Research Paper

Merits and Demerits of the Newly-developed English Textbooks (Vision): High School Teachers' Perspectives

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Abstract

Over the past few decades, research in language learning and teaching has highlighted the role of teachers' perceptions about English language teaching and learning in educational administration and materials planning. Recently, there has been a reform in Iranian high school English textbooks, developing new series of course books called "Prospect" and "Vision". Hence, the need for exploring teachers' perceptions about these newly-published textbooks is felt. Thus, the present study aims to investigate teachers' perceptions about these textbooks (Vision series) in Iranian high schools to understand both challenges and difficulties associated with this change and opportunities and advantages of the changed textbooks for teachers teaching them. To this end, a textbook evaluation questionnaire was generated based on the guidelines of Richards (2001) and distributed among 56 high school teachers. Then from the pool of the participants, ten experienced and novice teachers attended the interview. SPSS software was used to analyze the questionnaire data and the interview data was analyzed using content analysis. The findings revealed that the majority of the participating teachers approved the curriculum innovation and reform. However, they stated that the experts who were involved in materials development seemed to have ignored teachers' perceptions about the necessity of this reform and their readiness for it. This study, thus, has clear implications that teachers' perspective can be included in curriculum innovation to improve the quality of the educational system.

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1 Introduction

Nowadays, in educational practices throughout the world, textbook evaluation has gained momentum mainly because textbooks play a vital role in education. In fact, they are considered as the means of conveying the required materials and knowledge between teachers and students. Research has indicated that textbook is an important and dominant medium in the classroom. In fact, the use of textbook can help learners to achieve their learning goals and provide a road map for them to find their way (Supriadi, 1999; Paul, 2003). Similarly, O' Neil (1990) contends that textbooks are written in accordance with students' needs, even if they are not designed specifically for them. In the last decades, textbook evaluation began to construct checklists to analyze the books in detail to assure their usefulness and practicality considering such factors as learners' gender, proficiency level and needs, as well as course objectives and many other contextual factors. According to Ellis (1997) and Tok (2010), textbook evaluation helps teachers to go beyond impressionistic assessments and helps them to acquire useful, accurate, systematic and contextual insights into the overall nature of textbook material. Thus, the role of textbook evaluation in each curriculum is inevitable.

Moreover, textbook is the main tool a teacher uses in the teaching and learning processes and therefore, teachers' perception towards the textbook they use can have a critical role in this process. Definitely, any reform or innovation in textbooks is done on the basis of a thorough needs analysis in which the existing curriculum has been examined. It is important to remember that due to the nature of needs with a large variety of sources, material developers are required to consult various stakeholders, the most relevant ones being teachers, mainly because they are the only individuals who are in close contact with students' needs and classroom requirements. This indicates a need to understand the various challenges that teachers (experienced and novice ones) deal with as a result of such innovations. Therefore, the aim of this study is to shed light on teachers' perceptions and opinions towards the newly-published textbooks in Iranian high schools. It intends to understand challenges and difficulties associated with this change as well as opportunities and advantages, if any, that the changed textbooks might have for teachers teaching them.

2 Literature Review

One of the most significant changes in language learning and teaching over the past few decades has been the role of teachers' beliefs about English language teaching and learning in educational administration and materials planning. Teachers' perceptions and opinions towards changing textbooks are important issues considered in several studies (Bernat & Gvozdenko, 2005; Breen, 2001).

Beliefs are significant in every area related to human behavior and learning (Ajzen, 1988, Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975; Gilakjani & Sabouri, 2017). Zheng (2009) has noted that significant ideas in comprehending teachers' thought processes, teaching methods, and teacher training can be defined as teachers' beliefs. Li (2012) declared that beliefs have a significant role in language teaching.

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Gilakjani and Sabouri (2017) declared that beliefs help persons make sense of the world, affecting how new information is understood, and whether it is accepted or rejected. Teachers' beliefs have a greater effect than the teacher' knowledge on planning their lessons, on the types of decisions they adopt, and on classroom practice (Gilakjani & Sabouri, 2017). According to Gilakjani and Sabouri (2017), Kunt (1997) and Wang (1996), the terms "opinions" and "ideas" or "views" refer to "beliefs." Sixty four works in the field of foreign and second language teaching have been reviewed by Borg (2003) revealing the differences between different teachers' beliefs or opinions. Gilakjani and Sabouri (2017) stated that teachers' beliefs are very significant in comprehending the difficulty of teaching and learning issues and setting up better education programs. Donaghue (2003) noted that the acceptance of new methods has been taken effect by teachers' beliefs and it is a significant character in teachers' beliefs. Teachers should know their course content via refining it through their belief systems and teacher development programs must provide opportunities for teachers to reflect on their beliefs about teachers and teaching (Gilakjani & Sabouri, 2017; Johnson, 1994).

Textbooks are commodities, political objects, and cultural representations. Therefore, they are the site and result of struggles and compromise to determine how and by whom they will be produced, how and by whom their contents will be selected, how and to whom they will be distributed, and how teachers and students will make use of them (Mohammadi & Abdi, 2014; Shannon, 2010). Tomlinson & Masuhara (2018) contend that the textbook has a very significant and a positive role in teaching and learning of

English. Regarding the multiple roles of textbooks in ELT, Cunningsworth (1995) and Tok (2010) identified a textbook as a resource in presenting the material, a source for learners to practice and do the activities. Rea-Dickins and Germaine (1994, p.4) declared that "evaluation is an intrinsic part of teaching and learning". Tok (2010) mentioned some benefits of evaluation: "Evaluation plays a key role in education and it is important for the teacher since it can provide valuable information for the future going of classroom practice, the planning of courses and management of learning tasks by students"(p.509) . He also added that evaluation is fundamental for the use of instructional materials such as textbooks.

Findings have been reported in ELT, often in relation to the introduction of communicative curricula (Orafi & Borg, 2009). In Japan, for example, it was found that while policy emphasized the development of students' communicative ability and attention to all four macro skills, "Japanese teachers' current orientation toward foreign language learning seemed to be that strong teacher control was desirable and that students needed to memorize, use written mode, and be very accurate" (Gorsuch, 2000, p. 137).

In Taiwan, research also identified a strong tension between new ELT textbooks featuring communicative language teaching activities and established grammar-translation teaching practices (Wang, 2002; Orafi & Borg, 2009). For example, Levitt (2001) argues that "if teachers' beliefs are incompatible with the philosophy of science education reform, a gap is formed between the intended principles of reform and the implemented principle of reform, potentially inhibiting essential changes"

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(p.1).Thus, as Breen et al. (2001) claimed , "any innovation in classroom practice from the adoption of a new technique or textbook to the implementation of a new curriculum has to be accommodated within the teacher's own framework of teaching principles " (p. 472).

In Iranian EFL context, a new curriculum based on communicative principles was introduced in 2012 as well. In comparison to the previous curriculum, a remarkable change has occurred in teaching methodology, materials and in the assumptions about language, teaching and learning. The first official English textbooks for the Iranian context were developed by a team of Iranian and English-speaking English language teaching (ELT) specialists in 1939. The series was developed on the basis of the current trend of the time, i.e., the Direct Method (DM) and Reading Method (RM). Then, there was a shift in general trend in teaching methodology. Foroozandeh (2011) also mentioned that Situational Language Teaching (SLT) encouraged the material developers to edit the textbook based on SLT principles. The post-revolution English textbooks can be divided into three periods, namely 1982_ 90, 1991_ 2010 and the new English for school series from 2013 to date. The first revision to the English textbooks after the Islamic Revolution occurred in 1982 and remained effective until 1990. In 1991, Grade 4 was replaced by a new level named Pre-university for students intending to go to university. The English textbook for the Pre-university level was divided into Book one and Book two in a single volume. The English for schools series, Prospect and Vision, based on CLT principles, include a students' book and a workbook. Prospect 1, 2, and 3 have been used in junior high schools since 2013, 2014, and 2015 respectively, and 'Vision' series have been used in senior high school since the beginning of the academic year (2016).

With respect to the importance of textbooks in language learning which is used as a road map to the accomplishment of instructional goals, research is still needed to look into ways to provide insight into textbook effectiveness. The present study aims to investigate Iranian EFL high school teachers' perceptions towards the newly-published high school English textbooks. To this end, the following research questions have been posed and investigated:

1- What are teachers' perceptions towards the newly-published English language textbooks in Iranian high school?

2- What are the benefits and challenges of these textbooks from teachers' viewpoint?

3 Method

3.1 Participants

The participants of the present study included 56 English teachers from different cities of Iran. The teachers filled out the questionnaire through an internet link. 10 male and female teachers who were between 24 to 50 years old and with different teaching experiences were selected for interview based on purposive sampling, i.e., teachers who could provide the relevant information and were willing to be interviewed were selected. Table 1 demonstrates the demographic features of these participants.

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Table 1 Demographics of the participant teachers in the interview

Participants	Age	Gender	Level of education	Years of experience
Experienced teachers:				
P #1	50	Male	PhD in TEFL	27
P #2	40	Male	MA in TEFL	19
P #3	34	Female	MA in TEFL	12
P #4	36	Female	MA in TEFL	11
P #5	34	Female	MA in TEFL	12
Novice teachers:				
P #6	30	Female	MA in TEFL	3
P #7	24	Female	MA in TEFL	3
P #8	26	Female	BA in TEFL	4
P #9	26	Female	BA in TEFL	3
P #10	34	Female	MA in TEFL	4

3.2 Materials and Instruments

The materials under investigation in this study were Vision series, English language textbooks compiled by Alavimoghadam et al. (2016) that have been employed in high schools since 2016. This series comprises three books: Vision 1, 2 and 3. The books were designed based on a similar pattern and structure. Each unit includes the following sections: get ready, conversation, new words and expressions, reading, grammar, listening and speaking, pronunciation, and writing. Vision 1 includes four units and vision two and three comprises three units.

The instruments used in this study were a questionnaire and a qualitative semi-structured interview. The quantitative textbook evaluation questionnaire used in this study was generated based on Richards' (2001) checklist. It consisted of five parts, each focusing on different aspects of newly published English language texts books and the teachers' beliefs about these aspects. Part A focused on practical consideration of the new series books; it also consisted of questions in which participants were asked to state their beliefs on the practical consideration of these books. Part B was related to language content; it consisted of questions in which participants were asked to state their beliefs on the facilities required in the classes during their instruction. Part C focused on aims and approaches. In this part, participants were asked to state their beliefs on the students' different needs and the purposes of the new series books. Part D was related to teacher's books in which they stated their beliefs on the availability and usefulness of supplementary materials, including teachers' guide book, work book and CD. Part E was related to skills and methodology and participants were asked to state their beliefs about the four main English language skills and their perceptions, opinions and readiness toward the newly-published textbooks.

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The questionnaire was piloted with 21 participants and the Cronbach alpha reported was (.81).

To get more detailed information from the data and to obtain teachers' viewpoints towards these series of textbooks, a semi-structured interview with questions taken form Grant's (1987) CATALYST checklist was used in this study. Interviews focused on points of interest from questionnaire. The interviewees were given the opportunity to disclose in detail and expand on any topic which seemed to be significant from their experience. The questions also attempted to focus on the difficulties, challenges, benefits and drawbacks of the newly published high school textbooks which they thought were important to share.

3.3 Procedure

The initial version of the textbook evaluation questionnaire was first given to 5 experts in the field for its content validity and its applicability to the content of the study. Then, ten teachers were consulted for the clarity of the items. The pre-testing and piloting of the questionnaire was done using the following procedures: the questionnaire was distributed among student- teachers who were doing their MA or PhD in ELT; from a total of 40 questionnaires distributed, 27 were returned. After piloting, necessary changes and modifications were made on the questionnaire.

Then, based on the result of Cronbach Alpha reliability coefficient of the initial questionnaire (0.81), the adapted questionnaire was sent to teachers from across the country via an internet link. Then, for the next phase based on convenient sampling, some of the teachers

who have responded to the questionnaire were contacted. A semi-structured interview was conducted with these teachers who had consented to be interviewed to investigate the difficulties, challenges, benefits and drawbacks of the new series of high school textbooks. All the interviews have been audio-recorded, transcribed, coded and analyzed.

3.4 Data Analysis

The quantitative data collected by the questionnaire was analyzed descriptively using SPSS (22). All the interviews have been audio-recorded, transcribed and content analyzed to discover the difficulties, challenges, drawbacks and benefits of new series textbooks from the teachers' viewpoint.

4 Results and Discussion

4.1 Results

4.1.1 The results of the quantitative part of the study

The first phase explored teachers' perceptions about different sections of the new series of high school textbooks. The questionnaire included five sections of practical considerations, language content and technology, aims and approaches, teacher's books, skills and methodology. The questionnaire consisted of twenty-six statements on a 5 point Likert scale ranging from "strongly disagree" to "strongly agree".

In the first section, teachers were asked about the practical considerations of the textbooks under question. Table 2 illustrates the results.

Table 2 *Practical considerations category*

1	Practical considerations	1 %	N	2 %	n	3 %	n	4 %	n	5 %	n
a	The changes in newly-published English language textbooks in Iranian high school (vision 1, 2 and 3) are useful.	5.5	3	25.5	14	5.5	3	61.8	34	1.8	1
b	The newly-published English language textbooks are more challenging for teachers.	1.8	1	25	14	8.9	5	55.4	31	8.9	5
c	The main challenges for teachers are speaking and listening skills.	1.8	1	21.4	12	8.9	5	37.5	21	30.4	17
d	The newly-published English language textbooks are more challenging for students.	1.8	1	14.3	8	26.8	15	42.9	24	14.3	8
e	The main challenges for students are speaking and listening skills.	5.4	3	14.3	8	14.3	8	42.9	24	23.3	13
f	Teachers need to design appropriate tasks to teach different skills.	1.8	1	10.7	6	41.1	23	35.7	20	1.8	1
g	Teachers need to be familiar with CLT and use suitable techniques.	0	0	7.1	4	7.1	4	51.8	29	33.9	19
h	The diversity of economic and social conditions has been considered by authors of the newly-published English language textbooks.	10.7	6	37.5	21	25	14	23.2	13	3.6	2
i	The changes cover or pay attention to the needs of different students in different areas such as, urban, rural or deprived area.	21.4	12	30.4	17	12.5	7	26.8	15	8.9	5

*1= Strongly disagree, 2= Disagree, 3= Undecided, 4= Agree, 5= Strongly agree.

Table 2 illustrates that the majority of teachers approved the usability of the new series. However, they believed that these books were more challenging for them. The majority of teachers also mentioned two skills such as speaking and listening as the main challenges.

In addition, most of the teachers did not have any specific opinions about the designing of suitable tasks for each skill while (35.7%) of teachers strongly agreed

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with the idea that teachers need to design appropriate tasks to teach different skills in their classes. The author of these books claimed that these books are based on CLT (Communicative Language Teaching) approach, and most of the teachers (51.8%) reinforced this claim that they need to be familiar with this concept and its techniques for effective instruction. The analysis also indicated that the diversity of economic and social conditions, as well as the needs of different students in different urban, rural or deprived areas (3.6%and 8.9%) were not considered effectively.

Table 3 *Language content and technology category*

2	Language content & Technology	1		2		3		4		5	
		%	N	%	N	%	n	%	n	%	n
a	The newly-published English language textbooks apply to different students with different abilities, interests and learning styles.	12.5	7	48.2	27	16.1	9	17.9	10	5.4	3
b	It is possible to use media in your classes, such as computer or mobile.	10.7	6	16.1	9	8.9	5	39.3	22	25	14
c	Classrooms have been equipped with the facilities (such as computer, laptop and other devices) to be used during the instruction.	30.4	17	33.9	19	1.8	1	25	14	8.9	5
d	Different computer softwares and mobile applications related to the content of the newly-published English language textbooks are easily available to enhance instruction.	21.4	12	33.9	19	10.7	6	25	14	8.9	5

*1= Strongly disagree, 2= Disagree, 3= Undecided, 4= Agree, 5= Strongly agree.

Table 3 reveals that the majority of teachers believe that students' different abilities, interests and learning styles have not been recognized by the new series. Although the majority of teachers admitted the possibility of using media in classes, such as computer or mobile, they stated that different computer software and mobile applications related to the content of these textbooks are not easily available to enhance instruction. In addition, responses indicated that most of the classrooms were not equipped with facilities (such as computer, laptop and other devices) to be used during the instruction.

Table 4 *Aims and approaches category*

3	Aims & approaches	1		2		3		4		5	
		%	n	%	N	%	n	%	n	%	n
a	The students' real needs of learning English as a foreign language have been considered by the authors.	16.4	9	32.7	18	18.2	10	25.5	14	7.3	4

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b	These newly-textbooks cover the students' English needs in a real world.	10.9	6	49.1	27	18.2	10	18.2	10	3.6	2
c	The newly-published English language textbooks' priorities match the teachers' priorities.	10.9	6	38.2	21	27.3	15	20	11	3.6	2
d	The purpose of these newly-published English language textbooks correspond with the purpose of Konkur exam	36.4	20	29.1	16	7.3	4	21.8	12	5.5	3

*1= Strongly disagree, 2= Disagree, 3= Undecided, 4= Agree, 5= Strongly agree.

The students' need is divided into two categories, such as their needs for learning English as a foreign language and their needs for English for communicative purposes in the real world. Thus, based on the analysis, it is clear that neither of the needs was addressed by the authors. Moreover, the analysis illustrates that all of the teachers have their own priorities; a minority of teachers (23.6%) believed that their priorities matched the new textbooks' priorities. This is while the rest of the teachers (47.1%) did not think so, and (27.3%) had undecided opinions.

So far as Konkur (University Entrance Exam) and final exam goals were concerned, a great majority of teachers (65%) believed that the purpose of these textbooks did not correspond with that of Konkur.

Table 5 *Teacher's books category*

4	Teacher's books	1		2		3		4		5	
		%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n
a	All the supplementary materials such as, teachers' guide book, work book and CD are available for teachers.	12.7	7	36.4	20	5.5	3	36.4	20	9.1	5
b	All the supplementary materials such as, teachers' guide book, work book and CD are useful for teachers.	9.1	5	21.8	12	16.4	9	43.6	24	9.1	5
c	Teachers' books are well-organized, of high quality and useful in enhancing instruction.	10.9	6	36.4	20	16.4	9	32.7	18	3.6	2

*1= Strongly disagree, 2= Disagree, 3= Undecided, 4= Agree, 5= Strongly agree.

Table 5 contains three aspects of availability, usability, and purposefulness of supplementary materials such as, teachers' guide book, work book and CD. The analysis reveals that the majority of teachers did not approve the availability and usefulness of the mentioned supplementary materials. In other words, these supplementary materials are not easily available for teachers to be used during their instruction and even if accessible, they are not much useful.

Furthermore, all of the Vision series have teachers' guide books, but not in

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printed form and teachers should download them from the internet. The analysis also illustrates that most of the teachers do not find teachers' books well-organized, and do not think that they enjoy the high quality which can enhance instruction.

Table 6 Skills and Methodology category

5	Skills & Methodology	1		2		3		4		5	
		%	N	%	N	%	n	%	n	%	n
a	Teachers have enough time to attend to all four main English language skills, such as Speaking, Listening, Reading and writing in their instructions.	32.7	18	36.4	20	7.3	4	18.2	10	5.5	3
b	The time per week allowance designated for teaching these newly-published English language textbooks is appropriate.	31.5	17	37	20	9.3	5	20.4	11	1.9	1
c	Teachers' readiness for the change of textbooks has been considered or investigated.	10.9	6	38.2	21	32.7	18	16.4	9	1.8	1

*1= Strongly disagree, 2= Disagree, 3= Undecided, 4= Agree, 5= Strongly agree.

According to the analysis of skills, for teaching these newly-published English language textbooks, two times per week have been allocated (3 hours for Vision 1 and 2, 4 hours for Vision 3). The analysis reveals that based on the designated time, most of the teachers believe that there is not enough time per week to attend to all four main English language skills, such as Speaking, Listening, Reading and writing in their instructions. Some teachers stated that their perceptions and readiness have been considered or investigated by the experts involved in educational administration and material planning. However, the majority of teachers (55.6% and 49.1%) stated that the experts involved in educational administration and materials planning have ignored teachers' perceptions about and readiness for this innovation.

4.1.2 The results of the qualitative part of the study

Grant's (1987) CATALYST checklist was used in the interview sessions. CATALYST is an acronym for Communicative, Aims, Teachable, Available add-ons, Level, Your impression, Student interest, and Tried and tested. For each of these concepts, one question was posed to be answered by the teachers. Additionally, two parts of this checklist with five questions were used to explore ten Iranian teachers' perceptions on the books in terms of the extent to which the textbooks suit students and teachers. In addition to these, the teachers were asked to explain the benefits/points of strength and difficulties/challenges of the new textbooks as well. The following sections report the findings of the interviews.

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4.1.2.1 Experienced teachers' perceptions toward the newly-published English language textbooks

Five experienced teachers' perceptions toward the new textbooks were sought in the interview. Based on the first part of the CATALYST, all of these teachers believed that the textbooks are not communicative and that the students are not able to use the language to communicate as a result of using the textbook.

All the teachers believed that the new textbooks for senior high school students (Vision 1, 2 and 3) were well-designed in comparison with the old ones. They also mentioned that the new publications differed from the previous books in terms of the implementation of new teaching approaches into the classroom. They believed that, although there are deficiencies in the teaching approach, yet it can be considered as a progress in the educational system.

When asked whether the textbook was attractive given the average age of the students, teacher1 said: "Overall, the books are much better than the old ones in terms of their layout and appearance. However, they don't reflect what I know about my students' needs and interests." This issue was also mentioned by teacher 5 who had more than 30 years of teaching experience. She was also of the same opinion that "what our high school students need to learn in English as a school subject is not communicating in English, They have far more different needs than this. Our students need some knowledge about the language to succeed in their university entrance examination". Another issue raised by this teacher was related to the teachers' guide. She believed that the guidebooks are not very useful especially for teachers who are not familiar with the communicative approaches. She added that "the books lack concrete and easy-to-follow suggestions for using communicative approaches in the classroom and due to this shortcoming, a lot of teachers resort to the old methods and teach the book content in the traditional methodology."

Another issue raised by these teachers was related to the vagueness of the goals of the books. They thought the books could neither improve students' communicative abilities in the real sense of the word nor help them in improving their general proficiency to the point to achieve good results in Konkur.

Teacher 3 mentioned this and believed that it was neither clear for teachers nor for learners what exactly is meant to be achieved at the end of the instruction. He said: "I don't really understand what exactly is being developed in the students!"

Additionally, all of the teachers mentioned the shortcomings of in-service classes. They thought that some in-service classes were held for teachers every once in a while. However, they were not compulsory. Additionally, they stated that these classes were not effective and did not help their instruction. As an example, one teacher elaborated on her opinion as follows: "The ministry of education itself did not provide any special assistance or classes for teachers. Thus, I myself participated in some classes out of the ministry of education. I paid the membership cost myself and attended some of these classes which were constructive. However, the reality is that it is not easy for my other colleagues to pay because it is not cheap".

Regarding the teaching approaches of the new publications, she also contended: "I

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should mention that some teachers are not familiar with CLT method completely, so they still use GTM. They need to participate in such classes. Therefore the ministry of education should provide easy access to such classes".

Most of the experienced teachers believed that teachers' readiness for an innovation seems to have been ignored by the experts involved in the educational administration and materials development. All in all, they thought that these problems might not be solved unless teachers' voices and concerns are heard and responded.

4.1.2.2 Novice teachers' perception toward the newly-published English language textbooks

The five novice teachers in this study were also interviewed and their opinions were sought about the books through the questions of the CATALYST checklist. Although none of these teachers have taught the old books, they were familiar with them and especially knew how they were taught. Similar to the experienced teachers, when they compared the new textbooks to the previous ones, they believed that the new series (Vision 1, 2 and 3) were well-designed in comparison with the old ones, and they also referred to the replacement of GTM (Grammar Translation Method) with CLT (Communicative Language Teaching) method as an improvement in Iranian high school books.

Something which was both interesting and surprising at the same time was that they said when they encountered any problems and sought their colleagues' advice, they realized that most of them still

were using GTM and audio-lingual methods in their classes.

Besides, they stated that the ministry of education should provide in-service classes for all teachers from urban, rural or deprived areas to enhance their knowledge and show how to teach the new publications.

One of the things that novice teachers were concerned about was the teachers' guide. Just like experienced teachers, all the interviewees thought the books were not useful and did not provide any help for inexperienced teachers.

4.1.2.3 Benefits and points of strength of the newly-published textbooks

The results of the experienced and novice teachers' perception toward the benefits, drawbacks, difficulties, and challenges were considered together. This section focuses on the benefits and strength of this reform from both experienced and novice teachers' viewpoint.

The analysis revealed that the majority of teachers approved CLT as the main strength of these books. In other words, they declared that shifting from GTM to CLT method was a benefit of Vision series.

The majority of teachers also believe that the topics of these books are more enjoyable and interesting in comparison with the previous books taught in high school.

Besides, the analysis demonstrates that the majority of teachers believe that the authors tried to cover four main skills (speaking, listening, reading, and writing). Although the time designated for teaching all of four skills is not enough, it somehow

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depends on the teachers' appropriate plans to contain all of four skills.

In addition, they referred that speaking and listening are two important skills that the authors put a great emphasize on them. The teachers emphasized the undeniable role of speaking and listening in CLT. However, one teacher had a little different view about this said that: "To tell the truth, I spend most of the time on speaking and listening when I teach Vision 1 and Vision 2. However, the story is different when I teach Vision 3. Everybody, I mean the head-teacher, the students, and their parents, and even I myself, want the University Entrance Examination (UEE)-oriented way of class management i.e., multiple choice questions govern the classes. Hence, I kiss goodbye to CLT in grade 12". In other words, it seems the matter is different in grade 12 in comparison with the two previous books in high school (Vision 1 & 2) because of the Konkur exam and its related issues. Moreover, based on the analysis of teachers' opinions, the purpose of the new series do not correspond with the purpose of Konkur exam.

Furthermore, the teachers added that these books have audio files that have been prepared in the format of a CD (compact disc) to improve students' listening skill. They should be used by both teachers and students as an essential supplementary material.

Finally, the analysis indicates that majority of teachers admitted that although these books have benefits in comparison with the previous books of high schools, they still need a great deal of revisions and improvements.

4.1.2.4 Difficulties and challenges of the newly- published textbooks

This category referred to the drawbacks, difficulties, and challenges of this reform from both experienced and novice teachers' viewpoints. The analysis shows that all of the teachers believed that the new books require multi-dimension revisions and improvements. However, they referred to some points as the main challenges as below.

The majority of teachers declared that these books have audio files that have been prepared in format of a CD (compact disc) to improve students' listening skill. These CDs should be used by both teachers and students as an essential supplementary material. Teachers stated that although these books have audio files, these files do not come with the textbooks, so the teachers themselves must download these files for themselves and even for students, and then deliver them to the students in a flash or CD format. Consequently, they recognized this issue as a fundamental weakness.

The majority of teachers also pinpointed the unavailability of equipment as the main difficulty in Vision series. The authors put a great emphasize on technology and stated that new series should be integrated with equipment, and the teachers should use CD, short movies, audio files and other computer software during their instruction to create an enjoyable atmosphere in their classes. All of the teachers confirmed the benefits of technology in CLT during instruction in their classes while stating that the lack of facilities makes it hard to use the technological equipment in the classroom. They also mentioned that the classes have not been equipped with any computers. They presented that not all classrooms

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have been equipped with the facilities such as laptop or computer. Furthermore, the authors have not considered different students' economic and social conditions in different urban, rural and deprived areas. As an example, one of the teachers noted: "Most classes in urban areas have not been equipped, and teachers themselves should bring their own laptop and speakers to the classes to play the audio files and short movies. I think rural and especially deprived areas face these challenges more, because the teachers may not have laptops. Thus, what should teachers do?". Another teacher explained his opinion in such a way: "IT depends on the school in which you teach. The more your school is pre-eminent, the more you will have the educational paraphernalia in the classrooms. If you teach in a remote mountain village, you have to close the eyes to the CLT. To me, justifying the merits of it to my head-teacher is a herculean job". Hence, teachers agreed with the great role of technology, still believing that schools still were not ready or well-equipped.

Besides, all teachers stated that the purpose of these books does not correspond with that of Konkur exam. They also noted that these books only emphasize the scoring rubric offered by the authors for the final exam. For example, two teachers' comments were noted as following: "Neither the recent version of English books nor the prior ones have cared the UEE. Actually, their missions are not the same. To me, the UEE mars and/or offends CLT", and "These books series especially Vision 3 have put a lot of emphasis on the writing skill. This is while Konkur exam contains vocabulary, grammar and reading parts. Thus, writing skill is not included in Konkur exam but the authors of the textbooks put a lot of

emphasis on it". Thus, they stated that it would be better if the writing section could have been changed and revised.

In addition, a large number of teachers admitted that Vision series does not support the idea(s) behind Prospect series, and in effect, they do not match and they have dissimilar lines. Many students, hence, face problems.

Almost all teachers believed that the books highly emphasized the source culture and ignored the target culture. The teachers indicated that various activities and tasks need to be designed to introduce students to the target culture because if students do not know and the target culture, they may have difficulties in their relations with people from other cultures.

Furthermore, all the teachers had the same opinion about the supplementary materials, such as teachers' guide book, and work book. The teachers admitted that generally speaking, the teachers' guidebook is helpful, yet the problem is their lack of accessibility. They also thought that the work book does not have interesting, useful, and comprehensive exercises to recognize students' extra problems and concepts which students have already studied from the textbook.

One of the teachers narrated his opinion about the drawbacks of the new series in this way: "There are scores of weaknesses. Some are tolerable, some are not. To me, what is infuriating and irksome is the linguistic errors in the three volumes". Other teachers also confirmed this claim that these books have some grammatical and linguistic errors.

In addition, they stated that they have written letters or emailed the authors to transfer their comments to the educational administrator. However, the

teachers' comments and opinions were not considered.

Finally, the majority of teachers believed that the experts who were involved in the educational administration and materials development seemed to have ignored high school teachers' perceptions and opinions about the necessity of this change based on teachers' current status and their readiness for such a huge reform.

4.2 Discussion

The purpose of this study was to investigate Iranian EFL high school teachers' perception towards the newly-published high school textbooks. The findings of the study have indicated that teachers are aware of the importance of textbooks in the foreign language classrooms. Although they stated that no EFL teaching situation is ideal, they generally had expectations to be considered by the experts who were involved in materials development.

An important finding of the present study was that some teachers appeared not to be integrating CLT method in their own classes frequently. As Donaghue (2003) noted, the acceptance of new methods is affected by teachers' beliefs and it is a significant character of teachers' beliefs. In addition, research in Taiwan identified a strong tension between new ELT textbooks featuring communicative language teaching activities and established grammar-translation teaching practices (Orafi & Borg, 2009; Wang, 2002). Thus, this conclusion can be made that the books failed to contribute to CLT method in the new books completely.

Another finding was that most of the teachers approved that teachers' beliefs

have an essential role in a text book curriculum innovation to improve the quality of the educational program. This finding is consistent with the findings of Gilakjani and Sabouri (2017), Zohrabi (2011) and Torki and Chalak (2017), stating that teachers' beliefs are very significant in comprehending the difficulty of teaching and learning issues and setting up better education programs.

Finally, teachers stated that the experts who were involved in materials have not considered teachers' readiness and perceptions toward new series of textbooks and curriculum innovation. Thus, this study is consistent with Gilakjani and Sabouri (2017) and Johnson (1994), implying that teachers should refine their course content through their belief systems and teacher development programs must provide opportunities for teachers to reflect on their beliefs about teachers and teaching.

The data revealed that teachers believed that their perceptions toward the benefits and strength of the books have a key role in educational reform. Hence, the result of this study is consistent with the findings of Könings, et.al. (2007) who examined the connection between successful performance of an educational reform and teachers' concern for that. They concluded that the reform must provide a powerful learning environment that increases learners' learning and problem-solving skills. Thus, as the results pointed out, teachers have the role of a coach rather than an instructor and they are more sensitive to learners' improvements and difficulties.

Based on the findings of the previous studies such as Könings, et.al. (2007), and Zohrabi (2011), who declared that teacher's perceptions and opinions toward

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curriculum innovation or reform are seen as an important factor in language programs, in this study, this seemed to have been overlooked.

Teachers also stated that the experts responsible for materials development highly emphasize the source culture and ignore the target culture. According to Corbett (2003), Zarei and Khalessi (2011), Sharif and Yarmohammadi (2013), as well as Tajeddin and Teimournezhad (2014), one of the main goals of language teaching is to enhance learners' understanding and tolerance of two different cultures, i.e., source culture and target culture.

Finally, the findings revealed that the majority of the participating teachers approved the curriculum innovation and reform. However, they stated that the experts who were involved in materials development seemed to have ignored teachers' perceptions and opinions about the drawbacks, difficulties, and challenges of these textbooks. In addition, the teachers believe that textbook curriculum innovation achievement cannot be obtained except by considering teacher's beliefs. Therefore, the results of this study is consistent with a previous study by Levitt (2001, p. 1), arguing that "if teachers' beliefs are incompatible with the philosophy of science education reform, a gap is formed between the intended principles of reform and the implemented principle of reform, potentially inhibiting essential changes".

5 Conclusion

To conclude, in the case of the new publications and their aims for the reform, the nature of the change does not seem to be defined sufficiently or be practically applicable in the classroom. Teachers involved in the study pinpointed some constraints regarding implementing the books which can create a barrier to introducing a new educational approach to language studies in schools.

On the one hand, this innovation seems to be part of a greater effort by the ministry of education as an attempt to improve the standard of English language teaching in high schools. On the other hand, the goal of utilizing a communicative approach to language seems to have been problematic at the classroom implementation level. This has been indicated by teachers to be the result of a lack of correspondence between the features of this approach and the specific needs and specified aims of high school students.

Today, everything is changing and developing rapidly. Science is no exception to this rule. Therefore, both the students and teachers should be aware of the scientific developments. As Pajares (1992) contends, teachers' beliefs have a greater impact on the learning process than their knowledge. In addition, students' beliefs about language learning may have an impact on their performance in class. Students' beliefs about language learning can also impact their language learning strategies (Wenden, 1987, Fazilatfar, et.al., 2015).Therefore, further studies should consider learners' beliefs as an important factor influencing the curriculum innovation in education. Also, learners' perception towards the newly-published high school textbooks, their challenges and concerns need to be investigated in future research.

The other suggestion is to conduct a further research that investigates the relation between teachers' and learners' beliefs on curriculum innovation.

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Moreover, in today's developing and globalized world, both teachers and students need to become more competent in using technology in language teaching and learning. This study found the technology as a main challenge for teachers and students. Thus, it is recommended to include teachers' and students' perceptions toward the role of technology in further research.

The participants of the research were limited to the teachers of the ministry of education. Hence, it is recommended to include the material developers, authors of the textbooks, and policy makers in ELT in Iran in further research.

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Appendix

Quantitative questionnaire

Iranian High School English Teachers' Beliefs about New Series of English language Textbooks

The purpose of this anonymous survey is to investigate Iranian high school English teachers' perceptions about the new series of English language textbooks. The data will be used for the completion of the master's degree in Teaching English as a Foreign Language (TEFL). If you are an EFL teacher at high school, you are kindly invited to participate in this project. I would be grateful for your cooperation in completing this questionnaire.

Your age: _____

Please respond to the statements as they apply to you. Decide whether you agree or disagree with each statement. For example, if you strongly agree, mark: (5) Agree (4) Undecided (3) Disagree (2) strongly disagree (1)

Strongly disagree (1)	Disagree (2)	Undecided (3)	Agree (4)	Strongly agree (5)

Please respond to each statement carefully. Try not to change your responses after you choose them. Please answer all the questions.

Practical considerations:					
I think that...	1	2	3	4	5
1. The changes in newly-published English language textbooks in Iranian high school (vision 1, 2 and 3) are useful.					
2. The newly-published English language textbooks are more challenging for teachers.					
3. The main challenges for teachers are speaking and listening skills.					
4. The newly-published English language textbooks are more challenging for students.					
5. The main challenges for students are speaking and listening skills.					
6. Teachers need to design appropriate tasks to teach different skills.					
7. Teachers need to be familiar with CLT and use suitable techniques.					

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8. The diversity of economic and social conditions has been considered by authors of the newly-published English language textbooks.				
9. The changes cover or pay attention to the needs of different students in different urban, rural or deprived areas.				
Language content & Technology:				
10. The newly-published English language textbooks apply to different students with different abilities, interests and learning styles.				
11. It is possible to use media in your classes, such as computer or mobile.				
12. Classrooms have been equipped with the facilities (such as computer, laptop and other devices) to be used during the instruction.				
13. Different computer software and mobile applications related to the content of the newly-published English language textbooks are easily available to enhance instruction.				
Aims & approaches:				
14. The students' real needs of learning English as a foreign language have been considered by the authors.				
15. These newly-textbooks cover the students' English needs in a real world.				
16. The newly-published English language textbooks' priorities match with the teachers' priorities.				
17. The purpose of these newly-published English language textbooks correspond with the purpose of Konkur exam.				
18. The purpose of these newly-published English language textbooks correspond with the scoring rubric offered by the authors for the final exam.				
Teacher's books:				
19. All the supplementary materials such as, teachers' guide book, work book and CD have been available for teachers.				
20. All the supplementary materials such as, teachers' guide book, work book and CD have been useful for teachers.				
21. Teachers' books are well-organized, of high quality and useful in enhancing instruction.				
Skills & Methodology:				
22. Teachers have enough time to attend all four main English language skills, such as speaking, listening, reading and writing in their instructions.				
23. The time allocated for teaching these newly-published English language textbooks per week is appropriate.				
24. The Teachers' perceptions and opinions toward changes in the newly-published textbooks have been considered by the experts involved in educational administration and material planning.				

25. The teachers' readiness for the innovation of newly-published textbooks has been considered or investigated.					
26. The teachers' perspectives to the potential and drawbacks of the newly-published textbooks have been considered.					

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