audience-oriented and informed by comprehensive needs analyses can be the best choice. With all its benefits, this is much more difficult than adapting/adopting materials. In fact, Hutchinson and Waters (1987) consider it as "a last resort, when all other possibilities of providing materials have been exhausted" (p. 125). As McGrath (2013: 92) thinks, using a coursebook is not an either/or choice; in fact, "coursebook-based teaching is a continuum from frequent to less frequent coursebook use, with opportunities for autonomy and creativity ranging from minor forms of adaptation to extensive supplementation".

Materials development is an important undertaking requiring the investment of much time and effort (Charles & Pecorari, 2016). Needless to say, extensive research should be conducted to analyze students' needs in order to produce successful materials, which might not be possible for every teacher due to insufficiency or lack of resources and suitable opportunities (Stoller & Robinson, 2014). Stoller (2016) stresses that the development of effective materials should be informed by thorough needs analysis. In fact, "needs analysis is central to EAP teaching and is also of particular relevance to the production of materials, since it is key to both their selection and their development" (Charles & Pecorari, 2016: 74).

### **Teachers' and Learners' Views on Textbooks**

Teachers' and learners' views on textbooks are significant since they can affect how they use them. "The textbook . . . influences what teachers teach and what and to some extent how learners learn" (McGrath, 2002: 12). If this is the case, then both teachers

and learners react to textbooks and their reactions cannot be disregarded in TEFL research. An interesting study of how teachers and learners see textbook was reported by Shower (2010). In this study, teachers considered four different functions for textbooks, namely, guidance (map), support (walking stick), resource (supermarket), and constraint (roadblock), describing teacher's roles vis-à-vis textbook use as "curriculum-transmitters, curriculum-developers, and curriculum makers". More specifically, curriculum-transmitters closely follow the textbook, while curriculum developers adapt a textbook and tailor it to the particular needs of the students and the learning context. Finally, curriculum-makers use the textbook sporadically and create their own materials based on a primary needs analysis. Similarly, learners participating in McGrath's (2006) study used the same metaphors, i.e. support, guidance, and constraint, in addition to authority (great mind) and some negative images such as boredom (sleeping pills), worthlessness (rubbish bin), and fear/anxiety (nightmares).

Because of the wide range of possibilities that exist for EFL teachers in material selection and the importance of their views in the selection process, this study attempted to survey a group of Iranian EFL learners and teachers to explore possible differences in their views on locally-developed as well as on internationally produced EFL textbooks. Our extensive literature review indicates that no published research has so far systematically compared the efficiency and/or effectiveness of adapted, adopted, and developed materials used in the current Iranian English language education programs. This is a line of research that Iranian TEFL scholars can follow to address concerns voiced by Iranian officials, help teachers with textbook selection, and measure effects of these types of textbooks on language learning outcomes. To partially bridge the gap felt here, this study sought to look at different types of materials from the perspectives of both undergraduate EFL learners and their teachers. Given the division of opinions on adapted and developed materials and the fact that ELT materials used in Iran are either adopted from commercially available textbooks or developed by Iranian materials writers, the present study explored self-reported evaluations of university EFL teachers and learners of the two types of materials, developed and adopted. The study aimed to both present data on teachers' and learners' evaluations of textbooks and explore any possible significant differences in their evaluation of adopted and developed EFL textbooks.

## **METHOD**

### **Research Design**

One of the major lines of research in syllabus design and materials development in ELT is textbook evaluation. Based on Nation and Mcalister (2010), one of the main sources of evaluation data in this line of research is questionnaire data. To fulfill the aims of this study, a survey design was selected in which questionnaire data were collected to probe university EFL teachers' and learners' self-reported evaluations of the different dimensions of developed and adopted EFL textbooks including vocabulary, grammar, pronunciation, content, objectives, language skills, and language components. Both internationally-produced textbooks and locally-developed textbooks are used in the English departments of Iranian universities. Teachers, therefore, need to make informed decisions in choosing appropriate textbooks. Data collected through survey research can

provide insights that can be used in this type of decision-making, justifying the type of design selected for this research.

### Participants

The population targeted in the present study included all the EFL learners and teachers of five Iranian university English Departments, namely University of Isfahan, University of Kashan, University of Qom, University of Shiraz, and Jihad-Daneshgahi University of Isfahan in the 2015-2016 academic year. Stratified random sampling was used to select 119 undergraduate learners of English (15 males & 104 females) and 36 EFL teachers (21 males & 15 females) proportional to the population size of each department. Sample size was determined based on Krejcie and Morgan's (1970) table. Of the initially selected 240 EFL learners and teachers from the five departments, a total of 155 participants answered and returned the survey instrument of the research with the response rate of 64.58%. These participants had experienced teaching/learning EFL through both locally-developed and adopted materials.

### Instrument

The instrument for the present study was a five-point Likert-scale researcher-made questionnaire including 81 items on different aspects of textbooks. Insights derived from the current discussion on ELT materials evaluation in a skills-based framework that underline simultaneous attention to all language skills and components in ELT materials (e.g. Jordan, 1997; Nation & Mcalister, 2010, Tomlinson 2013) were drawn upon in the selection and modification of items for the final questionnaire. The questionnaire items were selected, modified, and adopted from current sources in the literature on EFL textbook evaluation including Mukundan, Nimehchisalem, and Hajimohammadi (2011), Nation and Mcalister (2010), Mukundan and Ahour (2010), and Razmjoo (2007). Table 1 shows Cronbach's alpha reliability coefficients for each sub-section of the questionnaire and the instrument as a whole.

Table 1

The Cronbach's Alpha reliability of the survey instrument

No.	Components	Items	No. of Items	Alpha
1	Appearance of the book	1-8	8	.714
2	Quality of illustrations	9-13	5	.673
3	Activities in the book	14-22	9	.841
4	Attention to reading	23-26	4	.424
5	Attention to listening	27-31	5	.761
6	Attention to Speaking	32-35	4	.855
7	Attention to writing	36-39	4	.641
8	Vocabulary practice	40-44	5	.784
9	Grammar practice	45-53	9	.785
10	pronunciation practice	54-56	3	.719
11	Content of the book	57-61	9	.689
12	Clarity of instructional objectives	62-71	5	.689
13	language use and structure	72-76	5	.671
14	The book as a whole	77-81	5	.551
15	Total	1-81	81	.964

In addition to the above 81 items, the questionnaire asked the respondents to indicate relevant demographic information including university affiliation, status as a teacher or a learner, and the type of textbook (locally-adopted or developed) that they evaluated. The same items were responded for both types of textbooks.

### **Procedure**

After the construction of the questionnaire and making the necessary modifications based on expert views, multiple delivery methods were used to distribute the questionnaires among the participants. For EFL learners, the questionnaires were administered and the data were collected in classes. Some of the EFL teachers received and returned the questionnaires through email. Others were given the copied questionnaires through their departmental mailboxes. Descriptive statistics including means and frequencies as well as nonparametric inferential analyses were computed using SPSS.

### **FINDINGS**

#### **Descriptive Statistics for Research Questions 1 and 2**

Table 2 shows descriptive statistics on teachers' and learners' evaluations of different aspects of locally-developed textbooks used for English language teaching. Evaluation components of content, grammar practice, book appearance, and learning activities in locally-developed textbooks received the highest ratings from both teachers and learners. Interestingly, lowest ratings were assigned to the components of speaking, writing, reading, clarity of objectives, and pronunciation practice in locally-produced textbooks. Based on these results, it can be inferred that, in the eyes of teachers and learners, locally-developed textbooks mainly emphasize content and grammar, but largely neglect language skills of reading, writing, speaking, and listening.

Table 2  
Learners' (n=119) and teachers' (n=36) views on locally-developed textbooks

Evaluation components	Learners' ratings		Teachers' ratings	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
Content of the book	35.58	7.71	34.39	8.36
Grammar practice	28.35	5.78	28.14	5.21
Activities in the book	26.26	6.15	24.11	7.33
Appearance of the book	23.90	5.05	24.72	5.01
Vocabulary practice	15.71	3.30	15.47	3.94
language use and structure	15.36	3.55	16.06	3.33
Quality of illustrations	15.21	3.03	14.81	3.80
Attention to listening	15.06	3.95	14.31	4.25
The book as a whole	14.81	4.65	12.92	4.19
Attention to writing	12.33	2.94	11.86	2.18
Attention to Speaking	12.31	4.05	10.97	3.54
Attention to reading	12.13	2.78	12.92	5.74
Clarity of instructional objectives	9.12	2.31	9.31	2.45
pronunciation practice	8.75	2.69	8.03	2.69

Table 3 shows descriptive statistics for teachers' and learners' self-reported evaluations of adopted textbooks. One observation here is that all the mean ratings for adopted textbooks are higher than those for locally-developed textbooks. Here again, highest ratings were assigned to the components of content, grammar practice, book appearance, and learning activities in adopted textbooks. Lowest ratings of adopted textbooks went to reading activities, clarity of objectives, and pronunciation practice in the ratings of both teachers and learners.

Table 3  
Learners' (n=119) and teachers' (n=36) views on adopted textbooks

Evaluation components	Learners' ratings		Teachers' ratings	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
Content of the book	39.96	6.56	41.58	7.93
Grammar practice	28.35	5.78	28.14	5.21
Activities in the book	31.39	6.42	33.84	6.59
Appearance of the book	26.18	4.55	29.53	4.38
Vocabulary practice	17.67	3.42	19.33	3.49
language use and structure	16.77	3.39	19.39	3.66
Quality of illustrations	17.32	3.18	19.56	3.66
Attention to listening	17.55	3.44	19.89	3.97
The book as a whole	17.64	5.22	18.36	4.07
Attention to writing	13.79	2.76	14.03	3.09
Attention to Speaking	14.29	2.86	15.58	3.32
Attention to reading	13.54	2.88	15.78	2.76
Clarity of instructional objectives	10.35	2.16	11.14	3.02
pronunciation practice	9.81	2.48	10.67	2.52

As seen in Table 2 and Table 3, based on the data collected for this study, locally developed textbooks and adopted textbooks commonly used in ELT departments of Iranian universities are similar in that they receive high ratings on content and grammar practice and low ratings on language skills. The comparisons also show the relative superiority of adopted textbooks because of higher means on all components.

### Mann-Whitney U Test Results for Research Question 3

Mann-Whitney U test was run in SPSS (Version 22) to address the third research question, i.e., whether there is any statistically significant difference between university EFL learners' and teachers' evaluation of locally-developed EFL textbooks. Table 4 shows that there was no statistically significant difference between the two groups when responses to all the 81 items of the evaluation checklist were entered into the analysis ( $U=1780$ ,  $P=0.125$ ). However, when ratings for each of the different components were considered separately, only one statistically significant difference was found: the teachers' and learners' ratings of the book as a whole. When considering the book as a whole, teachers rated locally-developed EFL textbooks significantly lower than their students ( $12.92 < 14.81$ ,  $U= 1506.00$ ,  $p \leq 0.05$ ). In other words, in teachers' views, locally-developed textbooks generally received lower rating, indicating their dissatisfaction with the material that is produced locally.

Table 4  
Differences between Teachers' and learners' views on locally developed textbooks

No.	Components	Items	Teachers' Mean	Learners' Means	Mann-Whitney U	Sig.
1	Appearance of the book	1-8	24.72	23.90	1889.50	0.284
2	Quality of illustrations	9-13	14.81	15.21	1960.50	0.439
3	Activities in the book	14-22	24.11	26.26	1690.00	0.055
4	Attention to reading	23-26	12.92	12.13	2137.00	0.983
5	Attention to listening	27-31	14.31	15.06	1865.50	0.240
6	Attention to Speaking	32-35	10.97	12.31	1745.50	0.092
7	Attention to writing	36-39	11.86	12.33	1951.00	0.415
8	Vocabulary practice	40-44	15.47	15.71	2106.00	0.878
9	Grammar practice	45-53	28.14	28.35	2072.00	0.766
10	pronunciation practice	54-56	8.03	8.75	1817.50	0.166
11	Content of the book	57-61	34.39	35.58	1900.00	0.304
12	Clarity of instructional	62-71	9.31	9.12	2039.50	0.661
13	language use and structure	72-76	16.06	15.36	1968.50	0.460
14	The book as a whole	77-81	12.92	14.81	1506.00	0.007
15	Total	1-81	67.94	81.04	1780.00	0.125

#### Mann-Whitney U Test Results for Research Question 4

To address the fourth research question, i.e., whether there is any statistically significant difference between university EFL learners' and teachers' evaluation of adopted EFL textbooks, another set of Mann-Whitney U tests was run, once for the whole questionnaire and once for the constituent components. The results of the analyses reported in Table 5 indicated that there was a statistically significant difference between the two groups in their evaluations. Teachers rated adopted textbooks statistically significantly higher than learners ( $U = 1370.50$ ,  $p = .001$ ). Based on the descriptive data reported in Table 5, teachers ranked adopted textbooks higher than learners in all of the components and these differences were statistically significant in most cases including appearance of the book, quality of illustrations, activities in the book, attention to reading, attention to listening, attention to speaking, vocabulary practice, and language use and structure. The appearance and illustration of adopted textbooks received a higher evaluation by the teachers than learners. Teachers also rated adopted textbooks significantly better than learners in terms of activities related to language skills and components.

Table 5  
Differences between Teachers' and learners' views on adopted textbooks

No.	Components	Items	Teachers' Mean	Learners' Means	Mann-Whitey Uney	Sig.
1	Appearance of the book	1-8	29.53	26.18	1289.50	.000
2	Quality of illustrations	9-13	19.56	17.32	1345.50	.001
3	Activities in the book	14-22	33.84	31.39	1581.00	.017
4	Attention to reading	23-26	15.78	13.54	1203.00	.000
5	Attention to listening	27-31	19.89	17.55	1338.50	.001
6	Attention to Speaking	32-35	15.58	14.29	1644.00	.034
7	Attention to writing	36-39	14.03	13.79	1998.50	.540
8	Vocabulary practice	40-44	19.33	17.67	1566.00	.014
9	Grammar practice	45-53	28.14	28.35	2072.00	.766
10	pronunciation practice	54-56	10.67	9.81	1721.50	.072
11	Content of the book	57-61	41.58	39.96	1728.50	.079
12	Clarity of instructional objectives	62-71	11.14	10.35	1625.00	.027
13	language use and structure	72-76	19.39	16.77	1167.50	.000
14	The book as a whole	77-81	18.36	17.64	1737.00	.085
15	Total	1-81	99.43	71.52	1370.50	.001

The results reported in Table 5 indicate that teachers seem more satisfied with the adopted textbooks that they use for teaching English at the university. This is in line with the results reported in Table 4 indicating they rate locally-developed ELT books significantly lower than learners.

## DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

This study examined self-reported evaluations of Iranian university EFL teachers and learners on two types of textbooks used in Iranian English language education programs: EFL textbooks developed nationally and those adopted from internationally well-known ELT publishers. The survey revealed that ratings for adopted textbooks were higher than those for locally-developed textbooks. The results also showed that both types of ELT textbooks received high ratings on content, grammar, appearance, and learning activities but low ratings on language skills. Teachers rated locally-developed ELT textbooks lower than their students and scores adopted textbooks higher than their learners.

Even though Iranian top curriculum planning authorities (e.g. officials in the Supreme Council of the Cultural Revolution) commonly advocate the use of locally-developed ELT textbooks, the population targeted in this study seems to be dissatisfied with these textbooks. In recent heated debates on ELT materials in newspapers and on national TV channels triggered by the orders given to teachers through related circulars, teachers are frequently advised to opt for locally-developed materials that can be culturally more

appropriate for learners. Based on the data reported here, teachers, nevertheless, tend to prefer ELT materials from global publishers. The authorities seem to be more concerned with the possible cultural influences of ELT materials while consumers may consider their benefits for learning the English language. Our interpretation is that teachers and learners' preference for adopted materials might result from their attention to instructional aspects of textbooks rather than from their resistance to authorities' cultural concerns.

The findings of the study are in line with the results of a similar study by Azizifar, Koosha, and Lotfi (2010) who found that locally-developed EFL textbooks do not provide enough opportunities for learners to practice the language communicatively. Teachers' higher opinion of adopted textbooks is also in line with Abbasian and Hassanooghi's (2011) remarks that such textbooks present learners with an equal balance among all the skills and components of the language. However, the findings of the present study are in sharp contrast with Charles and Pecorari's (2016) view that international textbooks may fail to satisfy the needs of particular groups of learners because they are meant to reach a wide, international audience. Our belief is that developers of globally marketed ELT textbooks usually draw upon greater levels of knowledge, technology, and expertise to produce more customer-friendly materials. Iranian EFL teachers seemingly prefer to sacrifice the local content suitability of national EFL textbooks for the higher ratings of adopted textbooks in different components of textbook evaluation.

Teachers usually confront a dilemma here: on the one hand, they have low-quality ELT materials specifically prepared for their particular local learner population; on the other hand, they have high-quality materials by well-known global publishers intended for a much wider learner population. In high schools, where teachers have no choice, all have to teach locally developed textbooks in the English language classes (Atai, 2013). In university ELT departments, where there are some levels of freedom, teachers prefer to use adopted materials as shown by the results. Future research in this area can comparatively investigate the actual outcomes of the choice of local or adopted textbooks. As Tomlinson (2012) suggests, looking at the final outcomes of a particular pedagogical choice (such as the choice of types of textbooks) can produce beneficial results for teachers and learners.

The findings of the present study suggest that the learners do not discriminate the two types of textbooks as strongly as do their teachers. In our view, the source of textbook evaluation data is of crucial significance. In other words, 'who' evaluates makes a difference. In this study, when learners provided the evaluation data on locally-developed textbooks, their views did not significantly differ from those of their teachers in that they rated such books high on grammar and content and low in language skills. However, when they evaluated adopted textbooks, their ratings were significantly lower than their teachers. The findings suggest that internationally marketed EFL textbooks might not have attracted learners as strongly as teachers and that their popularity may be rooted more in teachers' preferences. While preference for the choice of local or adopted textbook might be of interest and researchable, it should be noted that the same

material may be (mis)used differently, resulting in different perceptions. It is noteworthy that both learners and teachers perceived both types of textbooks to be strong in the grammar section and weak in attention to pronunciation and the skills of speaking, reading, and writing. This might be due to the fact that in multi-skill international textbooks, the teachers may practically pay undue attention to grammar activities while using the materials. Future studies on single-skill textbooks may further clarify this issue.

## REFERENCES

- Abbasian, G. R., & Hassan-oghli, E. (2011). Evaluation of Iranian EFL textbooks: A study of learner-teacher's criteria compatibility. *The Iranian EFL Journal*, 7(4), 176-202.
- Atai, M. R., & Mazlum, F. (2013). English language teaching curriculum in Iran: Planning and practice. *The Curriculum Journal*, 24(3), 389-411.
- Azizifar, A., Koosha, M., & Lotfi, A. R. (2010). An analytical evaluation of Iranian high school ELT textbooks from 1970 to the present. *Procedia-Social and Behavioral Sciences*, 3, 36-44.
- Allwright, R. L. (1981). What do we want teaching materials for? *ELT journal*, 36(1), 5-18.
- Appel, J. (2011). Moments of practice: Teachers' knowledge and interaction in the language classroom. In Huttner, Julia, Barbara Mehlmauer-Larcher, Susanne Reichl and Barbara Schiftner (eds), *Theory and Practice in EFL Teacher Education: Bridging the Gap*. Bristol: Multilingual Matters, pp. 38-54.
- Crawford, J. (2002). 'The role of materials in the language classroom: Finding the balance'. In J. Richards and W. Renandya (eds) *Methodology in Language Teaching: An Anthology of Current Practice* (pp.80-91). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Charles, M., & Pecorari, D. (2016). *Introducing English for academic purposes*. Routledge.
- Cunningsworth, A., (1995). *Choosing Your Coursebook*. Oxford: Heinemann.
- Donoghue, F. (1992). *Teachers' guides: A review of their function*: Trinity College Centre for Language and Communication Studies.
- Dudley-Evans, T. and St John, M. (1998). *Developments in English for Specific Purposes*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Ghosn, I. K., (2017). 'No place for coursebook in the very young learner classroom'. In B. Tomlinson (Ed.) *SLA Research and Materials Development for Language Learning* (pp. 50-66). New York: Routledge.
- Graci, J. P. (1989). Are Foreign Language Textbooks Sexist? An Exploration of Mobes of Evaluation. *Foreign Language Annals*, 22(5), 477-486.

- Graves, K., (2000). *Designing Language Courses*. Boston: Heinle and Heinle.
- Harwood, N. (2005). What do we want EAP teaching materials for? *Journal of English for Academic Purposes*, 4(2), 149-161.
- Hayati, A. M., & Mashhadi, A. (2010). Language planning and language-in-education policy in Iran. *Language problems & language planning*, 34(1), 24-42.
- Howard, J. and Major, J. (2004). 'Guidelines for designing effective English language teaching materials'. *Proceedings of the 9th conference of the Pan-Pacific Association of Applied Linguistics* (pp.101-9). Retrieved 1 January 2017 from [www.paaljapan.org/resources/proceedings/PAAL9/pdf/Howard.pdf](http://www.paaljapan.org/resources/proceedings/PAAL9/pdf/Howard.pdf)
- Hutchinson, T., & Torres, E. (1994). The textbook as agent of change. *ELT journal*, 48(4), 315-328.
- Hutchinson, T., & Waters, A. (1987). *English for specific purposes*. Cambridge University Press.
- Islam, C., & Mares, C. (2003). Adapting classroom materials. In Tomlinson, B. (Ed.). *Developing materials for language teaching* (pp. 86-100). A&C Black.
- Jordan, R. R. (1997). *English for academic purposes: A guide and resource book for teachers*. Cambridge University Press.
- Kramsch, C. J. (1987). Foreign Language Textbooks' Construction of Foreign Reality. *Canadian Modern Language Review*, 44(1), 95-119.
- Krejcie, R. V., & Morgan, D. W. (1970). Determining sample size for research activities. *Educational and psychological measurement*, 30(3), 607-610.
- McGrath, I. (2006). Teachers' and learners' images for coursebooks: Implications for teacher development. *ELT journal*, 60(2), 171-180.
- McGrath, I. (2013). *Teaching materials and the roles of EFL/ESL teachers: Practice and theory*. Bloomsbury Academic.
- McGrath, I. (2002). *Materials Evaluation and Design for Language Teaching Edinburgh Textbooks in Applied Linguistics*. Edinburgh University Press.
- McKay, S. L., (2012). 'teaching materials for English as an international language'. In *Principles and Practices of Teaching English as an International Language* (pp. 70-83). Bristol: Multilingual Matters.
- Ministry of Education. (2002). *Five-year program for English language development*. Tehran, Iran: Ministry of Education.
- Mukundan, J., & Ahour, T. (2010). 21 A Review of Textbook Evaluation Checklists across Four Decades (1970–2008). *Research for materials development in language learning: Evidence for best practice*, 336.

- Mukundan, J., Nimehchisalem V. & Hajimohammadi R. (2011). Developing an English language textbook evaluation checklist: A focus group study. *International Journal of Humanities and Social Science*, 1(12), 100-106.
- Nation, I. S. P., & Macalister, J. (2010). *Language curriculum design*. Routledge.
- Nunan, D., 1991. *Language Teaching Methodology*. Hemel Hempstead, Herts: Prentice Hall.
- Prahu, N. S. (1987). *Second language pedagogy: A perspective*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Porter, D., & Roberts, J. (1981). Authentic listening activities1. *ELT journal*, 36(1), 37-47.
- Razmjoo, S. A. (2007). High schools or private institutes textbooks? Which fulfill communicative language teaching principles in the Iranian context. *Asian EFL journal*, 9(4), 126-140.
- Richards, J. and Rodgers, T. 1986. *Approaches and Methods in Language Teaching*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Richards, J. (2001). *Curriculum development in language education*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Richards, J. C. (2006). Materials development and research—making the connection. *RELC Journal*, 37(1), 5-26.
- Richards, J. C. (2014). The ELT Textbook. In *International Perspectives on Materials in ELT* (pp. 19-36). Palgrave Macmillan UK.
- Richards, J. C. (1993). Beyond the text book: The role of commercial materials in language teaching. *RELC journal*, 24(1), 1-14.
- Richards, J., 1998. 'Textbooks: Help or hindrance?' In *Beyond Training* (pp.125–40). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Richards, J. C., 1985. Planning for proficiency. *Prospect* 1(2), pp. 1-17
- Richards, J. C. (2001) The role of textbooks in a language program. Retrieved from <http://www.professorjackrichards.com/pdfs/role-of-textbooks.pdf>
- Richards, J. C., 2012. 'the ELT textbook'. In *International Perspectives on Materials in ELT* (pp. 19-36). New York: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Shawer, S. F. (2010). Classroom-level curriculum development: EFL teachers as curriculum-developers, curriculum-makers and curriculum-transmitters. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 26, 173–184.
- Stoller, F., & Robinson, M. (2014). An interdisciplinary textbook project. In N. Harwood (Ed.), *English language teaching textbooks: Content, consumption, production* (pp. 262–298). Basingstoke, UK: Palgrave Macmillan.

- Stoller, F., & Robinson, M. (2016). EAP materials and tasks. In N. Hyland, K. & Shaw, P. (Eds.), *The Routledge handbook of English for academic purposes* (pp. 577–591). New York: Routledge.
- Tomlinson, B., & Masuhara, H. (2004). *Developing Language Course Materials. Portfolio Series# 11*. Southeast Asian Ministers of Education Organization (SEAMEO) Regional Language Centre (RELC). Available from: Market Asia Distributors. 601 Sims Drive# 04-05, Pan-I Complex, Singapore 387382, Singapore.
- Tomlinson, B. (2003). 'Humanizing the coursebook'. In B. Tomlinson (ed.) *Developing Materials for Language Teaching* (pp.162–73). London: Continuum.
- Tomlinson, B. (2001). 'Materials development'. In R. Carter and D. Nunan (Eds) *Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages* (pp.66–71). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Tomlinson, B. (2012). 'Materials development'. In A. Burns & J. C. Richards (Eds.) *The Cambridge Guide to Pedagogy and Practice in Second Language Teaching* (pp. 269–278). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Tomlinson, B. (2016). The importance of materials development for language learning. In M. Azarnoosh, M. Zeraatpishe, A. Faravani, & H. R. Kargozari (Eds.), *Issues in Materials Development* (pp. 1–9). Rotterdam: Sense Publishers.
- Walz, J. (1989). Context and contextualized language practice in foreign language teaching. *The Modern Language Journal*, 73(2), 160-168.