



TEACHERS' PERSPECTIVES ON NEW ELT TEXTBOOKS IN ESL CONTEXT. CROSS- SECTIONAL STUDY IN UZBEKISTAN.

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<https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.14826127>

ARTICLE INFO

Received:1st February 2025
Accepted:5th February 2025
Published:6 th February 2025

KEYWORDS

ABSTRACT

In recent years, the demand for English language teaching (ELT) materials has increased significantly in Uzbekistan, as English language learning has become a priority in the country's educational system.

Introduction

In response to this, government is constantly trying to reform textbooks and recently a total of 45 English language books for grades 1-11 developed by Cambridge Publishing House within the framework of the "Education Program for the Perfection of Uzbekistan" project implemented by the Ministry of Public Education in cooperation with the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) Informatics and information technology textbooks for grades 5-11 were localized and translated into Uzbek. Newly introduced ELT textbooks *Guess what?* Reed, S., & Bentley, K. (2015) and *Prepare!* book series Kosta, J., & Williams, M. (2015) are being implemented to meet the growing needs of English language teachers and learners. However, as Ellis (1997) argues, it is important that we should evaluate every single textbook used to teach a language. Likewise, since new ELT textbooks have been introduced by the ministry of education in 2021, no research has been done to evaluate the reliability/content of the ELT textbooks. As well, little is known about the perceptions and perspectives of English language teachers in Uzbekistan regarding the organization and format of these new ELT textbooks.

This study aims to explore the perceptiveness of English language teachers in Uzbekistan on the organization and format of the new ELT textbooks. By understanding the perspectives of teachers, this study seeks to assess the effectiveness and suitability of these textbooks in the ESL context of Uzbekistan.

Literature Review

The role and impact of textbooks in language education have been widely discussed in the literature. The textbook is an almost universal element of teaching, Hutchinson and Torres (1994). However, the effectiveness of ELT textbooks may vary depending on the specific context and the needs of teachers and students.

A study conducted by Mahmood, K (2011) examined the use of English language textbooks in Turkish primary school, and found them to be inadequate in terms of engaging students, providing authentic language input, and promoting communicative language use. Furthermore, it stated the content does not align with the proficiency level of the students.

Another study by Ahmadi, A., & Derakhshan, A. (2016) investigated teachers' perspectives as well as internationally and locally published textbooks used in Iranian high school and junior high schools. They found that even though the textbooks have some benefits in terms of a clear outline for teachers and learners, the textbooks also have several limitations such as in terms of neglecting communicative aspects of language learning and cultural understanding. This emphasizes the importance of textbooks in the classroom, and suggests to modify textbooks to better suit the needs and interests of the students. Several researchers (e.g., Litz, D. R. 2005; Jamalvandi, B. 2014; Ayu, M., & Inderawati, R. 2019) also did study on the evaluation of textbook, which shows its importance and relevance today.

These studies demonstrate the significance of understanding teachers' perceptions and perspectives on the organization and format of ELT textbooks. By considering the views of English language teachers in Uzbekistan, this research aims to bridge the gap in the literature and provide valuable insights into the reception and suitability of the new ELT textbooks introduced in Uzbekistan. By exploring these perspectives, this study will try to answer the following question;

What are the perceptions of English language teachers in Uzbekistan regarding the organization and format of the new ELT textbooks?

Methodology

For this research I used newly introduced ELT textbooks "Prepare" and "Guess what?" by Cambridge. These textbooks were introduced in Uzbekistan. Participants in this cross-sectional study included 29 English language teachers from across Uzbekistan who voluntarily participated in the survey based questionnaire. Among the participants, 8 were male and 21 were female. To ensure a diverse sample, teachers from different age groups, teaching experience levels, and regions were included. Thirteen participants were aged 20-30, 11 were aged 30-40, and 5 were aged 40 and above. Regarding teaching experience, 13 teachers had more than 5 years of experience, 8 teachers had 1-2 years of experience, 6 teachers had 3-4 years of experience, and 2 teachers had 1 year or less of experience. Participants represented various regions of Uzbekistan. The sample distribution was as follows: 15 from Tashkent, 3 from Andijan, 1 from Karakalpakstan, 1 from Namangan, 1 from Khoreizm, 2 from Surkhandarya, 1 from Bukhara, 1 from Kashkadarya, 2 from Jizzakh, 1 from Sirdarya, and 1 from Tashkent Region.

Data collection

The data for this study were collected through a questionnaire administered to the participant. It consisted of two sections, namely organization/format and content. This questionnaire included several rating scales, namely liker scale to evaluate the textbook and open-ended questions to get their further notes on both the survey and the ELT textbooks. Each section included several statements to evaluate the textbook. The evaluation was done in a liker scale format, with statements and scores where teachers tick their satisfaction level. 3 – fully evident, 2 mostly evident, 1 partially evident and 0 little or no evidence. To conduct the survey, the study used one of the highly know community of ESL in the country, the mentor hub. This mentor hub community has thousands of ESL teachers across the country who share and exchanges ideas. 29 English language teachers voluntarily participated in the survey with their comments on the newly introduced ELT textbook in Uzbekistan.

As for the **Organization/format**, it included several important points.

- *Information is accurate*

- Reading level is appropriate for age/grade
- Size and format of print is appropriate
- Format is visually appealing & interesting
- Instructions are clear

Content section of the survey included the following

- Real-life applications/ situations are given
- A variety of activities are included
- Activities are suitable for class.
- Non-text content (maps, graphs, pictures) are accurate and well-integrated into the text
- The content has been proofread and does not contain mistakes (grammar, spelling, etc.)
- Activities apply to a diversity of student abilities and interests
- Content is relevant to students
- Content is age appropriate

At the end of each section, there was a “further notes” part where some of them gave their opinion on the ELT textbooks.

To make sure the validity of the data collection process, I took several measures. First, the survey was pilot-tested with a small group of teachers to assess its clarity, understandability and its relevance to the research question. From the feedbacks received, some corrections and revisions have been made. Second, to ensure the anonymity in the survey and for the paper’s confidentiality, participants identities would remain anonymous throughout the study. Also, this survey’s aim was informed to the participants and their voluntary participation was emphasized.

Results/Discussion.

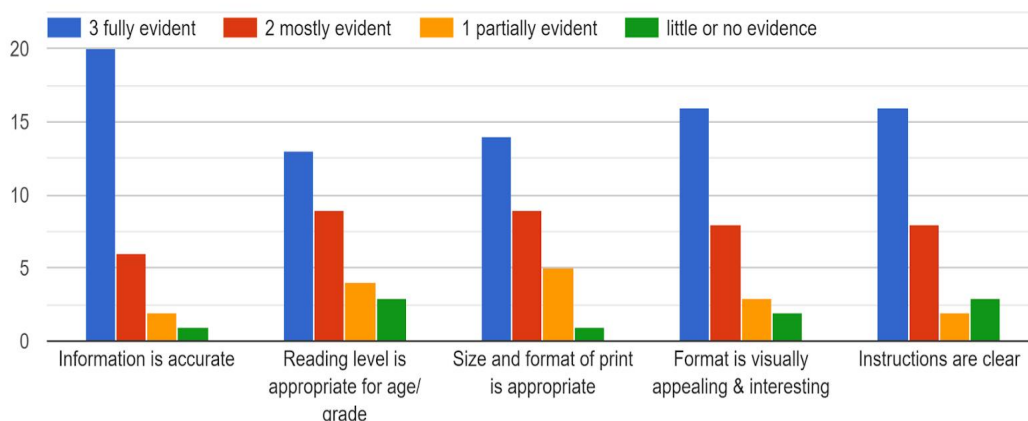


Figure 1. The chart indicates the results of the survey based on the organization/format of ELT textbooks

Based on the data collected from the survey, can be seen that most English teachers in Uzbekistan have positive perspectives regarding the organization/format of the newly introduced ELT textbooks, *Guess what?* Reed, S., & Bentley, K. (2015) and *Prepare!* book series Kosta, J., & Williams, M. (2015).

In terms of information accuracy, 20 out of 29 teachers rated it as fully evident, indicating that the content within the textbooks is reliable. Six teachers considered it mostly evident, suggesting that there might be some minor errors or inconsistencies in the information. However, overall, the high rating in this category shows that teachers perceive the new ELT textbooks to be reliable sources of information for their students to use in ESL context. Regarding the reading level, 13 teachers rated it as fully evident that the texts are appropriate both for the age and grade level of their students, indicating that the difficulty level matches the students' language proficiency level. Nine teachers considered it mostly evident, suggesting that there might be some texts that are slightly challenging or too easy for their students. This finding suggests that the majority of the teachers find the reading level of the new ELT textbooks suitable for their students. When it comes to the size and format of the print, 14 teachers rated it as fully evident that the size and format are appropriate. This result suggests that the font size and layout of the textbooks are visually clear and readable. Nine teachers considered it mostly evident, indicating that there might be some room for improvement in terms of print size and format to ensure better readability for all students. However, the overall positive ratings indicate that the majority of teachers find the size and format of the print satisfactory as well. The format being visually appealing and interesting, 16 teachers rated it as fully evident, indicating that the new ELT textbooks engage students visually and create interest in the content. Eight teachers found it mostly evident, suggesting that there might be some aspects of the format that could be enhanced to further captivate students. This finding indicates that the majority of teachers perceive the format of the new ELT textbooks to be visually appealing and interesting.

Lastly, for clear instructions, 16 teachers rated it as fully evident, suggesting that the instructions within the textbooks are easily understood by both teachers and students. Eight teachers considered it mostly evident, indicating that there might be some areas where the instructions could be clarified or improved. A small number of teachers, however, found it partially evident or little to no evident, implying that there are some issues with clarity in certain instructions.

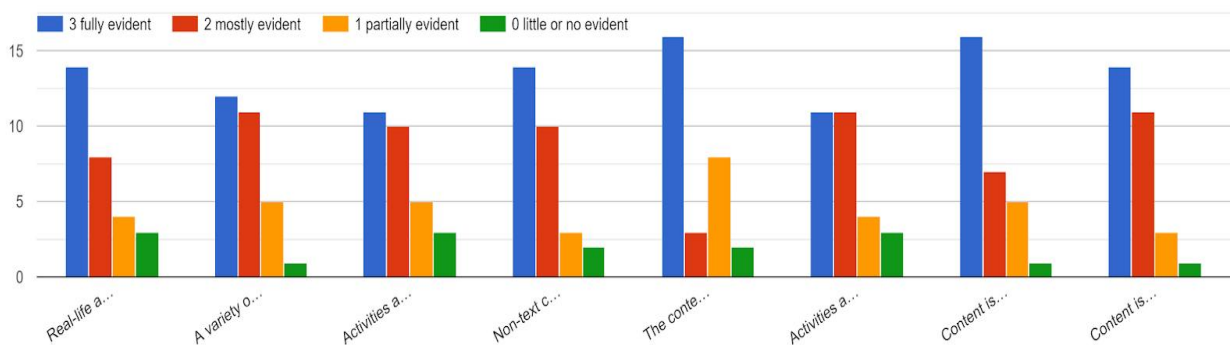


Figure 2. The chart indicates the results of the survey based on the content of ELT textbooks.

Based on the data collected from the survey, in figure 2, it is clear that most teachers are satisfied from the overall content of the textbooks.

As for Real-life applications/situations in the textbooks, 14 out of 29 teachers rated it as fully evident, suggesting that the textbooks provide relevant and practical examples for students to apply their language skills in real-world contexts. Eight teachers found it mostly evident, indicating that there might be some areas where the real-life applications/situations could be further integrated into the content.

Regarding the variety of activities included, 12 teachers rated it as fully evident, which means the textbooks provide a diverse range of activities for students to engage with and practice their language skills. 11 teachers found it mostly evident, suggesting that there might be a need for additional activity options in certain sections. This result indicates that the majority of teachers appreciate the inclusion of various activities in the new ELT textbooks. When it comes to activities being suitable for the class, 11 teachers rated it as fully evident. According to them, activities provided in the textbooks align with the needs and abilities of their students. Ten teachers found it mostly evident, indicating that there might be some activities that require modification or adaptation to better suit their specific classes. This finding suggests that while the majority of teachers find the activities suitable, there is room for improvement in terms of customization to meet the specific needs of different classes. In terms of non-text content (maps, graphs, pictures) being accurate and well-integrated into the text, 14 teachers rated it as fully evident, indicating that the visual aids provided in the textbooks are reliable and effectively integrated into the content. Ten teachers found it mostly evident, suggesting that there might be some instances where the accuracy or integration of the non-text content can be improved. When it comes to the content being proofread and free of mistakes, 16 teachers rated it as fully evident that the textbooks have been carefully edited and do not contain grammar, spelling, or other mistakes. Three teachers found it mostly evident, suggesting that there might be some minor errors present.

Regarding the activities applying to a diversity of student abilities and interests, 11 teachers rated it as fully evident, indicating that the activities cater to the different skill levels and interests of their students. Four teachers found it partially evident, suggesting that there might be a need for further differentiation in activities. This finding suggests that while the majority of teachers find the activities adaptable to different student abilities, there is room for improvement in terms of incorporating more varied options. As for the content being relevant to students, 16 teachers rated it as fully evident, indicating that the topics and themes covered in the textbooks are meaningful and relatable to their students. Seven teachers found it mostly evident, suggesting that there might be some areas where the content could be more closely aligned with student interests. Nevertheless, the high rating in this category indicates that the majority of teachers perceive the content to be relevant and engaging for their students. Finally, in terms of the content being age-appropriate, 14 teachers rated it as fully evident, indicating that the content of the new ELT textbooks is suitable for the age of their students. Eleven teachers found it mostly evident, suggesting that there might be some minor adjustments needed to better match the age group. This finding suggests that while the majority of teachers find the content age-appropriate, there is a need for careful consideration to ensure the highest level of suitability.

Findings

The majority of English language teachers in Uzbekistan have positive perceptions of the organization and format of the new ELT textbooks. These teachers find the content to be accurate, suitable for their students, visually appealing, and supported by clear instructions. They also appreciate the inclusion of real-life applications/situations and a variety of activities. However, there are areas for improvement, such as addressing minor errors, improving readability, enhancing the visual appeal, and providing clearer instructions. Overall, the teachers perceive the new ELT textbooks as beneficial and relevant for their students. While most teachers did not provide additional feedback, there were two teachers who made specific comments. One teacher noted that the textbooks are well-designed but lack sufficient time for students to practice. This teacher recommended allowing more time in lessons to complete all the activities. Another teacher suggested including syllables and pronunciation transcripts, particularly for words like "crocodile" that may be difficult for young students to pronounce without assistance.

Overall, the findings indicate a positive reception of the new ELT textbooks by teachers in Uzbekistan, with some constructive feedback for improvement. By addressing the suggestions provided, the textbooks can be further enhanced to meet the needs of English language learners in the country.

Limitations and Implications

There are several limitations of this mini research. First, the following study only examined 29 teachers by survey, which is relatively small number. Further studies are advised to sample larger number of participants to make sure the reliability a clear summary of ELT textbooks. And also, it cannot represent most teachers and exact conclusion cannot be drawn since it is compared to the large population. Second, this study examined the perceptions of teachers on textbooks. However, it did not survey from students'/learners' perceive which could have provided a more comprehensive understanding of the effectiveness and suitability of the new ELT textbooks by incorporating their opinions. Thirdly, this study examined perceive of teachers on only the organization/format and content of ELT textbooks but lacks other aspects, such as the language proficiency level targeted by the textbooks or the alignment with the curriculum standards in Uzbekistan, cultural diversity and equity. Evaluating these additional factors may provide a more reliable and thorough assessment of the textbooks. Further studies are recommended to consider this.

Finally, this study only examined the perceptions of teachers on newly introduced ELT textbooks and did not include a comparative study of the previous textbooks as well. This limits the understanding of how large the progress has been made by the government to achieve better reformation of education system.

Conclusion

This mini research tried to investigate teachers perceive on new ELT textbooks introduced by the ministry of education, Uzbekistan, 2021. The findings suggest that most teachers have positive perceptions of the textbooks, viewing them as accurate, appropriate for their students' level, visually appealing, and with clear instructions. In terms of content, teachers find it diverse, suitable for their classes, and relevant to their students. However, there are areas for improvement, such as further integration of real-life situations and customization of activities.

This mini study to the field by providing insights into the reception and suitability of the new ELT textbooks in Uzbekistan. It helps identify areas for improvement to better meet the needs and preferences of teachers and students. Future research should consider a larger

sample size, incorporate student perspectives, and examine additional factors such as language proficiency levels and curriculum.

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