Iranian EFL Teachers' and Learners' Perceptions of the Localized EFL Textbooks: A Mixed-Methods Analysis

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Abstract

Nowadays, the goal of language education has changed from mastery of structure to the ability to use language for communicative purposes; however, the cultural content of the ELT textbooks in Iran has never been sufficiently discussed. Therefore, the major purpose motivating this study was to study the perceptions of teachers and learners of the localization of Iranian English textbooks in the Iranian EFL textbooks (i.e., Prospect series), besides investigating if there were any significant differences between the perceptions of teachers and learners. For this purpose, the participants of this study comprised two samples. The first group who took part in this study were 87 EFL teachers, and the second was a sample of 105 EFL learners. The research instruments were a questionnaire and a semi-structured interview protocol. For the evaluation of the textbook, a researcher-made questionnaire was used. The questionnaire was designed based on Cheng (2005). The purpose of this questionnaire was to probe the Iranian EFL teachers' and students' perceptions of the localized materials. In order to explore teachers' attitudes towards localized materials, a semi-structured interview was used. The findings suggest that while teachers and learners might view the series differently, there exists a common ground of appreciation for its value in enhancing the English learning experience. This convergence in positive perceptions emphasizes the importance of educational resources that cater to diverse learning styles and preferences. This study can have some pedagogical implications for curriculum developers, educational policymakers, teachers, and material designers.

Keywords: ELT textbooks, Learner perspectives, Prospect series, teacher's perspectives

1. Introduction

In the past, the goal of teaching English was to master the structure of the language; however, nowadays, English seems to play a central role and the goal of language education has changed from mastery of structure to the ability to use language for communicative purposes (Yamini & Barjesteh, 2016). According to Ho (2009), it has been widely recognized that learners need not just knowledge and skill in the grammar of a language but also the ability to use the linguistic system effectively and appropriately. Similarly, language teacher`s awareness of intercultural communication seems necessary for modern language education and language educators need to feel the necessity of the inclusion of cultural components in their curriculum in order for their learners to become successful in their intercultural interactions (Hammer & Bennett, 2004).

According to Nunan (1988), materials and textbooks are among the most fundamental components "within the curriculum and more than simply profit the wheels of learning. At their best, they prepare concrete models for desirable classroom practice. They act as curriculum models and at their very best they comply with a teacher development role" (p. 98).

Localization, according to Taylor (2004), is the freedom of schools or local education authorities to adapt this curriculum to local conditions, and the relevance of the curriculum and teaching methods and use to the local environment. Localization is the use and adaptability of content to determine local resources, to address a specific style of presentation, to adapt to a different basic level, to different disciplines, to adapt to a different environment, to respond to different needs, to address a priority cultural, to support a specific educational need, and to address the standardized curriculum of a school or a district (Taylor, 2004).

Aliakbari and Jamalvandi (2013) opined that EFL textbooks play a pivotal part in the process of teaching and learning in general and it sounds hard to imagine language free from culture as they are interwoven and mutually significant. According to McKay (2002), one of the major goals of teaching English as an international language is to make it easier for learners to communicate their ideas and cultural understandings in the medium of English. Intercultural competence, the ultimate aim of acquiring language, cannot be attained if the textbooks focus solely on the learner's native culture or the target culture. As Mozaffarzadeh and Ajideh (2019) stated, ELT textbooks are mostly based on the source culture, which does not seem to help promote intercultural competence and cultural understanding.

In recent years, educators and materials developers in Iran have been trying to take control of the contents that are taught in EFL textbooks to incorporate Iranian-Islamic culture in them (Boroomand & Yazdani, 2017). Some have modified the original textbooks so that some cultural aspects that are deemed dangerous can be controlled. Some others have attempted to develop textbooks that have been designed based on this culture from scratch. All the same, it is concluded that there is a need to evaluate our localized and domestically produced textbooks by utilizing high-quality, standardized, and culture-free checklists to find out where we stand in the development of textbooks.

2. Review of the Related Literature

2.1. Culture

Culture has been defined and studied from different angles for many years as more than one hundred sixty definitions of culture have been identified. Richards and Schmidt (2010) defined culture as "the set of practices, codes, and values that mark a particular nation or group: the sum of a nation or group's most highly thought of works of literature, art, music, etc." (p.149). As Mozaffarzadeh and Ajideh (2019) stated, culture is a concrete term and plays a vital role in language classrooms.

There are three ways to understand culture (Kramsch, 1995; Kramsch et al., 1996). The first one is the way a given social group represents itself and others through art, history, and literature. The second way is through peoples' beliefs, attitudes, and the way they behave and think (Liberman, 1994; Nostrand, 1989). Culture can also be discussed through different views. One of these views is *little C* and *big C* culture. *Big C* culture refers to the culture institutionalized in a particular form such as "social, economic, political, and linguistic systems - the kinds of things that usually are included in area studies or history courses" (Bennett, 1998, p.3). The third influential view is that culture is viewed as "a contested zone" (Martin & Nakayama, 2000, p.58). Proponents of this view claim that people have to acknowledge the differences of a particular culture rather than focus on the universal qualities of people in different cultures.

Five important functions of culture have been explicated by Ting-Toomey (1999). They are: (1) identity meaning function, (2) group inclusion function, (3) intergroup boundary regulation function, (4) ecological adaptation function, and (5) cultural communication. First, as it has been mentioned in definitions of culture, culture serves the identity meaning by providing the frame of reference in the shape of values, beliefs, and norms. Culture helps students and teachers to identify themselves. Second, culture is

at the service of the group inclusion function. It is responsive to the need of us, to be included in a specific group; this function of culture is important for students whose cultures differ from those of others. They want to be accepted within the new school environment. When the teachers work with such students, they should make an effort to justify their actions which normally need no explanation. The intergroup boundary regulation function is the third role of culture. Ting-Toomey (1999) asserted, "Culture helps us to form evaluative attitudes [positive or negative] toward in-group and out-group interactions" (p.13).

The fourth role of culture is ecological adaptation. According to Triandis (1994), "realities of the environment create conditions for the development of particular cultural, socialization, and behavioral patterns" (p.23). Culture as an important factor "facilitates the adaptation processes among the self, the cultural community, and the larger environment" (Ting-Toomey, 1999, p. 14). The fifth function served by culture is cultural communication. Intercultural communication researchers conceive culture as a set of knowledge, which helps individuals to know how to communicate with people of different cultures and how to interpret their behaviors (Gudykunst, 2004). Ting-Toomey (1999) concludes that these several functions of culture are considered "an essential component of the effort of human beings to survive and thrive in their particular environment" (p. 12).

Most theoreticians believe that the relationship between language and culture is strong and complex (Risager 2006). Due to the existence of various cultures and languages, intercultural competence has become prominent (Elorza, 2008). Since it is difficult to identify specific components of intercultural competence, there is no specific definition in the field (Deardorff, 2006). Zakaria (2000) asserted that intercultural competence consists of behavioral, cognitive, and affective parts. Chen and Starosta (1996) opined that in the behavioral part, communicational skills help an individual to act appropriately and efficiently in a community of target culture. For multicultural coexistence, both an understanding of one's own culture and the influence of culture on one's behavior, which is regarded as self-awareness, are required. The third part of intercultural competence is like intercultural sensitivity (Zakaria, 2000).

2.2. Localization

Language is one of the main factors for the relationship between human beings, and culture and language are two inseparable categories. English has not become an international language by incident but is gradually formed as part of the socio-economic and political world of the West and hence has

become part of a global scene, and different people find it inevitable to be learned (Ibrohimova & Ziyaboyeva, 2022).

Although English in our past colonial times may have been used as a means of domination for the civilization of the indigenous and domination of their thoughts, there is no reason to think that the effects of those policies are still on us to continue (Leiss, 2023). After years of research on what localization is and its importance, as well as why there is such a need, we have concluded that to protect our Iranian-Islamic culture and values, localization is imperative. While having an eye on globalization, the national and cultural identity of each country and nation has to remain firm in place. In other words, globalization does not mean that we have to let go of our national and cultural identity (Esfandiyari & Nourabadi, 2020).

Most of the above-mentioned studies have focused on the "whatness" and "whyness" of localization and developing localized materials. However, to the best of the researchers' knowledge, none of these studies has focused on the "howness" of this process. The trend of research on the localization process shall eventually lead to the development of a framework. The other important factor that needs to be taken into account when we research localization is analyzing the needs of our indigenous learners. This needs analysis is a delicate, time-consuming process that has to be worked more on. Different factors such as common errors of Iranian learners in learning the foreign language under study, factors leading to the promotion of motivation in the learners such as incorporating humor in the materials that fit to the cultural values more and are believed to be more efficient. In conclusion, it is suggested that research on localization start a direction moving towards the processes of developing a framework for incorporating what we know about what to do and why we need to do it in development of materials that are more specific to our cultural and national identity.

2.5. Empirical Studies

There have been some studies that have evaluated ELT textbooks. Soozandehfar and Sahragard (2011) analyzed the conversation sections of Top Notch Fundamental textbooks from the pragmatic dimension of language functions and speech acts. For this purpose, 14 conversations from the entire 14 units of the books were selected randomly and the two pragmatic models were applied. The results of their study indicated that the conversations in these textbooks are not pragmatically efficacious and functional.

In another study, Sahragard et al. (2010) evaluated a series of ELT materials namely, Interchange 3rd edition. They found that Interchange is not

completely along with the objectives intended for it. They further continue that the book does not use learners or even the teachers as a source for its content. They continue that the supra-sentential level as well is ignored for both the expected output and input of the learners.

In another study, Riazi and Aryashokouh (2007) intended to investigate how English lexis is treated in English textbooks in Iranian high schools. The main objective of their study was to examine the vocabulary exercises in the current English language textbooks used in Iranian high schools and to propose some guidelines to enhance vocabulary teaching. Results of their study indicated that none of the exercises in English books 1, 2 and 3 could be considered to raise learners' consciousness. Overall, they found that only 1.02 percent of the exercises in the four textbooks could be categorized under consciousness-raising.

On the role of localized materials in learning of FFL students, Mahabadi (2013) carried out a study. The aim of her study was to investigate the effects of localized materials on students' comprehension in a context in which French was taught as a foreign language. She selected 30 male and female Iranian learners of French and asked them to read two stories: one written originally in French by a native writer, and another written originally in Persian and translated into French. After reading the stories, the participants were asked to answer reading comprehension questions.

In another relevant study in this regard, Yamini and Barjesteh (2016) investigated the attitudes of EFL teachers and students toward localized materials from a willingness to communicate approach. Their paper was also aimed at identifying what obstacles Iranian EFL teachers faced with in taking advantage of localized materials. In order to find the answer to these questions, they used Litz's (2005) textbook evaluation checklist to compare the attitudes towards the localized materials.

To provide an explanation of what it means to teach EFL in an Islamic-Iranian context Pishghadam and Zabihi (2012) attempted to look beyond the global tendency to learn English and look into the future with an emphasis on the importance of including the local specificities of the Iranian culture and religion. They concluded that as the British and American aim to impose their specific ideological, cultural, and attitudinal views, it is necessary to take greater control of what takes place in the Iranian context by localizing the materials and textbooks.

All the same, the cultural content of the ELT textbooks in Iran has never been explicitly discussed. There is a serious absence of studies that examine

the quality and the types of materials used in teaching culture. Therefore, the major purpose motivating this study was to study the perceptions of teachers and learners about the localization of Iranian English textbooks in Prospect series and to investigate if there were any significant differences between the perceptions of teachers and learners. To that, the questions which were going to be investigated in this research were as follows:

> **RQ1**. Are there any statistically significant differences between the perception of Iranian EFL school teachers and learners about the localization of the Prospect series?
>
> **RQ2**: What do Iranian EFL school teachers and learners think about the localization of the Prospect series?

3. Method

3.1. Design

This study followed a sequential mixed-method design using a questionnaire and a semi-structured interview to find out whether there are significant differences among the perceptions of Iranian EFL teachers and learners toward the localized materials of EFL textbooks (i.e., Prospect series).

3.2. Participants

The participants of this study were of two groups of people. The first group who took part in this study were EFL teachers, and the second group of participants were EFL learners. Both groups were Iranians and had the same national background, and English was their foreign language. The details of these groups are discussed in this section.

As for the first group, a total of 87 EFL teachers were selected to take part in this research. The sampling method for the teachers was convenience sampling and they were selected based on availability. In order to screen the probable difference in Iranian EFL teachers' perceptions of localized materials as far as their teaching experience is concerned, care was taken to include an equal number of participants based on their experience. For this purpose, they were selected from three levels of teaching experience: level 1 (1 to 10 years of experience), level 2 (11 to 20 years of experience), and level 3 (21 to 30 years of experience).

The learners who took part in this study were 105 EFL learners who were in seventh, eighth, and ninth grade in junior high school. Their ages ranged from 11 to 15. They were selected as the participants of the study through the convenience sampling technique. They were also classified according to their grade at the high school. In fact, in order to screen the probable difference in Iranian EFL learners' perceptions of localized materials

as far as their grade is concerned, care was taken to include an equal number of participants based on their grade: level 1 (the seventh graders), level 2 (the eighth graders), and level 3 (the ninth graders).

3.3. Materials and Instruments
3.3.1. Materials

The main material that was used in this study was the Prospect series, which was the mainstream EFL textbook of the Iranian education system. The Prospect series written by Alavi Moghaddam et al. (2015), Alavi Moghaddam et al. (2015), and Alavi Moghaddam et al. (2016) were examined in this study. Each book consists of 8 lessons, each lesson including 1. One conversation, two practices, one sound and letter conversation, listening and reading sections, speaking and writing sections, a conversation.

3.3.2. Questionnaire

For the evaluation of the textbook, a researcher-made questionnaire was used. The questionnaire was designed based on Cheng (2005). The purpose of this questionnaire was to probe Iranian EFL teachers' and students' attitudes towards the localized materials. In fact, this questionnaire was used in order to explore the perceptions of Iranian EFL teachers and learners toward the school English textbooks (Prospect series). The questionnaire comprised of 28 items in a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (*completely disagree*) to 5 (*completely agree*). The questionnaire consisted of three sections including national identity, cultural aspects, and practical and intercultural knowledge aspects. The reliability of the questionnaire was measured through Cronbach's alpha within the context of Iran (α=.89). In addition, the validity of the questionnaire was confirmed by 2 experts in this field, who were university professors.

3.3.3. Semi-structured Interview

To explore teachers' attitudes about localized materials, a semi-structured interview developed by Yamini and Barjesteh (2016) was used. It comprised five open-ended questions, used to crosscheck the written information given by the participants as well as to gain verbal insight into ELT teachers' perceptions towards the localized textbooks. In other words, the interview was used to elaborate on the data retrieved from the questionnaires.

The interviews were conducted in Farsi, which allowed the interviewees to express their feelings and ideas more fluently and fully. They were done via phone, internet (WhatsApp Call), and face-to-face based on the

participants' preferences, because all of the participants were not available for face-to-face interviews. Each phone or face-to-face interview took approximately 30 – 40 minutes and was recorded with the permission of the interviewee. The questions in the interview were as follows:

Q1. What difficulty do Iranian EFL teachers encounter while using localized materials within the context of Iran?

Q2. What boundaries do Iranian EFL teachers encounter in preparing localized materials within the context of Iran?

Q3. Do these textbooks provide you with an opportunity to boost your students' motivation to learn English?

Q4. What are your opinions on the different items of the general design of a model ELT textbook and the merits and demerits of localized textbooks?

Q5. Are the language skills being emphasized equally?

3.4. Procedure

First, the questionnaires were distributed to 50 teachers and 50 learners. The participants were asked to complete questions after being provided with the necessary directions. The interview was conducted most conveniently for the participants. The participants were informed about the general purpose of the research, but not the specific questions that might be asked. In addition, they were informed in advance that they would be recorded, and the researcher would ask them whether they had any problems with this.

In all of the interviews, Farsi language was used, and the interviews were tape-recorded. The real names of the respondents were kept anonymous, and numbers were used to identify each interviewee. The five semi-structured questions were asked from teachers about their perceptions of the localized materials of school English textbooks.

3. 5. Data Analysis

All the data, collected through a mixed-method design, were analyzed. The statistical package for the social sciences (SPSS) software was employed to analyze the data collected from the groups. A T-test was run to compare the means of the participants in the groups on a questionnaire. In addition, the results of the semi-structured interview were analyzed based on the Dörnyei's (2007) guidelines.

4. Results

4.1. Results of Descriptive Statistics

This study investigated the Iranian EFL teachers' and learners' perceptions of the Prospect series. The quantitative research question was analyzed through descriptive statistics and the Chi-square test. Table 1 shows the demographic information for the teachers' age and gender.

Table 1

Frequencies and Percentages for Distribution of Teachers by Age

	N	P
Age		
18-25	13	14.94
26-30	9	10.34
31-35	10	11.49
36-40	18	20.69
40 & above	37	42.54
Total	87	100.00
Gender		
Male	27	31.03
Female	60	68.97
Total	87	100.00

Based on the results shown in Table 1, it can be concluded that most of the teachers (i.e., 68.97 %) were female with the highest percentage of teachers, aged 40 and above. Table 2 shows the distribution of the EFL learners based on their gender and grade.

Based on the results shown in Table 2, it can be concluded that the majority of the learners; (i.e., 74.29 %) were female, 20 percent were male, and another 5.71 percent did not answer the question. Table 2 also shows the distribution of EFL learners by their age and grades. Based on the results it can be concluded that the majority of the learners (i.e., 20.97 %) were 13 years old which equals the seventh grade. This was followed by 18.10 percent, who were 14 years old and another 16.18 percent, who were 15 years old. The results also showed that 15.24 percent were 16 years old and another 15.25 percent were 17 years old. Finally, the remaining 14.29 percent at the 12th level were 18 years old.

Table 2
Frequencies and Percentages for Distribution of Learners by Gender

	N	P
Gender		
Male	21	20.00
Female	78	74.29
Not Specified	6	5.71
Total	105	100.00
Age (Grade)		
13 (K7)	22	20.95
14 (K8)	19	18.10
15 (K9)	17	16.18
16 (K10)	16	15.24
17 (K11)	16	15.24
18 (K12)	15	14.29
Total	105	100.00

4.2. Exploring the First Research Question

Table 3 shows the frequencies, percentages, and standard residuals for the first research question (i.e., Are there any statistically significant differences between the perception of Iranian EFL school teachers and learners about the localization of the Prospect series?). Before discussing the results, it should be noted that, if the standard residual is higher than 1.96, it can be claimed that the observed frequency is significantly more than what is expected whereas standard residuals higher than -1.96 indicate that the frequency is lower than what is expected.

Table 3
Frequencies and Percentages for Teachers' and Learners' Perceptions of Localization

		Choices					Total
		Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree	
Teachers	N	96	603	537	979	214	2429
	%	4.0%	24.8%	22.1%	40.3%	8.8%	100.0%
	Std. Residual	-9.7	4.4	1.4	2.2	-2.6	
Learners	N	420	441	511	910	315	2597
	%	16.2%	17.0%	19.7%	35.0%	12.1%	100.0%
	Std. Residual	9.4	-4.2	-1.3	-2.1	2.5	
Total	N	516	1044	1048	1889	529	5026
	%	10.3%	20.8%	20.9%	37.6%	10.5%	100.0%

Based on the results shown in Table 3, it can be concluded that a higher percentage of EFL learners (12.1 % vs. 8.8 %) strongly agreed with the Prospect series. The Std. Residual for the learners (2.5 > 1.96) indicated the frequency of EFL learners holding a positive attitude towards the Prospect series was significantly beyond what was expected. However, a higher percentage of EFL teachers (40.3 % vs. 35 %) agreed with the 'Prospect' series. The Std. Residual for the teachers (2.2 > 1.96) indicated the frequency of EFL teachers showing agreement attitude towards the Prospect series was significantly beyond what was expected.

On the other hand, a higher percentage of students (16.2 % vs. 4 %) strongly disagreed with the Prospect series. The Std. Residual of 9.4 indicated that the observed frequency was significantly beyond what was expected. However, a higher percentage of teachers (24.8 % vs. 17 %) disagreed with the Prospect series. The standard residual of 4.4 indicated that the observed frequency was significantly beyond what was expected. The results also indicated that 22.1 percent of teachers and 19.7 percent of learners did not decide about the Prospect series. These results were further supported by the results of Chi-square (Table 4).

Table 4

Chi-Square Tests for Teachers and Learners' Perceptions towards Localization

	Value	df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	245.688[a]	4	.000
Likelihood Ratio	261.706	4	.000
Linear-by-Linear Association	20.992	1	.000
N of Valid Cases	5026		
Cramer's V	.221		.000

a. 0 cells (.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 249.38.

The results, representing a weak effect size, indicated that there were significant differences between teachers and learners' perceptions towards the Prospect' series, χ^2 (4) = 245.68, $p < .05$, *Cramer's V* = .221. Thus, the null hypothesis (i.e., there was no significant difference between the perception of Iranian EFL school teachers and learners about the localization of Prospect series) was rejected. Figure 1 shows the percentages presented above.

Figure 1
Percentages of Teachers and Learners' Perceptions towards Localization of 'Prospect' Series
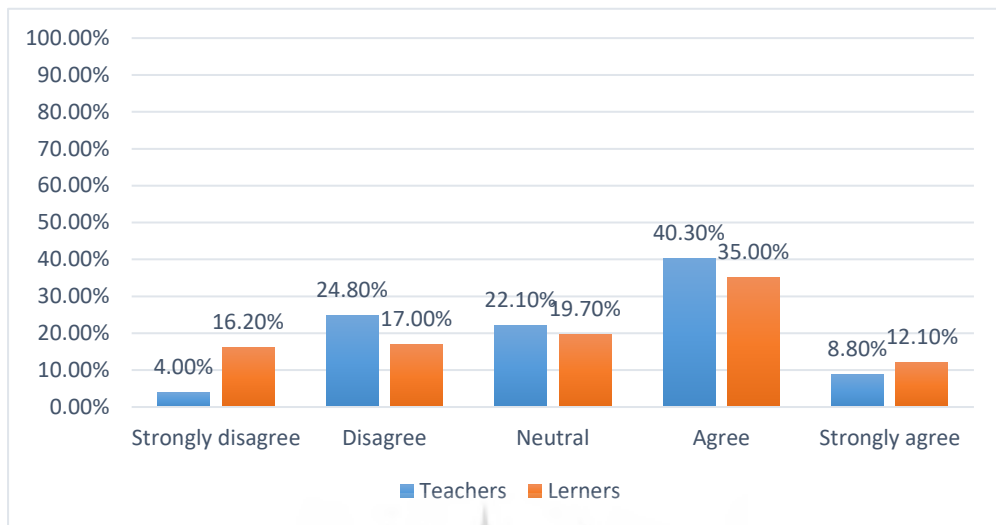

Table 5 shows the significance or non-significance of the difference between the opinions of the teachers and the learners.

Table 5
Differences between Teachers and Learners' Opinions

| items		Teacher Mean (SD)	Student Mean (SD)	P
1	The book maintains cultural assets and local identities.	3.25(1.19)	3.47(1.31)	.24
2	The book fosters local knowledge with roots in local values and traditions.	3.26(1.09)	3.60(1.31)	.06
3	The curriculum is based on local values and cultural assets.	3.30(1.02)	3.67(1.25)	.02
4	The selection of global knowledge depends on the needs of the local community and cultural preference.	3.40 (.98)	4.07(.85)	.00
5	The expected outcome in the book is to develop a local person with international outlook.	3.13(.96)	3.27(.85)	.29
6	The book accumulates the global knowledge along local expectations and demands.	3.19(.86)	3.33(1.08)	.30
7	The book fosters local knowledge with clear local needs in globalized education.	3.11(.87)	3.13(1.09)	.85
8	The curriculum identifies the core local needs and values as the fundamental seeds to accumulate the relevant global resources for education.	3.25(.89)	3.00(1.21)	.10

9	The expected educational outcome is to develop a local person who can remain as a local person but equipped with some global knowledge.	3.41(.93)	2.93(1.06)	.00
10	Efforts are made to limit the local interactions with the outside world to a fixed framework.	3.28(.97)	3.50(1.05)	.14
11	The incoming global knowledge is filtered in the book.	3.57(1.05)	3.57(1.24)	.98
12	The local developments are protected from the global influences.	3.29(.95)	3.50(1.05)	.15
13	The book is designed within a framework of ideological boundaries and social norms.	3.49(1.03)	3.93(1.07)	.00
14	Local relevance is ensured in globalizing education.	3.28(1.19)	3.00(1.31)	.07
15	Any loss of local identity and concerns is eliminated in the face of international exposure.	3.33(1.03)	3.50(1.30)	.17
16	Local traditions are removed and are replaced with new ideas borrowed from Western countries.	2.90(1.13)	2.07(1.28)	.00
17	The book replaces the existing weaker local components with the better key elements from the global knowledge.	3.02(1.06)	3.00(1.11)	.88
18	The book replaces the invalid local knowledge with vital global knowledge through globalization or globalized education.	3.20(1.04)	3.00(1.07)	.21
19	Students are strongly encouraged to be open to transplanting any good elements into local contexts.	3.13(1.02)	3.07(1.34)	.75
20	The expected educational outcome is to develop a person with locally and globally mixed elements.	3.30(1.18)	2.93(.96)	.02
21	The book absorbs certain relevant types of global knowledge instead of creating local knowledge from the beginning.	3.01(1.06)	2.79(1.21)	.18
22	The curriculum aims at enabling students to learn what global knowledge is valuable and necessary to their own developments.	3.36(.97)	2.71(1.16)	.000
23	The expected educational outcome is to develop a person equipped with certain types of global knowledge.	3.24(1.20)	2.38(.84)	.000
24	The book has no clear local identity and vision for its growth but is dependent on external resources and knowledge.	3.52(1.07)	2.43(1.50)	.000
25	The book aims to make full use of global knowledge with minimal local constraints.	2.94(1.01)	2.36(1.50)	.002
26	The book uses global knowledge in the local context to foster local knowledge.	3.15(1.20)	2.07(1.28)	.000

Table 6 shows the results of the second research on Iranian EFL teachers' and learners' perceptions of the localization of Prospect series.

Table 6
Frequencies and Percentages for Participants' Perceptions of the Localized Books

	Teachers		Learners	
	N	%	N	%
Strongly Disagree	96	4.0%	420	16.2%
Disagree	603	24.8%	441	17.0%
Neutral	537	22.1%	511	19.7%
Agree	979	40.3%	910	35.0%
Strongly Agree	214	8.8%	315	12.1%
Total	2429	100.0%	2597	100.0%

The results indicated that 28.8 percent of EFL teachers (4 % strongly disagree plus 24.8 % disagree), held a negative attitude towards the localization of the Prospect series while 33.2 percent of EFL learners (16.2 % strongly disagree plus 17 % disagree) stated a negative perception of the localization of the Prospect series. On the other hand, 49.1 percent of teachers (40.3 % agree plus 8.8 % strongly agree) held a positive perception of the localization of the 'Prospect' series; while 47.1 percent of EFL learners (35 % strongly disagree plus 12.1 % disagree) stated a positive attitude towards the localization of the 'Prospect' series. The results also showed that 22.1 percent of teachers, and 19.7 percent of learners were neutral (Figure 2).

Figure 2
Percentages for Teachers' and Learners' Perceptions of the Localized Prospect Series
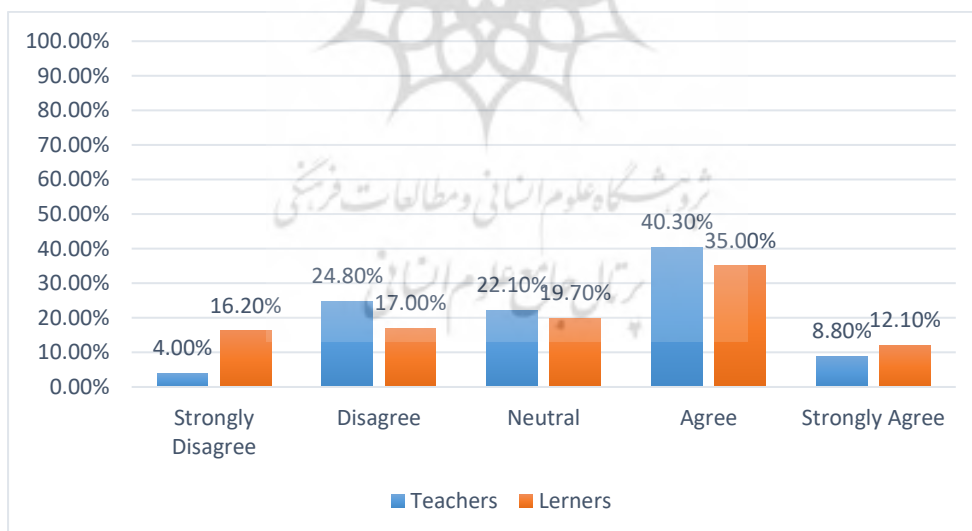
4.3. Exploring the Second Research Question

The results of the qualitative data analysis, derived from the semi-structured interview questions, had the following results:

4.3.1. Question 1: What difficulty do Iranian EFL teachers encounter while using localized materials within the context of Iran?

Out of the interview data collected from the participants, two prominent excerpts were as follows:

1. "Teaching a language without considering the culture of that language is useless. In Iran, teachers have to teach localized books which can't help students learn English at all because these books haven't considered the English culture."
2. "As Iranian EFL teachers intend to prepare their students for the international marketplace where each student will be ideally able to communicate with people from diverse backgrounds, it is best not to incorporate localized materials within the English school textbooks and instead use globalized texts to provide the opportunity so that the students are familiarized with the global English culture."

These responses were close to the following scenarios:

- Response 2 aligns more closely with Cheng's (2005) scenario 2 (i.e., totally globalized education) by emphasizing the importance of preparing students for international communication.
- Response 1 leans toward Cheng's (2005) scenario 3 (i.e., totally localized education) by highlighting the need to consider the culture of the language being taught.

4.3.2. Question 2: What boundaries do Iranian EFL teachers encounter in preparing localized materials within the context of Iran?

Based on the responses given to this question by the participants, the two very prominent responses were as follows:

1. "Teachers cannot find suitable information with correct grammatical structure and right level in English for use in the classroom."
2. "Iran is a vast country with diverse ethnolinguistic and cultural backgrounds. It's practically impossible and undesirable to design textbook materials based on the localized idiosyncrasies of these ethnic groups."

These responses were close to the following scenarios:

- Response 1 does not strongly align with any particular scenario but implies a challenge related to localized materials.
- Response 2 leans toward Cheng's (2005) scenario 3 (i.e., totally localized education) by emphasizing the diversity within Iran and the challenges of localized content.

4.3.3. Question 3: Do these textbooks provide you with an opportunity to boost your motivation in learning English and your willingness to communicate?

Two particularly noteworthy extracts from the participants that expressed their ideas in a straightforward and concise manner were:

1. "No. The focus is more on grammar."
2. "Not at all. The main purpose of these books is to teach grammar. Students have to learn a lot of grammar."

These responses were close to the following scenarios:

- Responses 1 and 2 align more closely with Cheng's (2005) scenario 2 (i.e., totally globalized education) by highlighting the focus on grammar and the neglect of speaking skills.

4.3.4. Question 4: What are your opinions on the general design of a model ELT textbook and the merits and demerits of localized textbooks?

Out of the responses given to this question by the participants, the two very prominent responses that clearly expressed their opinions were:

1. "We can publish new textbooks with a combination of the localized materials and institute textbooks. The new textbook should develop students' four language skills, especially speaking and writing."
2. "In my opinion, localized materials should have no place in an English classroom. English is an international language. EFL textbooks should prepare the students to get to know this international culture better."

These responses were close to the following scenarios:

- Response 1 aligns with Cheng's (2005) scenario 1 (i.e., highly globalized and localized education) by suggesting a combination of localized and global content to develop language skills.
- Response 2 strongly aligns with Cheng's (2005) scenario 2 (i.e., totally globalized education) by advocating for a focus on international culture in ELT textbooks.

4.3.5. Question 5: Are the language skills being emphasized equally?

Among the answers provided by the interviewees on this question, two particularly noteworthy answers that unambiguously conveyed their thoughts were:

1. "No. Listening and speaking skill are neglected especially in Prospect 1,2, and 3."
2. "Not at all. Speaking is less important in these books."

These responses were close to the following scenarios:

- Responses 1 and 2 both align more closely with Cheng's (2005) scenario 2 (i.e., totally globalized education) by highlighting the focus on grammar and the neglect of speaking skills.

Overall, the analysis shows that the participants' responses vary in their alignment with the scenarios, but there is a tendency toward emphasizing the importance of grammar and receptive skills in the current ELT context in Iran, which aligns with Cheng's (2005) scenario 2 (i.e., totally globalized education). However, there are also elements of Scenario 1 (Highly Globalized and Localized Education) and Cheng's (2005) scenario 3 (i.e., totally localized education) in some responses, indicating a diverse range of perspectives.

5. Discussion

Comparing and contrasting with previous research endeavors sheds light on diverse perspectives within the academic landscape. Mahabadi's (2013) investigation into the effects of localized materials on French language comprehension among Iranian learners showcased positive outcomes, with participants performing better on localized content. In contrast, the study delved into the perceptions of both Iranian EFL teachers and learners, uncovering nuanced views on the localization of English textbooks.

Yamini and Barjesteh (2016), focusing on the willingness to communicate, identified obstacles faced by EFL teachers in utilizing localized materials. In alignment with their emphasis on teacher attitudes, the present study extends this exploration to learner perspectives, offering a comprehensive understanding of the dynamics at play. Pishghadam and Zabihi's (2012) exploration of EFL teaching in an Islamic-Iranian context emphasized the need for incorporating local specificities into language education. This aligns with the current study's focus on understanding the agreement or disagreement of Iranian EFL teachers and learners with the localization of ELT textbooks, providing a nuanced examination of cultural considerations.

Javdani et al. (2009) study on cross-cultural factors in EFL in Iran highlighted learners' preferences for bilingual/bicultural teachers, emphasizing the impact of cultural background on language learning. In comparison, the present study probes into perceptions regarding the Prospect series, delving into participants' attitudes towards national identity, cultural aspects, and practical intercultural knowledge within the localized materials. Pishghadam and Kamyabi's (2008) investigation into the relationship between accent and deculturation among EFL learners in Iran revealed a negative correlation between mimicking native-like accents and alienation from Iranian culture. In contrast, the current study explores broader aspects of localization, encompassing cultural, practical, and intercultural knowledge aspects in the evaluation of the Prospect series.

Overall, the present study contributes a deeper understanding of Iranian EFL teachers' and learners' attitudes toward localized ELT materials, specifically the Prospect series, offering valuable insights into the complex interplay between culture, language, and educational materials in the Iranian context. In Cheng's (2005) theory of tree, where fostering local knowledge is rooted in local values while absorbing relevant global resources, teachers generally showed higher agreement percentages in questions related to basing the curriculum on local values (questions 3 and 4) compared to students. However, in questions 1 and 2 about maintaining cultural assets and fostering local knowledge with roots in traditions, students' agreement levels were relatively lower than teachers', suggesting a potential perception gap in understanding the integration of these elements within the curriculum. The theory of tree suggests discrepancies in perceptions between teachers and students regarding cultural bias and the extent of cultural integration within the curriculum (Cheng, 2005). Students might perceive a lesser incorporation of cultural assets and local identities compared to educators. Their differing expectations regarding cultural integration within the curriculum could contribute to this discrepancy.

6. Conclusion and Implications

In conclusion, the examination of Iranian EFL teachers' and learners' perceptions regarding the Prospect series offers valuable insights into the dynamics of educational material reception within the Iranian context. The significant difference found between the perspectives of these two key stakeholders highlights the importance of acknowledging and addressing the varied viewpoints that educators and learners hold regarding teaching resources. Despite this disparity, the shared positive view towards this EFL textbook series suggests its general acceptance and perceived utility among most participants. This collective positive sentiment underscores the potential effectiveness and suitability of the series within the Iranian EFL educational framework.

This study can have some pedagogical implications for curriculum developers, educational policymakers, teachers, and instructional designers. These implications can also be directly and indirectly helping EFL learners. Understanding the differing perceptions between teachers and learners regarding the 'Prospect' series is crucial for curriculum developers and policymakers. They can utilize these insights to make informed decisions about the selection and adaptation of teaching materials. Additionally, teachers can benefit from these findings by gaining a deeper understanding of their students' perspectives, enabling them to adjust their teaching methodologies and materials to better suit the preferences and needs of their learners.

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