An Analytical Evaluation of Iranian High School ELT Textbooks from 1970 to 2010

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Textbooks play a very crucial role in the process of language teaching and learning. The present study carries out an evaluation of two series of ELT textbooks used for teaching English language in Iranian high schools since 1970 to 2010. For this purpose, Tucker's (1975) textbook evaluation model (see Appendix) has been employed. The results suggest that one of the main factors for the students' achievement in English language is the ELT textbooks. The researcher suggests that in the textbooks, there should be enough opportunity for the learners to communicatively practice the language they are learning.
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Textbooks are important resources for teachers in assisting students to learn every subject including English. They are the foundation of school instruction and the primary source of information for teachers. In Iran, in practice, textbooks serve as the basis for much of the language input learners receive and the language practice that takes place in the classroom. For the EFL learners, the textbook becomes the major source of contact they have with the language apart from the input provided by the teacher. Hutchinson and Torres (1994) suggest that the textbook is an almost universal element of English language teaching, and no teaching-learning situation seems to be complete until it has its

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relevant textbook. Sheldon (1988) consents that textbooks not only "represent the visible heart of any ELT program" (p. 237), but also offer considerable advantages for both the student and the teacher when they are used in the ESL/EFL classroom. The most important reward of using textbooks is that they are psychologically vital for students since their accomplishment can be measured concretely when we use them (Haycroft, 1998). McGrath (2002) states that a textbook is important because it sets the direction, content, and to a certain extent how the lesson is to be taught. Similarly he asserts that it is significant to view the images that teachers have as this reflects their attitudes and beliefs toward textbooks which will, in turn, have impact on how teachers use textbooks.

Materials development is a relatively young phenomenon in the field of language teaching. In the practical sense, it includes the production, evaluation and adaptation of materials. Tomlinson (2001) defines materials as "anything which can be used to facilitate the learning of a language" (p. 66). Tomlinson offers a short summary of the history of materials development. He explains that the study of materials development was not given any real importance until the 1990s when books on this subject started to be published. A few books came out in the 1980s. Tomlinson mentions for example Cunningsworth (1984) and Sheldon (1988), but with these exceptions, materials development was treated as a sub-category of methodology. Tomlinson gives two reasons why the interest in materials development increased. One was the realization that by making teachers aware of the process of materials development, it would be easier for them to understand and apply theories of language learning. It would also help teachers to develop personally and professionally. The other reason was the understanding that no coursebook can be suitable for any kind of learners. Therefore, teachers need to be able to evaluate, adapt and produce materials that would be appropriate for their particular class.

These realizations have increased materials development research as well as the occurrence of materials development courses for teachers (Tomlinson, 2001).

Textbook evaluation is an applied linguistic activity through which teachers, supervisors, administrators and materials developers can "make judgments about the effect of the materials on the people using them" (Tomlinson, 2001 p. 15). McGrath (2002) believes that textbook evaluation is also of an important value for the development and administration of language learning programmes. Harmer (2001) sees a distinction between evaluation and assessment. He states that "the assessment of a course book is an out-of-class judgment as to how well a new book will perform in class. Course book evaluation, on the other hand, is a judgment on how well a book has performed in fact" (Harmer, 2001, p. 301).

Constant evaluation of textbooks to see if they are appropriate is of great importance. As Genesee (2001) stated, evaluation in TESOL settings is a process of collecting, analyzing and interpreting information. This process enables us to make informed decisions through which student achievement will increase and educational programs will be more successful. According to Sheldon (1988), there are several reasons for the evaluation of textbooks. Among these reasons, he suggests that the selection of an English language teaching textbook often demonstrates an important administrative and educational decision in which one can see considerable amount of professional, financial, or even political investment. As there are many diverse ELT textbooks in the market, there is a necessity for the evaluation of textbooks in order to be able to recognize the advantages of one over the others, which in turn will lead to the adoption of the textbook.

Since 1970, two series of locally produced English language textbooks have been used in Iranian high schools; series of Graded English books published by the Ministry of Education in 1970 and the series of Right Path to English books published by the Ministry of Education in 1985. The purpose of this study is to analyze and evaluate these two series of locally produced English language textbooks used in Iranian high schools since 1970. This study provides students and teachers with a set of reference points regarding English language education material development in Iran. It is intended for teachers and students of English and people

who have a general interest in English language teaching in Iran. It is intended to give a general background on some issues related to language teaching, and an overview of practical language teaching, including the teaching of the four skills.

Most of the textbook evaluation studies carried out in Iran focus on three main goals, : the first group has mostly tried to develop some criteria to contribute to more successful textbook evaluation studies (see e.g., Ansary & Babaii, 2002), the second group has evaluated certain textbooks for their strength and weakness to find their advantages and shortcomings (see e.g., Kheibari, 1999; Shahedi, 2001; Yarmohammadi, 2002; Jahangard, 2007; Riazi & Aryashokouh, 2007), and the third group has studied discourse features and the representation of discourse elements in the textbooks (see e.g., Amalsaleh, 2004; Darali, 2007).

Ansary and Babaii's (2002) study is an example of the first group. They analyzed a corpus of 10 EFL/ESL textbook reviews plus 10 EFL/ESL textbook evaluation checklists and outlined what they perceived to be the common core features of standard EFL/ESL textbooks. The major categories comprise approach, content presentation, physical make-up, and administration concerns. Each set of major features of EFL/ESL textbooks consists of a number of subcategories. They concluded the article mentioning that not all of these characteristics would be present in each and every textbook.

The second group in textbook evaluation concentrated on the strengths and weaknesses of the textbooks. For example, Kheibari (1999) modified Tucker's model and applied it to the five volumes of Teaching Persian to Speakers of Other Languages (TPSOL) textbooks. She claimed that the philosophy behind the changes is due to the recent developments in language teaching. The results revealed that the books follow the Grammar Translation Method which attaches the least attention to role-playing, different kinds of tasks, or language skills such as speaking. Shahedi (2000) also analyzed one of the leading texts in TPSOL and stated that in these series, not enough attention has been attached to the four skills of the language. Moreover, the manner and amount of the

presentation of vocabulary and pronunciation are not in harmony with language learners' proficiency levels.

On the other hand, Yarmohammadi (2002) evaluated the senior high school textbooks based on a revised version of Tucker's model. He came to the conclusion that these textbooks suffer from a lot of shortcomings: 1. they are not authentic; 2. English and Persian names are used interchangeably; and 3. oral skills are ignored. At the end, some suggestions were proposed to remedy the shortcomings. In a similar way, Jahangard (2007) evaluated four EFL textbooks that have been used in the Iranian high schools by the Ministry of Education. He discussed the merits and demerits of the textbooks with reference to 13 common criteria extracted from different materials evaluation checklists. The criteria were as follows: explicitness of objectives, good vocabulary explanation and practice, educationally and socially acceptable approaches to the target community, periodic review and test sections, clear attractive layout, print easy to read, appropriate visual materials, interesting topics and tasks, clear instructions, clearly organized and graded content, plenty of authentic language, good grammar presentation and practice, fluency practice in all four skills, and independent learning situations. The results of the study indicated that Book Four had better features in comparison with the three other textbooks (which needed huge revisions and modifications).

Riazi and Aryashokouh (2007) also studied the four high schools and pre-university English textbooks, focusing on the consciousness-raising aspect of vocabulary exercises. They found that of all the exercises in the four books, only one percent of them could be categorized as consciousness-raising. They also found that the exercises mainly concentrated on individual words (approximately 26%) with no emphasis on fixed expressions, lexical collocations (approximately 15%) and grammatical collocations (approximately 2%). They concluded that students are mainly dealing with meanings of individual words and not with how words are used with other words or in what combinations.

Finally, the third group of textbook evaluation studies in Iran has focused on discourse features such as speech acts,

intertextuality and so on. Amalsaleh (2004) examined the representation of social factors in three types of textbooks, including junior and senior high school textbooks, based on Van Leeuwen's model (1996). According to the results, in general, the textbooks demonstrated a deferential representation of social factors that tended to portray females as performers belonging to a home context and having limited job opportunities in society. In particular, junior and senior high school textbooks tended to shape normative views of gender and class relations in which a middle-class urban male was considered to be the norm. Similarily, Darali (2007) studied the important features of new English textbooks such as the Spectrum series to see how cultural pragmatic knowledge of the language is included in the lessons. The results of the study showed that the series provided a variety of language functions, but the most frequent ones in daily speech were not focused on as much as other functions were. Although the textbooks provided valuable metalinguistic information, they lacked explanations on the use of different forms in the same situation. There was also a paucity of explicit descriptions regarding appropriateness, paralinguistic information and contextual information.

In other contexts, textbook evaluation studies have also attracted researchers' attention. For instance, Morgan (2003) evaluated IELTS preparation materials and showed that there is a need for more materials that aim beyond test-taking practice and endeavor to develop the language competencies that the candidates need for their work or study goals. Morgan stated that in the books, IELTS candidates were expected to be highly motivated and therefore, there is not any attempt to make the books emotive as visually attractive books are. This was found to be a disadvantage of the books.

In his study, Kartner (2003) wonders why students and teachers' enthusiasm towards a new textbook tends to get less and less by the end of the school year. The answer he provides is that textbooks that are at first interesting eventually get too familiar and unexciting. He admires course books that give the reader new ideas and perspectives.

Considering students as the main users of textbooks, Weiten, Deguara, Rehmke, and Sewell (1999) focused on textbook pedagogical aids. They examined students' evaluation of textbook pedagogical aids and found that boldface technical terms, running or chapter glossaries, chapter summaries and self-tests earned the highest marks in their evaluation.

On the other hand, Vellenga (2004) was concerned with how pragmatics was presented in EFL/ESL textbooks. She studied eight English as a Second Language (ESL) and English as Foreign Language (EFL) textbooks to determine the amount and quality of pragmatic information included. She focused mainly on the use of metalanguage, explicit treatment of speech acts, and metapragmatic information, including discussion(s) of register, illocutionary force, politeness, appropriacy and usage, and found that textbooks lack explicit metapragmatic information, and teachers' manuals rarely supplemented this adequately. The researcher also found that teachers rarely brought outside materials related to pragmatics into the classroom, and concluded that learning pragmatics from textbooks would be highly unlikely.

Regarding the studies mentioned, a comprehensive study seems to be still urgently needed to allow a subsequent assessment of the amount of use of different pronunciation points, grammatical structures, and content forms in the Iranian high school English language textbooks.

Objectives

Many teachers and school authorities believe that there are different factors involved in the Iranian students' achievement in English language. One of these factors may refer to the quality and characteristics of the textbooks used in the process of English language teaching in the country. The present study is conducted with the hope that knowledge of materials development can help teachers, learners, textbook developers and the educational authorities to find new ways for improving the quality of textbooks and consequently the quality of teaching and learning English in the country's educational system.

The results of the study is hoped to benefit English language teachers, learners, and textbook developers to improve their teaching, learning, and designing of the textbooks.

As such, the study seeks answers to the following questions:

RQ1. How are the pronunciation points, content, and grammar dealt with in

"Graded English" (henceforth: GE) series?

RQ2. How are the pronunciation points, content, and grammar dealt with in "Right Path to English" (henceforth: RPE) series?

Method

Materials

The materials of this study are the two locally produced series of English language textbooks used in Iranian high schools since1970. As it was practically impossible to evaluate all the books in the mentioned two series, the researchers randomly selected Book Two of high school from every one of these series. Therefore, the materials used were:

1. Book Two from the series of Graded English books written by Strain, Manuchehri, and Pazargadi, published by the Ministry of Education in 1984, and

2. Book Two from the series of Right Path to English books by Birjandi, Nowrozi, and Mahmodi, published by the Ministry of Education in 2002.

Instruments

To conduct the evaluation, Tucker's (1975) evaluating model was used. Then, the researcher used the ideas and suggestions of different experts in the field of textbook evaluation both in Iran and abroad -including Tomlinson- and provided a modified version of Tucker's (1975) evaluating model for the study. Tucker (1975) believes that a system for evaluating textbooks should include basic linguistic, psychological, and pedagogical principles. Accordingly, he discusses four main categories: pronunciation,

grammar, content, and general criteria. Each category has some subdivisions.

The rating scheme used in this model is based on three scales:

1. The Value Scale (VS) which shows the relative weight assigned to each one of the mentioned criteria by the evaluator. It consists of a score of 0 to 5.

2. The Merit Scale (MS) which delineates the evaluator's judgment of the text in relation to any specific criterion. It ranges from 0 through 4 numerically. A score of 0 shows that the evaluator considers the text totally lacking any merit in that respect; conversely, a score of 4 reveals the ideality of the book's merit by a specific criterion.

3. The Value Merit Product (VMP), which is a combination of the importance of the criterion and the merit of the book.

Modifications in Tucker's Model

Tucker's model focuses on those elements which are generally considered fundemental to a structural syllabus. However, the researchers want to go a bit further and evaluate the textbooks from the standpoint of communicative language learing and teaching. Thus, Tucker's model is modified to fulfill the objectives of this research. Since this study focuses on pronunciation, grammar, and content of the mentioned textbooks, the general criteria in Tucker's system are not directly relevant. Thus, they are excluded from the version adopted here.

Analysis and Discussion

This part presents the analyses and results of the data collected and their interpretations. As noted earlier, Tucker's (1975) modified model is applied to serve the purpose of the study. The data used in this study was collected through the analysis of GE and RPE series used for the teaching of English in Iranian high schools in terms of pronunciation, grammar, and content.

Pronunciation

The first issue dealt with is pronunciation. In this section, the presentation of pronunciation points in GE and RPE series are analyzed.

Pronunciation in GE

The presentation of pronunciation is evaluated on the basis of three criteria: 1) completeness of presentation, 2) appropriateness of presentation, and 3) adequacy of practices.

1) Completeness of Presentation
a) Segmentals: Consonants, Vowels and Diphthongs
   Consonants
Fries and Pike (Paulston & Bruder, 1976) classify English consonants as follows:
p, b, t, d, k, g, f, v, θ, ð, s, z, š, ž, h, č, ĵ, m, n, ŋ, r, l, w, y.

The consonants presented in the GE series consist of the following: t, d, v, θ, ð, s, z, ŋ, w.
Considering the consonants of Fries and Pike's system, GE does not present the following consonants:
/p/, /b/, /k/, /g/, /f/, / š/, / ž/, /h /, / č /, / ĵ /, /m /, /n /, / r/, / l/, and /y/.
The following initial clusters are also practiced in GE: st, bl, pl, kl, sk, sl, sp, br, dr, gr, fl. Yet, there are some other initial clusters including two and three consonants that are not presented in GE: fr, gl, pr, tr, θr, sw, spr, str.

Vowels

The following vowels are presented and practiced in the GE series: i, i:, u, u:, e, ʌ, ə. Considering the Fries-Pike's system, the vowels which are not introduced in GE are: æ, o, ɔ. The first two vowels exist in Persian although they are slightly different. The third one does not exist in Persian; therfore, it should have been presented in a series such as GE.

Diphthongs

Diphthongs are not presented in GE at all.

b) Suprasegmentals
Considering suprasegmentals, stress is treated from the outset in GE series. The stress of almost all the words which have more than one syllable is displayed, yet, only the primary stress is emphasized. Also, sentence-stress and the stress of some expressions-e.g. Good morning- are practiced in GE. Two main intonation patterns -rising and falling- of English are also dealt with in GE series.

On the whole, in GE, pronunciation is largely identified with the articulation of individual sounds and, to a lesser extent, with the stress and intonation patterns of the target language. Consonants, clusters, vowels, stress, and intonation are presented. However, some important points are missing in the presentation of consonants, clusters, and vowels. English syllabic /m/, /n/, /l/, and /r/ are of much importance.   Therefore, the score of the GE's merit – based on the presented rating scheme- would be 2.

2) Appropriateness of Presentation
As far as the linguistic background of Persian students is concerned, the authors of GE try to present the materials on the basis of a contrastive analysis of Persian and English. However, as it was discussed earlier, some of the sounds (syllabic /m/, /n/, /l/, and /r/, etc) which are points of difficulty for Persian students are not dealt with in GE. It seems that the contrastive analysis of Persian and English sound systems has been the source of the selection and gradation of some of the English sounds in GE. The following segments are presented in groups with reference to the above mentioned source:
/i/ and /i:/, /ð/ and /d/, /θ/ and /t/, /u:/ and /u/, and /w/ and /v/.
A few segments are presented in groups because of their voiced/voiceless distinction. For example, / ð / & /θ/, and /t/ & /d/.
Considering the inappropriate presentation of some English segments and also some pronunciation points which are difficult for Persian students, the merit score of GE – based on the presented rating scheme- would be 1.5.

3) Adequacy of Practice

Repetition drills represent the only form in which the sound system of English is practiced in GE. The learners are expected to produce the sounds in words without having the opportunity to discriminate between similar sounds. Moreover, all the consonants and vowels are presented in words, but words - and consequently the sounds - are not practiced in sentences. Tucker (1975) believes that the quantity of materials for pronunciation practice should be adequate. It is while, the /ə/, / ^/, / ŋ /, and /u / sounds are not practiced adequately in GE.

Since pronunciation is practiced through just one technique, and the segmentals are practiced only in words, and finally since the practice of some sounds is not adequate as far as the CA of English and Persian sound systems is concerned, it would be justified to score GE's merit– based on the presented rating scheme- as 1 as far as the adequacy of practice is concerned.

Pronunciation in RPE

In RPE also pronunciation is evaluated on the basis of three criteria: 1) completeness of presentation, 2) appropriateness of presentation, and 3) adequacy of practices.

1) Completeness of Presentation
a) Segmentals : Consonants, Vowels, and Diphthongs

Consonants

The consonants presented in RPE Book Two series consist of the following:
  /p/, /b/, /t/, /d/, /k/, /g/, /f/, /v/, /θ/, /ð/, /s/, /z/, /h/, /č/, /m/, /n/, /ŋ/, /r/, /l/, /w/, /y/.

As mentioned above, Fries and Pike classify English consonants as follows:
  /p/, /b/, /t/, /d/, /k/, /g/, /f/, /v/, /θ/, /ð/, /s/, /z/, /š/, /ž/, /h/, /č/, /ĵ/, /m/, /n/, /ŋ/, /r/, /l/, /w/, /y/.

Considering the consonants of this system, Book Two does not present the following consonants: /š/, / ž/, / č /, and / ĵ /. Initial clusters, including /b/, /pl/, /sk/, /sl/, /sp/, /br/, /dr/, /gr/, /fl/ are not

practiced in Book Two either, but the words which display them are introduced in the book.

Vowels

The following vowels are presented and practiced in the RPE Book Two:

/ i/, /iː/, /u/ , /juː/, /əʊ/, /ɑʊ/, /uː/, /e/, /³/, /ʊ/, /^/ , /eə /, /ɔː/, /rə/, and /ə/

Considering the Fries-Pike's system, the following English vowels are not introduced in the book: /æ/ and /o/

Diphthongs

The following diphthongs are presented in RPE Book Two: /əʊ/, /ɑʊ/, /eə /, and /rə/.

b) Suprasegmentals: Stress and Intonation
Stress and intonation are not dealt with in this book.
On the whole, in RPE Book Two, pronunciation is largely identified with the articulation of individual and diphthong sounds. Consonants and vowels – both individual and diphthong sounds- are points of English pronunciation presented in RPE Book Two. However, some important points are missing; stress, intonation, pitch, and juncture are not presented in the book. Therefore, the score of the RPE's merit– based on the presented rating scheme- would be 2.

Appropriateness of Presentation

The authors of RPE try to present the English language sounds, but they miss to present stress, intonation, pitch, and juncture and also some of the sounds like /æ/, and /o/,. Similar to GE, the CA of Persian and English sound systems has been the source for the selection and gradation of some of the English sounds in RPE. The following segmentals are presented in groups with reference to the above mentioned source:

/i/ and /iː/
/ ð / and /d/

3. /θ/ and /t/

A few segmentals are presented in groups because of their voiced/voiceless distinction. For example, / ð / and /θ/, and /t/ and /d/. Some sounds are presented in groups though they have no specific relationship. For instance, /i/, / ŋ /, and /st/, or /w/, /i/, and /i:/.

Considering the inappropriate presentation of some English segmental and also some pronunciation points which are difficult for Persian students, the merit score of RPE– based on the presented rating scheme- would be 1.5.

Adequacy of Practice

As in GE, repetition drills represent the only form in which the sound system of English is practiced in RPE, but in RPE, the learners are expected to produce the sounds both in words and in sentences. Although pronunciation is practiced through just one technique - repetition drills, and the practice of some sounds is not adequate, the segmentals are practiced both in words and in sentences. So, it would be justified to score RPE's merit– based on the presented rating scheme- as 1.5 as far as the adequacy of practice is concerned.

Grammar

The second issue dealt with is grammar. In this section, the grammar represented in GE and RPE series are analyzed.

Grammar in GE

Grammar in GE is analyzed and evaluated on the basis of the adequacy of pattern inventory, appropriate sequencing, adequacy of drill model and pattern displays, and finally adequacy of practice.

Adequacy of Pattern Inventory

In Book Two, the concentration is on the simple past along with the distinction between mass and count nouns. Also, comparisons, such as "Ahmad is as old as Mina," "He is taller than

…," "She is more beautiful than …" - and two auxiliary verbs (must and may) are presented in this book. Although there are some compound nouns in GE, they are not distinguished from nouns as modifiers. Tucker (1975) believes that such a distinction should be included in any beginning text.

The presentation of grammatical patterns in GE is satisfactory enough to score its merit– based on the presented rating scheme- as 3.

Appropriate Sequencing

Although the verb "to be" is irregular, in majority of the available texts it is presented very early because of its very high functional load. Graded English seems to follow the same order; however, it presents WH questions—e.g. what time is it? – before yes/no questions – e.g. are you a student?. Since WH questions involve more transformations than yes/no questions, it would be more appropriate to present them after yes/no questions.

The first four lessons of Book Two review the basic structures introduced in Book One. Mass and count nouns and how many / much questions are the structures presented in lessons 5 and 6. First, mass and count nouns are distinguished; then, how many / much questions are introduced. Although these two successive units show an appropriate sequencing, how many / much questions do not appear in the remaining lessons. Of course, "how many /much questions" do appear in some of the drills in Books Two; nevertheless, their appearance is a mechanical review of these structures. In fact, the learner is only reminded of the structures practiced earlier in the book. Possessive forms, simple past tense, comparison, and some modal verbs make up the basic structures sequenced successively in Book Two.

On the whole, GE presents the structures as isolated and loosely related blocks. Sometimes the blocks have no specific relationship and it is not clear why they are arranged in one way or another. As such, the merit score of sequencing in Book Two from the series of GE – based on the presented rating scheme- would be 2.

Adequacy of drill model and pattern displays

Grammar in GE is to be practiced through oral and written drills. Although the instructions to some of the drills specify the modality, various other drills are not often clearly distinguished. The age and the level of the learners require each drill (or group of drills) be clearly defined and restricted in terms of the appropriate modality. For example, it is not explained how to do drills with titles such as "Change into questions", "Change from 'now' to 'every day'". Moreover, different instructions are used for the same types of drills, e.g. "Complete the following", "Fill in the missing words", "Fill in the blanks". It would be more appropriate to use one instruction for similar kinds of drills as far as the age and level of the learners are concerned. Also, drills of the same modality (e.g. oral) should be grouped together so that the learners could discern easily how they should do the drills. In this book, new patterns are usually written under each other. Vertical lines separate identical grammatical structures (e.g. subjects, verbs) so that the learners could discern the identical structures. Unfortunately, Book Two from the series of GE lacks boxes, arrows, and other graphical devices that could help the learners to understand various patterns.

Due to the above-mentioned deficiencies in drill model and pattern displays of Book Two from the series of GE, its merit score – based on the presented rating scheme- would be 2.

Adequacy of Practice

Table 1 classifies the drills in Book Two from the series of GE. Moreover, as Table 2 shows, nearly a half of the drills are of transformation type, in which the learners change some sentences into negative, plural, etc .The drills are numerous, yet, since the focus is on transformation type of exercise, they do not represent a variety of drill types.

Table 1
Classification of Drills in GE, Book Two

Total 1	Communicative drills	Meaningful drills	Mechanical drills	GE Book2
103	9	1	93	

Table 2
Range of Various Types of Drills in GE, Book Two

Types of drills		Number	
Mechanical			
Transformation		41	
Verbatim repetition		20	
Completion		11	
Moving slot substitution		11	
Short answer		2	
Integration		4	
Expansion		2	
Single slot substitution		1	
Reduction		1	
Question/answer		0	
Meaningful			
Completion		0	
Describing pictures		1	
Reply		0	
Communicative			
Reply		9	

All communicative drills in Book Two from the series of GE are of reply type in which the learners are to answer some WH-questions. In short, the drills in the book are not distributed adequately to cover various types of drills and to provide appropriate opportunity for practicing the structures. Moreover, it seems that the drills are lengthy. There are drills which consist of twenty items. As far as the level of the learners is concerned, drills of this length are tiresome.

On the whole, there is mainly one class and one type of drills in Book Two from the series of GE - mechanical and transformational, respectively. Therefore, its merit score – based on the presented rating scheme- would be 1.

Grammar in RPE

Adequacy of pattern inventory

Book Two offers two tenses (present continuous and simple past), and three modal verbs (can, should, may), and distinguishes between mass and count nouns. It seems that the presentation of adjectives, adverbs, prepositions, and possessives in RPE is sufficient as far as the level of the series is concerned. Yet, it presents a few conjunctions in Book Two. It does not differentiate between nouns as modifiers and compound nouns. Therefore, it would be fair to score RPE's merit as 3.

Appropriate Sequencing

Book Two begins with the present continuous tense only in the statement form. Negative and question forms of this tense are not dealt with, the reason of which is not clear. The simple past tense of the verb "to be" with its various forms is presented in lessons 3 and 4. This is a new point which has no relationship with what comes before and after it, because in lessons 5, 6, 7, and 8 adjectives, possessives, mass / count nouns and how much / many questions are introduced. Moreover, all of these structures are constructed in the present tense. After that, the past tense of regular and irregular verbs is dealt with and finally three modal verbs are introduced. As the structures are presented in isolated blocks, some of the Units could be switched around without disturbing the order.

In Book Two, there is not a profound sequencing of the grammatical structures. Therefore, the RPE's merit – based on the presented rating scheme- would be scored as 2.

Adequacy of Drill Model and Pattern Displays

There are three kinds of drills in RPE. The titles that display these drills are "Oral drills", "Write it down", and "Speak out". Although there are models and examples for most of the drills to help the learners discern the exercises, some of the drills are just clarified by explanations written in English. Yet, the age and level of the learners require examples and not just explanations.

Basic structures of each lesson are displayed in boxes. The relationships between various patterns and the transformations that any specific structure may involve are illustrated by arrows and small boxes.

From the outset in Book Two, some grammatical terms and explanations are utilized. These are not necessary as far as the level of the learners is concerned. Moreover, the explanations may impel the learners to concentrate more on the grammarian's jargon than on aspects essential to language learning. Some of the drills are accompanied by pictures. And about ten type faces in black and red are used in RPE.

On the whole, drill models and pattern displays are adequate in RPE, and hence, its merit score would be 3.

Adequacy of Practice

As tabulated in Table 3, mechanical drills form the majority of the drills in RPE. In fact, Book Two does not provide enough chance for the learners to practice the structures communicatively. Mechanical drills are presented more than meaningful and communicative drills. As Table 4 shows that there are two main types of drills in RPE, completion and single slot substitution. These drills constitute more than half of all the drills in Book Two. Seven types of drills are repeated less than six times in the book. Although the drills in RPE are more divers than in GE, they are far from being exhaustive.

Table 3
Classification of Drills   in RPE, Book Two

RPE Book Two	Mechanical drills	Meaningful drills	Communicative drills	Total
	110	16	3	129

Table 4
Range of Various Types of Drills in RPE, Book Two

Types of drills		Number	
Mechanical			
Completion		28	
Single slot substitution		33	
Transformation		28	
Verbatim repetition		11	
Reply		1	
Expansion		4	
Word order		2	
Describing pictures		0	
Moving slot substitution		2	
Integration		1	
Meaningful			
Completion		13	
Reply		1	
Two stage drills		0	
Describing pictures		0	
Drawing		0	
Expansion		1	
Transformation		1	
Communicative			
Reply		0	

In summary, there are mainly one class and two types of drills in RPE --mechanical, and completion and single slot

substitution. The length of the drills seems appropriate. Nevertheless, RPE does not present an adequate number of meaningful and communicative drills. Therefore, its merit score – based on the presented rating scheme- would be 2.

Content

The third issue dealt with is content. In this section, the content represented in GE and RPE series are analyzed.

Content in GE

This section aims at evaluating the content of GE on the basis of functional load, rate and manner of entry and re-entry, and the appropriateness of contexts and situations.

Functional Load

Book Two presents expressions such as "I am happy to have you.", "What grade are you in?", "Of course", etc. Yet, these expressions are presented only once or rarely twice throughout the book. The expressions used in naming the months are presented nearly at the end of Book Two. It is while such expressions for naming the days, months, etc. must be and could be used much earlier. In other words, GE does not benefit from the structures and expressions appropriately as far as functional load is concerned. Accordingly, its merit score would be 1.

Rate and Manner of Entry and Re-Entry

Book Two does not present a quite balanced rate of entry of vocabulary. For example, Unit 13 presents 27 new words, while Unit 16 introduces only 8 new words. These two units present the most and least number of new words in this book. As far as the re-entry of grammatical structure is concerned, "how many/much" questions introduced in Unit 6 are not re-presented throughout the units succeeding this unit. And "comparison" which is presented in Units 15 and 16 is not reviewed in the succeeding units, too. Moreover, some words and grammatical structures do not play active roles in various units though they are introduced in GE.

Accordingly, the GE's merit score would be 1.5 as far as the rate and manner of entry and re-entry are concerned.

Appropriateness of Contexts and Situations

GE presents a lot of its vocabulary and grammatical structures in isolated sentences. Obviously, isolated sentences could not present appropriate contexts and situations because it is possible to attribute different meanings to an isolated sentence.

Regarding the appropriateness of contexts and situations, there is a dialogue in Unit One which is accompanied by a picture of a classroom. There are some students and a teacher in the classroom. Both the teacher and the students are males. In the dialogue the teacher says "We all speak English in the classroom". Such an utterance is not appropriate as far as the context of this dialogue is concerned. Since all of them (the teacher and the students) were already speaking English, there is no need to say such a sentence. Moreover, there is no relationship between this sentence and other sentences. In other words, this sentence breaks down with the propositional development of the dialogue. As such, it disturbs the coherence of the dialogue.

On the whole, GE does not provide appropriate contexts and situations in the dialogues. In almost all of the GE conversations, little attention is paid to those functions which often dominate in face-to-face interaction. Except for a few cases, a majority of dialogues in GE suffer from not being cohesive and coherent. Also, in nearly all of these dialogues, the emphasis is often on usage rather than use. Considering all of the above serious deficiencies, GE lacks any merit as far as the appropriateness of contexts and situations is concerned and its score would be 0.

Content in RPE

This section aims at evaluating the content of RPE on the basis of the functional load, rate and manner of entry and re-entry, and appropriateness of contexts and situations

Functional Load

Various expressions of greeting, leave-taking, and courtesy are introduced throughout Book Two. They are: "Hello", "How are you?", "Fine, thank you", "Not too bad", "Nice to see you", "See you tomorrow", "That's too bad", and "Thank you".

These expressions are presented as formulas and their structures are not analyzed for the learners. They are presented in dialogue of each unit; they are often repeated near the end of that unit with some of its words replaced by blanks to be filled in by the learners. These mechanical "fill in the blanks" drills form the only type of exercise for practicing the above-mentioned expression. The simple present tense of "to be "and "to have" are presented before irregular verbs because of their functional load. Both of these verbs are also re-presented throughout RPE.

In brief, RPE presents some words, expressions, and structures with respect to their functional load. However, RPE overemphasizes greeting without providing appropriate opportunities for the learners to practice the introduced functions. Therefore, RPE's merit would be scored as 2.5.

Rate and Manner of Entry and Re-Entry

The rate of introducing new words in the units of RPE Book Two ranges from 10 to 25, but a majority of it introduces one to three grammatical structures. Such a rate of entry of grammatical structures seems to be adequate because it supports Tucker's suggestion (1975) that in early units, vocabulary should be introduced sparingly. Nevertheless, the re-presentation of some of them is not adequate. For instance, the present continuous tense is presented in lesson two of Book Two, but it is not re-presented throughout the book. Also, the simple past tense of the verb "to be", which is introduced in Units 3 and 4, does not play any role in the four succeeding lessons. In this respect, Tucker (1975) remarks that if a verb tense is introduced, it should play a substantial part in the majority of the units. In RPE, the presentation of the mentioned grammatical structures does not follow such a manner.

RPE, on the whole, introduces the structure properly, but the introduction of vocabulary and expressions has some inadequacies.

On the other hand, the re-entry of structures is not appropriately handled. Therefore, its merit score would be 2.5

Appropriateness of Contexts and Situations

RPE offers a systematic presentation of dialogues. With the exception of the first unit, each of the units of Book Two consists of a dialogue which is accompanied by pictures.

Dialogues 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 11, and 12 of Book Two, totally or partially, display the English language usage. If a question is asked in these dialogues, it is not for the manipulation of language in communication, but for exhibiting a grammatical point. In addition, some of the dialogues in RPE have special inadequacies, for example, in the second dialogue of Book Two, Reza calls Ali, but this is Ali who asks all the questions. Generally speaking, one expects to know why Reza calls Ali. On the contrary, not only does Ali ask all of the questions, but also he finishes up the conversation and wants Reza to call him later.

In summary, the dialogues in RPE basically deal with English usage. Even in this respect, some of the utterances are not appropriate. It needs to be pointed out that English usage could be handled directly in drills, and dialogues should be left for the presentation of natural English utterances. Therefore, the emphasis which is put on usage in RPE's dialogues is not appropriate. On this basis, RPE's merit – based on the presented rating scheme-would be scored as 0.5.

Conclusion

In this study, Book Two from the series of Graded English (GE) and Right Path to English (RPE) were compared and contrasted. The advantages and disadvantages of each series were evaluated for pronunciation, grammar, and content on the basis of Tucker's (1975) evaluation system.

Based on the analysis of the two series, the researchers found no considerable differences between GE and RPE. The major difference lies in the pronunciation criteria in which GE has several serious inadequacies which should have obviously been

amended in RPE. However, RPE does not accomplish completely the GE's deficiencies in the domain of pronunciation.

GE and RPE are best esteemed on the grammar criteria. This reveals, on the one hand, the fact that they are fundamentally based on the structural views of syllabus design, on the other hand, the point that RPE does not correct completely the inadequacies of GE as far as the fundamental concepts of syllabus design are concerned. In other words, RPE does not operate beyond the structural syllabus, and its superiority over GE is quantitative rather then qualitative. That is, RPE presents the structural syllabus better than GE. It presents and practices better structural exercises. If we consider the seventh criterion (adequacy of practice) in which communicative aspects of drills, on the basis of Paulston and Bruder (1976) classification of grammar exercises are also taken into consideration, RPE and GE gain the least merit in the area of grammar. In other words, RPE does not present and practice the English grammar as far as communicative competence is concerned.

The shortcomings of GE and RPE with regard to the communicative aspects of language teaching – or specifically syllabus design and text construction – are much more revealed in applying the content criteria, and specially the tenth criterion which inspects the appropriateness of contexts and situations. In this respect, GE lacks any merit and RPE gains only marginally.

As it was remarked earlier, the authors of RPE claimed that they had tried to incorporate the recent improvement in language teaching and learning in designing RPE. The results of this study show that RPE did employ the recent improvement only in some areas. RPE achieves better scores in the grammar and the content criteria.

On the whole, the results of this study, reveal that RPE does not cover up most of the inadequacies and deficiencies of GE. Moreover, it fails to incorporate the recent findings in syllabus design and text construction. In other words, the development of RPE is not, by and large, a step forward towards constructing an up-to-date series for teaching English in Iranian schools. Generally speaking, the two textbook series are found to have

overemphasized the practice of the linguistic forms, and not many of their language learning activities actually include activities which stimulate or lead to authentic communication and language use.

To sum up, these textbooks cannot meet the learners' and the teachers' needs within the Iranian educational system, and it is a bit strange that they still emphasize structural methods and ignore the communicative role of the language.

The Author

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Appendix

Tucker (1975) Textbook Evaluation Model

I. INTERNAL CRITERIA
PRONUNCIATION CRITERIA
Completeness of presentation
Appropriateness of presentation
Adequacy of practice
GRAMMAR CRITERIA
Adequacy of pattern inventory
Appropriate sequencing
Adequacy of drill model & pattern display
Adequacy of practice
CONTENT CRITERIA
Functional load
Rate & manner of entry & reentry
Appropriateness of contexts and situations
II. EXTERNAL CRITERIA
Authenticity of language
Availability of supplementary materials
Adequate guidance for non-native teachers
Competence of the author
Appropriate level for integration
Durability
Quality of editing and publishing
Price & Value