Research Article

Vision 3 vis-à-vis Learning to Read: A Taxonomy-Based and Teacher-Oriented Evaluation of Reading Comprehension Skill

Mavadat Saidi[1*], Morteza Marooy[2], Niloofar Karami[3]

[1, 2, 3] *Shahid Rajaee Teacher Training University, Tehran, Iran*

*Corresponding author: m.saidi@sru.ac.ir

Abstract

Reading passages act as the locus of comprehensible input in the English language teaching materials and are mostly followed by a host of activities to ensure the learners' comprehension. The current study aimed to carry out a comparative evaluation of Vision 3 and Learning to Read (i.e., English for Pre-university Students) in terms of the reading sections. To this end, Freeman's taxonomy of reading comprehension questions was used. To enrich the quantitative data, thirty-two English teachers were also interviewed. The results revealed the prevalence of Language questions in both textbooks. However, the least common types of questions were Affect and Content in the old and new textbook, respectively. The results of Chi-square tests unfolded a significant difference between the two textbooks in terms of three categories of questions. The analysis of the teachers' responses corroborated the findings of the quantitative phase. The teachers seemed satisfied with the inclusion of more Affect questions in Vision 3; nevertheless, they believed that the new English textbook needed to be revised in terms of the quantity and quality of reading texts and tasks in order to shape and expand the students' reading comprehension skills. The findings carry pedagogical implications for the materials developers and English teachers.

Keywords: affect questions, content questions, language questions, reading comprehension questions, Vision 3, learning to read

Introduction

Making a wise selection of the textbooks puts the teaching and learning procedures on the right track (Byrd, 2001) and facilitates fulfilling the intended group of students' needs (Oltowski, 2003). Although using a textbook in English language teaching curriculum has always been a controversial issue with its own pros and cons (Ur, 1996), its evaluation has been and still is an unrivaled orthodoxy (Ansari & Babaii, 2002). The significance of textbook evaluation lies in its potential power to enhance the ELT practitioners' understanding of the merits and demerits of the presented content (Mirzaei & Tabatabaei, 2017; Torki & Chalak, 2017).

Accordingly, a large bulk of research has focused on unraveling the strong and weak points of ELT textbooks taught in Iranian mainstream education (See Saidi & Mokhtarpour, 2020). Nevertheless, these studies have had a summative approach to evaluate the English textbooks in their totality and provided a critical analysis of the linguistic and non-linguistic characteristics of the textbooks and none has adopted a micro-analytical approach to evaluate the presentation of a particular skill or component. Amidst several skills and components covered in ELT textbooks, reading comprehension enjoys high status due to its determining role in expanding the students' knowledge and enriching their learning experiences (Mckee, 2012). Reading skills not only develop the students' cognitive competencies but also boost their readiness to rise to the academic challenges they may encounter after entering the university (Atai, 2002). To assess the students' comprehension and ensure their understanding of the presented information, reading passages are mostly followed by numerous questions and activities (Grabe, 2009).

To date, diverse taxonomies have been put forth for evaluating the reading comprehension questions in ELT textbooks (Nuttal, 1996; Day & Park, 2005, cited in Baleghizadeh & Zakervafaei, 2020). More recently, Freeman (2014) critically reviewed the existing classifications and proposed a comprehensive framework and categorized the reading comprehension questions into three main types, namely Content, Language, and Affect questions. Content questions, including Explicit, Implicit, and Inferential comprehension subcategories, aim to assess the students' comprehension of

the overtly or covertly imparted information. Language questions include Reorganization, Lexical, and Form types and rate the students' grasp of the lexico-grammatical knowledge reinforced in the text. Affect questions elicit the students' Personal Response and critical Evaluation of the ideas conveyed by the writers.

Less research (Baleghizadeh & Zakervafaei, 2020) has been conducted adopting this framework to evaluate the reading comprehension questions in English textbooks although Freeman (2014) summoned the researchers to scrutinize the reading sections of various ELT packages. Acting as a useful tool for conducting a reading-oriented evaluation of ELT materials, this framework allows for identifying both the reading subskills which were addressed and the missing ones (Charles, 2015). In this sense, the model expedites the supplementary materials production by the teachers.

On the other hand, the contribution of the English teachers' insights has been substantiated in textbook evaluation studies (Yu, 1986). The teachers' perceptions of the merits and demerits of the reading sections in ELT textbooks lead to informed decisions and intellectually and professionally supported lesson plans (McDonough & Shaw, 2003). The current study aimed to take a mixed approach to evaluating the reading comprehension sections in the English textbooks developed for the last grade of high school in the previous and new series utilizing both the Freeman's (2014) taxonomy of reading comprehension questions and the English teachers' perceptions. Hence, the reading comprehension questions in Learning to Read and Vision 3 were scrutinized. The English textbooks in this grade were particularly considered due to their prominent role in shaping the students' general reading ability and enabling them to successfully fulfill the future academic reading requirements in their own field of study (Atai, 2002). In this sense, eliciting the teachers' insights contributes to effective revision and adaptation of the books (Cunningsworth, 1995; Ellis, 1997). Comparing the previous and the current English textbook taught to the would-be university students reveals that whether the newly introduced English textbook into the mainstream education notched up its previous counterpart.

Literature Review

Bloom's (1956) taxonomy was one of the earliest frameworks to analyze the activities in educational materials. Bloom speculated six levels ascendingly growing in terms of the cognitive demands including knowledge, comprehension, application, analysis, synthesis, and evaluation. Adopting this framework, a large number of researchers attempted to categorize and evaluate the tasks and activities reinforcing various skills and components in ELT materials (Adli & Mahmoudi, 2017); Razmjoo & Kazempourfard, 2012; Roohani, Taheri, & Poorzanganeh, 2014). The results of these studies have revealed the adequate coverage of lower-order cognitive skills in such ELT packages as Four Corners 2 and 3, American Headway, and Inside Reading and sufficient attention to higher-order cognitive abilities in Interchange series.

Although Bloom's (1956) taxonomy has been widely used to critically examine the ELT materials, it failed to gear to the peculiarities of skill-based studies. Among various skills, reading comprehension specifically seems to contribute to the students' cognitive development (Waters, 2006). The students are expected to read, infer and interpret the presented ideas, and evaluate them and critically analyze and synthesize the given information (Liaw, 2007). To cater for the reading-based tasks, numerous models have been proposed (Nuttall, 1996; Day & Park, 2005, cited in Baleghizadeh & Zakervafaei, 2020). Nevertheless, they have been rarely employed to evaluate the reading comprehension questions. Having reviewed and thought over the existing models, Freeman (2014) put forth three main categories of reading comprehension questions, namely Content questions to test the students' understanding of the directly or indirectly stated ideas and their ability to interpret and infer the implied messages, Language questions which target the students' grasp of the lexicogrammatical resources injected into the texts, and Affect questions that elicit their individual comments and criticisms on the reading passages.

Freeman (2014) herself analyzed the reading comprehension questions in Headway, American File, Cutting Edge, and Inside Out and revealed the prevalence of Content questions. Adopting her taxonomy, Baleghizadeh and Zakervafaei (2020) demonstrated the high frequency of Content questions in

Four Corner series. Moreover, they found a significant difference across four levels of this ELT textbook with regard to Explicit, Implicit, Lexical, and Reorganization questions. Their study also indicated the dominance of Personal Response type and the low frequency of Form questions.

The newly developed English textbooks, Vision series, have been evaluated in numerous studies. Khodabandeh and Mombini (2018) elicited the teachers' andtstudents' evaluationiof Visionr1 and showed bothɲgroups' satisfaction with the book with regard to all areas excluding cultural content. Masoumi and Ahour (2020) also evaluated Vision 2 from the teachers' perspectives and demonstrated the high extent of correspondence between the textbook content and the 11th-graders' needs. Furthermore, Saidi (2021) asked 130 teachers to provide their critical evaluation of the presentation of all skills and components in Vision 3. The results of her study pointed to the teachers' positive dispositions towards the newly developed textbook in terms of the modifications in the speaking and listening sections. However, the findings displayed the teachers' dissatisfaction of the rest of the sections and the urgent need to revise the new textbook in terms of covering a wide range of skills. In addition, Gheitasi, Aliakbari, and Yousefi (2020) analyzed three textbooks of this series in terms of the cultural content and revealed the dominance of the Persian emblems. These studies all led to this conclusion that despite the noticeable improvements, the new textbooks must be modified to be considered as a fully acceptable source of ELT education.

A review of the existing literature reveals a paucity of research on evaluating the reading sections in ELT materials. Trying to fill this void, Freeman (2014) called for focused scrutinizing of reading comprehension questions across various textbooks. She held to this taxonomy as a useful reading evaluation checklist. Bearing this in mind, the current study aimed to compare Learning to Read and Vision 3 in terms of reading comprehension questions.

Adopting Freeman's (2014) taxonomy and eliciting the teachers' viewpoints on the English textbook for pre-university students, Learning to Read, and Vision 3, the current study aimed to evaluate the reading sections in these books through addressing the following questions:

RQ1. What are the most and the least frequent reading comprehension questions in Learning to Read and Vision 3?

RQ2. Is there any significant difference between these two books in terms of the frequency of different categories and sub-categories of reading comprehension questions?

RQ3. How are the reading sections in these two books evaluated based on the English teachers' perspectives?

Method

The textbooks are briefly introduced and the Freeman's (2014) taxonomy is elaborated in this section. The study adopted a mixed-method design relying on the analysis of the reading comprehension questions in terms of the major categories and their subcategories in the used model and elicitation of the English teachers' evaluation of the reading comprehension passages and activities via interviews.

Materials

Learning to Read (1) and (2), the English textbook for pre-university students (Birjandi, Ananisarab, & Samimi, 2003) was first introduced into the mainstream education in the academic year 1382-1383 (2003-2004) and had been used for almost fifteen years till the new series of English textbooks were developed. It consisted of eight lessons encompassing Reading, Vocabulary, and Grammar sections.

Vision 3, the third book in the new "English for School" series, (Alavimoghaddam, Kheirabadi, Rahimi, & Davari, 2018) was first taught in the academic year 1397-1398 (2018-2019) and comprised of three lessons. Each lesson has nine sections, namely Get Ready, Conversation, New Words and Expressions, Reading, Vocabulary Development, Grammar, Listening and Speaking, Writing, and What You Learned. The book is accompanied by a workbook. There are six reading passages in the student book and the workbook.

Both Learning to Read and Vision 3 follow the same goal, that is preparing the students and getting them familiarized with the reading comprehension skills to succeed in the University Entrance Examination and fulfill future academic reading tasks in universities.

Participants

Following a convenient sampling procedure, 32 (18 males and 14 females) English teachers participated in the present study. They had the experience of teaching English textbooks to both the pre-university and 12th-grade students. Their teaching experience ranged from 4 to 16 years (M=8, SD= 1.82). They were English teachers in public schools in Tehran with the age range of 29 to 50 (M=39, SD= 2.31) and held BA (19) and MA (13) in Teaching English as a Foreign Language (TEFL). They voluntarily took part in the study and their major seems to justify their concerns to share their perspectives on the English materials in the ELT curriculum. Table 1 presents the demographic information of the participants.

Table 1

Demographic Information of the Participants

No. of teachers	32 (29-50)
Gender	18 males and 14 females
Schools	Public schools in Tehran
Academic year	2019-2020
Degree	19 BA and 13 MA
Major	32 TEFL

Instrumentation

To categorize the reading comprehension questions in the two textbooks, Freeman's (2014) taxonomy was used and the main categories (Content, Language, Affect) and their subcategories (Explicit, Implicit, Inferential, Reorganization, Lexical, Form, Personal Response, Evaluation) were identified. To elicit the teachers' insights into the reading sections of the two English textbooks, a semi-structured interview was conducted. The existing literature and textbook evaluation checklists were reviewed. Accordingly, the interview questions were formulated and given to three associate professors of applied linguistics to be checked in terms of their validity. They provided some suggestions and the questions were revised, rechecked, and finalized.

Data Collection Procedures

The reading comprehension questions in Vision 3, its workbook, and Learning to Read were classified in terms of the major categories and subcategories in Freeman's (2014) model. The unit of analysis included "any text-related task" (Freeman, 2014, p. 74). The three researchers identified the type of reading comprehension questions and a Kappa coefficient of 0.98 was obtained. They negotiated the areas of difference and reached an agreement for the differently labeled questions before the final statistical analysis.

Moreover, the teachers were interviewed on WhatsApp via video calls due to the school closure resulting from the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic. Their responses to the interview questions were transcribed and prepared for analysis.
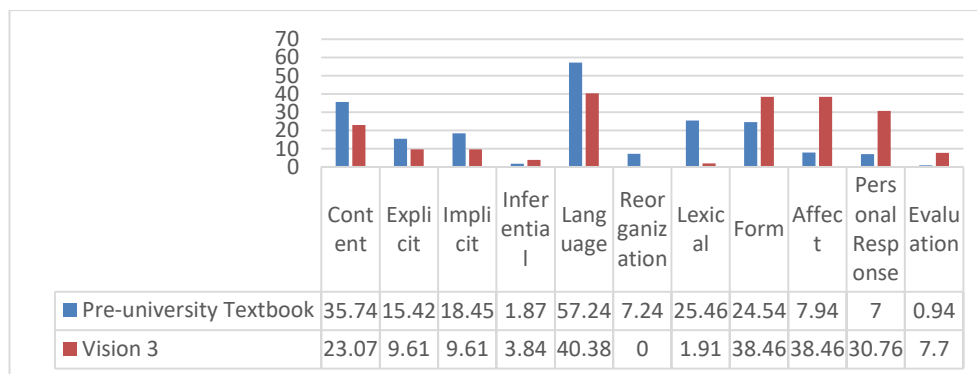
Data Analysis Procedures

The frequency and percentage values were calculated for the reading comprehension questions in the two books. Several Chi-square tests were conducted on SPSS (Version 25.0) to find the possible difference between Learning to Read and Vision 3 with regard to the types of reading comprehension questions in Freeman's (2014) taxonomy.

The teachers' responses to the interview questions were analyzed in terms of the recurrent themes. The content analysis of the interview data revealed the major themes that teachers desired to highlight considering the reading comprehension sections in the two books developed for the last grade of high school.

Results

The study aimed to conduct a comparative evaluation of Learning to Read and Vision 3 in terms of the reading comprehension questions using Freeman's taxonomy and English teachers' perceptions. The results of both phases are reported here. The Figure below provides a graphical comparison of the frequency of reading comprehension questions in the two books.

	Content	Explicit	Implicit	Inferential	Language	Reorganization	Lexical	Form	Affect	Personal Response	Evaluation
Pre-university Textbook	35.74	15.42	18.45	1.87	57.24	7.24	25.46	24.54	7.94	7	0.94
Vision 3	23.07	9.61	9.61	3.84	40.38	0	1.91	38.46	38.46	30.76	7.7

Frequency of each category of post-reading comprehension questions
across the student's books and workbooks

The results demonstrated that out of 428 activities in Learning to Read, half of them (245 ones) were Language questions. Likewise, 40.38 percent of the reading comprehension questions (52 ones) in Vision 3 belonged to this category. This implied that the authors of the two books prioritized shaping the lexicogrammatical knowledge of the students at this level.

The second frequently used types were Content questions (35.74%) in Learning to Read and Affect questions (38.46%) in Vision 3, indicating the authors' shift of interest from assessing the students' comprehension of the explicitly or implicitly presented ideas in the reading passages in Learning to Read to evaluate the intellectual and emotional reactions to the posed information in Vision 3.

Furthermore, the least common types of questions in Learning to Read and Vision 3 were Affect (7.94%) and Content (23.07%), respectively.

Considering the subcategories, Lexical questions (25.46%), Form questions (24.54%), and Implicit comprehension questions (18.45%) were the most frequent types in pre-university textbook. In this regard, the least prevalent types were Inferential comprehension questions (1.87%) and Evaluation questions (0.94%).

As regards the Vision 3 textbook, the most prevalent questions were Form (38.46%) and Personal Response (30.76%) and the least common questions were Inferential comprehension (3.84%) and Lexical (1.91%). It is worth noting that no Reorganization questions were identified in this textbook.

The study further attempted to investigate the possible difference between Learning to Read and Vision 3 with regard to three categories of reading comprehension questions. The results of Chi-square tests are presented in Table 2.

Table 2
Results of Chi-square Tests for Three Categories of Reading Comprehension Questions in Pre-university English Textbook and Vision 3

	Content	Language	Affect
Chi-Square	6.142	4.048	35.151
Df	1	1	1
Asymp. Sig.	0.000	0.000	0.000

The results in Table 2 revealed a significant difference between the two books in terms of the three categories of reading comprehension questions in Freemans' (2014) taxonomy, p=.00<.05. In this regard, the proportion of Affect questions had a dramatic increase while the Content and Language questions substantially decreased in Vision 3.

Results of the Interviews

Drawing on the textbook evaluation studies and checklists, the following interview questions (IQs) were finalized via eliciting the experts' judgments. Thirty-two teachers were interviewed and provided their evaluation of the reading comprehension sections in the previous English textbook and the newly developed one, Vision 3. The teachers' responses for each question were transcribed, analyzed and the recurrent themes were extracted and reported.

IQ1: Are the reading passages authentic?

Almost all the teachers agreed that the reading texts in both textbooks lacked the required degree of authenticity. However, 20 (62.50%) teachers stated that the reading texts in the old textbook enjoyed much larger number of authentic texts.

T 13: *The texts in previous textbook seemed more authentic and provided a more real picture of a reading passage.*

T23: *I think the reading texts in Vision 3 are not authentic at all. They seem like fabricated texts for teaching some words.*

The teachers thought that the reading passages in the old textbook provided the students with more academic-like texts which the students would need at universities later.

T17: *In my opinion, the previous English textbook exposed the students with more serious reading texts they may see in the English books at university next year.*

Hence, the teachers seemed to be quite dissatisfied with the quality of the reading passages in the newly developed English textbook.

IQ2: Are the texts interesting?

Almost all the teachers had a consensus over the coverage of more interesting texts in the old textbook. They held that the previous English textbook presented a variety of more interesting topics. They stated that the newly developed textbook, Vision 3, failed to attract the students' attention and motivate them to read the texts,

T25: *I see my students do not like the reading passages in Vision 3. When I was teaching the pre-university textbook, my students were eager, at least to a much higher degree than they are now.*

T30: *The topics of the reading passages in Vision 3 are not interesting at all. Pre-university textbook included different texts with more interesting topics.*

The teachers believed that adding more texts and attempting to include vibrant passages would solve the problem.

IQ3: Is there a wide range of different reading texts?

The teachers asserted that both textbooks could not cover a large number of text types and failed to expose the students to a wide range of genres. They argued that that the texts were more like academic, scientific ones in the old textbook and non-authentic in Vision 3.

T9: *The English books does not seem to take into account coverage of numerous text types from different sources such as magazines, newspapers, literary works, etc.*

T15: *Unfortunately, lack of variety of text types led both books to be boring.*

T15: *The topics were different in pre-university textbook but the text type remained the same all over the book.*

The teachers argued that a variety of genres may evoke the students' interest and involve them in reading comprehension activities.

IQ4: Do the English textbooks (Learning to Read and Vision 3) have adequate and various exercises for improving the students' reading comprehension?

Among the interviewed teachers, 28 (87.50%) believed that the old textbook provided more and a wider range of exercises for assessing the students' reading comprehension and reinforcing the presented lexicogrammatical features in the text. They stated that including six reading passages with a limited number of reading comprehension questions in Vision 3 hardly sufficed to improve the students' reading comprehension.

> **T3:** *The number of reading passages is low, let alone the exercises to check the students' reading comprehension.*

> **T11:** *I believer that pre-university textbook could provide adequate number of exercises for the students in the last grade of high school. However, the new book failed to do the same.*

Five teachers (15.62%) referred to the low level of the reading comprehension questions in both English textbooks and complained about disregarding higher-order cognitive abilities. They asserted that even though the new book attempted to target the students' higher levels of comprehension, it still lacked enough exercises for teaching the students how to infer the conveyed meaning(s) of the passages relying on the text and their background knowledge.

> **T18:** *Unfortunately, both textbooks do not include highly challenging exercises which require deeper logical thinking.*

> **T22:** *The new English textbook cannot prepare the students to confront more challenging reading comprehension questions.*

> **T24:** *I don't think these simple exercises can improve the students' reading skills unless they are supplemented by more sources and more exercises.*

Accordingly, the results unfolded the teachers' dissatisfaction with both the quantity and quality of the reading comprehension questions in the new English textbook.

IQ5: How do you evaluate Learning to Read and Vision 3 in terms of the pedagogical appropriateness of the reading sections?

Regarding this question, the teachers stated that the new book fell short of the teachers' expectations since the reading sections lacked the required educational efficiency and sufficiency. They believed that the newly developed textbook, Vision 3, improved in terms of the inclusion of other skills and enough contextualized and useful vocabulary and grammar sections, but declined with regard to the adequacy and quality of the reading comprehension passages and exercises.

> **T3:** *I think we shouldn't disregard the new book improvements in terms of speaking and listening and components; however, reading sections seemed to be unsatisfactory.*
>
> **T16:** *It is not good that the material developed enhanced the quality and coverage of other skills but sacrificed the reading comprehension skill. The students really need it.*

The teachers are aware that reading is a sine quo non for developing their students' language knowledge. Indeed, reading passages act a primary source of input for the language learners.

Discussion

The analysis of the reading comprehension questions in Learning to Read and Vision 3 revealed a significant difference between the two textbooks in terms of the frequency of Content, Language, and Affect questions in Freeman's (2014) taxonomy. The results indicated that Language questions were the most prevalent type in both textbooks. However, the least common categories of reading comprehension questions in Learning to Read and Vision 3 were Affect and Content questions, respectively.

On the other hand, the teachers seemed to be more satisfied with the previous English textbook for the student of the last grade of high school due to higher degrees of text authenticity, adequacy of exercises, and variety of topics while they believed that both books provided reading comprehension questions mostly triggering lower-order cognitive abilities. Nevertheless, the teachers stated that the new English textbooks, Vision 3, improved considerably in terms of addressing higher levels of comprehension. This was confirmed in the analysis of the reading

comprehension questions in light of Freeman's (2014) taxonomy since Vision 3 encompassed a much larger number of reading comprehension questions catering for the students' personal reactions to the texts and their judgments of the presented ideas. Hence, the interview results corroborated the results of the classification of reading comprehension questions into various groups.

The higher frequency of Language questions in both Learning to Read and Vision 3 may lie in the authors' preference to make use of reading passages as a meaningful context to reinforce the target lexico-grammatical features. In this regard, the results were in line with those of Baleghizadeh and Zakervafaei (2020) who found out the dominance of language questions in the highest level of Four Corners series. Since both textbooks under the study were intended to be used by the students at the last grade of high school, the authors' intention might have been filling the possibly existing gaps in the semantic and syntactic knowledge of the students through reading comprehension exercises.

The findings further revealed the low frequency of Content questions in Vision 3 and of Affect questions in Learning to Read. This might imply that Affect questions were sacrificed for the sake of improving the students' comprehension of the presented information in the texts in the previous textbook. The inverse trend occurred in Vision 3, that is, the higher-order thinking abilities were considered and reading comprehension questions gearing to the students' intellectual and emotional involvement in the text were included in the new book. This might point to the vast overestimation of drawing upon the students' attitudes and personal experiences (Masuhara, 2013) at the cost of underestimating the potential benefits of Content questions for enhancing their comprehension skills. Although it was mentioned as one of the merits of Vision 3 by the teachers, focusing on the students' ability to comprehend the directly or indirectly presented ideas in the passages must be taken into account as well (Freeman, 2014). In this regard, the presence of more Affect questions in Vision 3 compared to its old counterpart disconfirmed the findings of previous studies (Adli & Mahmoudi, 2017; Roohani et al., 2014) which demonstrated the dominance of lower-order cognitive abilities in English textbooks.

On the other hand, the lower frequency of Content questions in Vision 3 might underlie viewing reading comprehension sections as the locus in quo of developing the learners' knowledge of the lexicogrammatical features of the language the students are learning (Tomlinson & Masuhara, 2013). Accordingly, "reading for the sake of reading" motto seemed to be neglected in the newly developed textbook.

The same trend was observed in Learning to Read and Vision 3 considering the subcategories of reading comprehension questions. On the one hand, Inferential comprehension questions were the least prevalent type in both books. In this regard, the results contrasted those of previously conducted studies (Baleghizadeh & Zakervafaei, 2020; Freeman, 2014). Inferencing the meaning is conceived as the most difficult subskill in which the students are required "to bring their background knowledge into play to comprehend the text" (Baleghizadeh, 2016, p. 155). Comprehending the texts at this level is the ultimate goal of reading (Grabe, 2009). Minimizing the proportion of Inferential comprehension questions in reading sections of the English textbooks at the last grade of high school can be a demerit which deserves undivided attention. On the other hand, the results demonstrated the absence of Reorganization questions in Vision 3. Such activities would foster the students' ability to infer and discern the contextualized lexicogrammatical features of the language (Na & Nation, 1985). In fact, reading sections can act as a platform for improving the students' bulk of language knowledge through asking them to rearrange the ideas presented in the texts.

According to the interviews, the teachers' insights supported the findings of the quantitative phase of the study in that the new textbook has undergone extensive alterations and was upgraded in terms of the target cognitive abilities in the reading sections. However, these changes could, by no means, satisfy the teachers' expectations. From their point of view, giant strides are still needed to be taken for aligning the content of Vision 3 with the students' needs. The primary goal of the students, at this stage, is putting in a good performance in University Entrance Examination which seems not to be reflected in the reading comprehension exercises currently included in Vision 3 with their increased emphasis on Affect questions and negligence of Content questions. In this regard, the results were commensurate with the

findings of the exiting studies (Rashidi & Kehtarfard, 2014; Torki & Chalak, 2017). This might insinuate that the newly developed textbook required some revisions with regard to the presentation and practice of reading comprehension skills. Considering this, the results confirmed those of Saidi's (2020) study in which the teachers called for further modifications of the new textbook to fulfill the objectives of the ELT curriculum at this level.

To conclude, the study primarily strove to classify and compare the reading comprehension questions in the old and new English textbooks taught to the students at the last grade of high school. Drawing on Freeman's (2014) model, the results revealed a significant difference between the two textbooks in terms of the Content, Language, and Affect questions. The new textbook encompassed a higher percentage of Affect questions and a lower proportion of the other categories. The results were backed up by the English teachers' insights which revealed their satisfaction of the inclusion of a larger number of higher-order thinking activities. However, the new textbook seems to fall below the teachers' expectations considering the quantity and quality of the texts and exercises.

The high frequency of Language questions compared to the Content ones in Vision 3 demonstrated that reading sections were utilized for reinforcing the vocabulary and grammar rather than developing the students' ability to decode the imparted meanings of the texts (Tomlinson & Masuhara, 2013). The teachers believed that enabling the high school students to fulfill their future academic reading tasks would result from a more balanced distribution of various reading comprehension questions accompanying highly authentic and diverse texts. Hence, they stated that the available categories of questions would hardly contribute to the students' success in University Entrance Examination.

The findings of the current study benefit the authors of the ELT mainstream education textbooks to revise the available materials and take a wide range of reading comprehension questions into account while developing new textbooks. The results also raise the English teachers' consciousness about the merits and demerits of the reading comprehension question sections of Vision 3 and inform them of the paramount significance

of providing the students with supplementary resources and a whole host of extensive reading tasks.

The results of analyzing the reading comprehension questions of Learning to Read and Vision 3 in light of Freeman's (2014) taxonomy and from the English teachers' perspectives testified to the value of ongoing evaluation and revision of the ELT textbooks particularly when they are used at a larger national scale. To continue this line of research, future studies may evaluate the presentation of other skills in ELT materials. Moreover, the students' perspectives might be elicited and considered for revisiting the existing materials. Furthermore, other English textbooks which are widely taught in the public and private sectors can be examined in light of the model used in the present study. All in all, evaluation of ELT materials must be persistently carried out.

Declaration of interest: none

References

Adli, N. & Mahmoudi, A. (2017). Reading comprehension questions in EFL textbooks and learners' levels. *Theory and Practice in Language Studies. 7*(7), 590-595. http://dx.doi.org/10.17507/tpls.0707.14.

Alavimoghaddam, S. B., Kheirabadi, R., Rahimi, M., & Davari, H. (2018). *Vision 3*. Iran Textbook Publishing Company.

Ansari, H., & Babaii, E. (2002). Universal characteristics of EFL/ESL textbook: a step towards systematic textbook evaluation. *The Internet TESL Journal, 2,* 1-8.

Atai, M. R. (2002). ESAP curriculum planning in Iran: An incoherent educational experience. *Special Issue of the Journal of Faculty of Letters and Humanities, 9*(3), 17- 34.

Baleghizadeh, S. (2016). *Materials development for English language teachers: A practical guide*. SAMT Publication.

Baleghizadeh, S., & Zakervafaei, H. R. (2020). Analyzing post-reading comprehension questions and task types in Four Corners. *MEXTESOL, 44*(1), 1-11.

Bloom, B. S. (Ed.) (1956). *Taxonomy of educational objectives, handbook 1: Cognitive domain*. Longman.

Birjandi, P., Ananisarab, M. R., & Samimi, D. (2002). *Learning to read: English for pre-university students*. Iran Textbook Publishing Company.

Byrd, P. (2001). Textbooks: evaluation for selection and analysis for implementation. *Teaching English as a Second or Foreign Language, 3*, 415-427.

Charles, M. (2015). [Review of the book] English language teaching textbooks: Content, consumption, N. Harwood (Ed.). *TESOL Quarterly, 49*(4), 897-899. https://www.jstor.org/stable/43893796

Cunningsworth, A. (1995). *Choosing your coursebook.* Heinmann Publishers Ltd.

Ellis, R. (1997). The empirical evaluation of language teaching materials. *ELT Journal, 51*(1), 36-42.

Freeman, D. (2014). Reading comprehension questions: The distribution of different types in global EFL textbooks. In N. Harwood (Ed.). *English language textbooks: Content, consumption, production*. (pp. 73-110) Palgrave Macmillan. https://doi.org/10.1057/9781137276285_3

Gheitasi, M., Aliakbari, M., & Yousefi, N. (2020). Evaluation of cultural representation in Vision English textbook series for Iranian secondary public education. *Journal of English Language Teaching and Learning, 12*(26), 145-173.

Grabe, W. (2009). *Reading in a second language: Moving from theory to practice*. Cambridge University Press.

Khodabandeh, F., & Mombini, R. (2018). Iranian EFL teachers' and students' perceptions towards the first grade high school English textbook (Vision 1). *The Journal of English Language Pedagogy and Practice, 11*(22), 141-167.

Liaw, M. (2007). Content-based reading and writing for critical thinking skills in an EFL context. *English Teaching and Learning, 31*(2): 45-87.

Masomi Sooreh, E., & Ahour, T. (2020). Internal evaluation of English textbook "Vision 2" from teachers' perspectives. *The Journal of English Language Pedagogy and Practice, 13*(27), 237-256.

Masuhara, H. (2013). Materials for developing reading skills. In B. Tomlinson (Ed.), *Developing materials for language teachi*ng (pp. 265-289). Bloomsbury.

McDonough, J., & Shaw, C. (2003). *Materials and methods in ELT: A teacher's guide* (2nd ed.). Blackwell Publishing.

Mckee, S. (2012). Reading comprehension, what we know: A review of research 1995 to 2011. *Language Testing in Asia, 2*(1), 45-58. https://doi.org/10.1186/2229-0443-2-1-45

Mirzaei, N, & Tabatabaei, O. (2017). Textbook analysis: comparing the recent and the old first grade high school English textbooks, teachers and

learners' perspectives in focus. *Research in English Language Pedagogy, 5*(2), 167-180.

Na, L. & Nation, I. S. P. (1985). Factors affecting guessing vocabulary in context. *RELC Journal, 16*(1). 33-42. https://doi.org/10.1177%2F003368828501600103

Nuttall, C. (1996). *Teaching reading skills in a foreign language*. Heinemann.

Oltowski, M. (2003). Ethnic diversity and gender bias in EFL textbooks. *Asian EFL Journal, 5*(2), 1-15.

Rashidi, N., & Kehtarfard, R. (2014). A needs analysis approach to the evaluation of Iranian third-grade highs school English textbook. *Sage Open,* 1-9.

Razmjoo, S. A. & Kazempourfard, E. (2012). On the representation of Bloom's revised taxonomy in Interchange course books. *The Journal of Teaching Language Skills, 31*(1), 171-204. https://doi.org/10.22099/JTLS.2012.336.

Roohani, A., Taheri, F., & Poorzanganeh, M. (2014). Evaluating Four Corners textbooks in terms of cognitive processes using Bloom's revised taxonomy. *Journal of Research in Applied Linguistics, 4*(2), 51-67. http://rals.scu.ac.ir/article_10538.html

Saidi, M. (2021). A comparative study of the previous and the new English language textbook: pre-university book versus Vision 3. *Journal of English Language Teaching and Learning, 13*(27), 333-358.

Saidi, M., & Mokhtarpour, H. (2020). Can Vision 3 notch up a win over pre-university English textbook? *Language TESOL Quarterly, 15*, 21-32.

Tomlinson, B. & Masuhara, H. (2013). Adult course books. *ELT Journal. 67*(2), 233-249. https://doi.org/10.1093/elt/cct007

Torki, F., & Chalak, A. (2017). An evaluation of English textbooks used in Iranian high schools: teachers' and learners' attitudes. *Research in English Language Pedagogy, 5*(1), 52-60.

Ur, P. (1996). *A course in language teaching*. Cambridge University Press.

Waters, A. (2006). Thinking and language learning. *ELT Journal, 60*(4), 237- 319.

Yu, G. (1986). Perception, practice and progress- significance of scaffolding and zone of proximal development for second or foreign language teachers. *Asian EFL Journal, 6*(4), 12-23.

Biodata

Mavadat Saidi is an assistant professor of TEFL at Shahid Rajaee Teacher Training University, Tehran, Iran. Her areas of interest include discourse analysis, ESP/EAP, and teacher education.

Morteza Marooy is an MA student of TEFL at Shahid Rajaee Teacher Training University, Tehran, Iran. He is interested in English for academic purposes and teacher education.

Niloofar Karami is an MA student of Teaching English as a Foreign Language at Shahid Rajaee Teacher Training University. She has been teaching English for several years. She is interested in discourse analysis and English for academic purposes.