

# TEXTBOOK EVALUATION: ENGLISH TEACHERS' PERSPECTIVE OF INTENSIVE ENGLISH FOR SENIOR SECONDARY SCHOOLS

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## Abstract

*Textbooks are meant to be used by not only students but teachers as well and they play a significant role in the overall learning process. This research focused on evaluation of English language textbook from teachers' perspective using a cross sectional survey research design and an adapted checklist with 47 items. Seven teachers were used as sample drawn from four senior secondary schools that use Intensive English language textbook for senior secondary schools in Gombe metropolis. Data collected were analysed using frequency counts and percentages. Findings revealed that teachers are satisfied with the textbook in use as it caters for most of the needs of both teachers and learners of the English language at the senior secondary school level.*

**Key words:** Evaluation, textbook, English language, checklist

## Introduction

Textbooks play major roles in our educational processes both from the teachers and students perspective. It is a teaching material that has great impact on the teaching-learning process and as such throughout the world, teachers use it as guide to their instruction because it influences how content is delivered. A textbook according to Wikipedia (2019), is a comprehensive compilation of content in a branch of study. It is used for the study of a subject and may sometime have questions to test the knowledge and understanding of learners.

Similarly, Jones (2007) defines textbook as a book which contains information about a subject that students study. According to Williams (1983) the teacher takes over where the textbook leaves off, and he/she must be able to assess its strengths and weaknesses; hence, the textbook is a tool and the teacher must know not only how to use it, but also how useful it can be

Textbooks define the boundaries of content, the order in which specific topics are taught and their presentations. Some textbooks are well indexed and comprehensive while others are shorter and more concise, emphasizing selected topics while mentioning others briefly. Textbooks are produced and used to teach particular subjects. They are collection of knowledge, concepts and principles of a selected subject or course. Most textbooks are accompanied by teachers' guide which provide supplementary teaching materials, ideas and activities that subject teachers can use throughout the academic year. There are numerous textbooks available that schools can choose from and recommend for their teachers and students use; however, such textbooks must be thoroughly evaluated before been recommended for use. Rubdy (2003) cited in Sahragard and Rahimi (2018) observes that evaluative criteria are not always readily accessible to teachers hence, selection may be done in an ad hoc manner. Even at that, McGrath (2002) Tomlinson (2003) also cited in Sahragard and Rahimi (2003) also advised that textbook evaluation should be done in three stages: pre-use, in-use, and after-use (or post-use).

Textbook readers from different cultures, age groups and social backgrounds may understand the same information in a rather different manner. Well organized textbooks assist students to effectively comprehend the intended contents of the subject. However, some textbooks lack the required

contents since authors have not carried out a comprehensive review of the field before writing the textbook. As Lordhi et al (2019) put it “most textbooks are often regarded as the tainted end product of an authors or publishers desire for a quick process”. In addition, they stressed that it is common to find textbooks that lack student-centred activities or teachers guide/ manual which are essential features that make textbooks worthy/valuable. Their findings revealed both teachers and students dissatisfaction with the textbook in use at grade 12 intermediate level.

The content of textbooks must be presented bearing in mind the learners developmental needs, age and readiness to learn. Psychology plays a vital role here. Most valuable textbooks also consciously touch on the cultural environment that makes up the learner. By so doing, the learner will readily identify with the activities enshrined in the text. Good textbooks assist both teachers and learners in organizing individualized instructions by giving the learners opportunities to proceed at their own pace, or to revise at their own convenience. Sometimes even textbook publishers’ representatives might tactically force a particular text on unsuspecting schools under the pretence of providing a form of assistance in the process of textbook selection. What schools and English language teachers should watch out for is the fact that such sales representatives have the sole aim of selling their books hence, whatever recommendation they give is bound to be influenced by this motive.

Gak (2011) explained that textbooks give great contribution in the teaching-learning process through offering a framework for guidance and orientation. This claim is further corroborated by Chegeni, Kamali, Noroozi and Chegeni (2016) where they asserted that there is no exaggeration that the textbook is the next important factor in the second or foreign language teaching classrooms after the language teachers. Hutchinson and Torres cited in Litz (2005) suggested that the text book is an almost universal element of English language teaching and millions of copies are sold every year. So many aid projects have been set up to produce them in many countries and no teaching and learning situation is complete until it has its relevant textbook. This clearly articulates the relevance of textbook in our educational system. Textbooks offer vast opportunities to both teachers and learners in the teaching-learning process. However, a single textbook cannot meet diverse needs of the learner and in the stand point of Gak (2011) and Lodhi, Farman, Ullah, Gul, Tahira and Saleem (2019), no ready-made textbook will ever fit every language programme perfectly.

Not only that, Lodhi, et al (2019) explained that textbooks perform a major guiding tool in giving learning input and providing help in English language learning. They provide security to teachers and inexperienced teachers to make decisions regarding *the what and how* of lesson planning. Textbooks save both teacher and learners’ time, provide ample activities and ideas for both teachers and learners to enrich the learning process. However, Lodhi et al (2019) lament that many textbooks are not up-to-date and many include language learning activities that are ineffective and not helpful to the teachers and do not recognize modern teaching methods. Hence, this calls for the need to evaluate textbooks in order to find out how far they address the purpose for which they are meant for.

Sheldon (1988) in Sahragad and Rahimi (2018) offered an explanation of why English language textbooks must be evaluated. He explained that selection of an English language textbook mostly signals an important administrative and educational decision in which there is considerable professional, financial or even political investment. Lodhi et al also corroborated that selection of textbook is a major educational decision which has immediate implications for the quality of students

learning. A sound evaluation of English language textbook will no doubt provide opportunity for educators to choose wisely among numerous textbooks available.

In another attempt to justify textbook evaluation, Litz (2005) argued that there can be no denying the fact that textbooks still maintain a great deal of popularity and are most definitely here to stay. Litz (2005) further stressed that we must make concerted efforts to establish and apply a wide variety of relevant and contextually appropriate criteria for the evaluation of textbooks that we use in our language classrooms. On this note, researches were carried out using various procedures and methodologies to evaluate textbooks in use with the aim of finding out how suitable a particular textbook is in relation to the learner, the teacher as well as learning of the target language (in this case English language). Researchers like Daoud and Celce-Murcia (1979), Cummingworth (1995), Ur (1996), Ellis (1997), McDonough and Shaw (2003), Los Angeles Unified School District Textbook evaluation (2002), Mukundan, Nimehchisalem, Hajimohammadi (2011) all used different checklists to evaluate English language textbooks and to justify the criteria they used to select textbooks that students use at various levels.

### **Review of relevant literature**

Sahragard and Rahimi (2018) study titled textbook evaluation of family and friends series based on teachers' perspective adopted the survey research design with twenty experienced participants (teachers) for the study which comprised of 10 males and 19 females. They used a modified checklist for textbook evaluation originally designed by Mc Donough and Shaw (1993) to evaluate *the family and friends series* textbook for young learners they use in teaching English language to their students. The reliability coefficient of all the four sections of the instrument ranged from 0.75 to 0.91. The instrument had 35 items. Frequencies and percentages were calculated for each item and Chi square statistical technique was used to analyse each criterion to ascertain the participants' overall attitude about the textbook and the degree to which they agree or disagree with the evaluative statements in the checklist. Results revealed that 90% of the respondents believe that the aims and achievements of the textbook corresponds to the needs and goals of the students with a mean of 3.80 and SD of 0.89. 70% agree with the view that the textbook have increased the linguistic proficiency of the students with a mean of 1.90 and SD of 0.71, and another 65% agree to the third statement that the materials help the students to become autonomous learners with a mean of 4.20 and SD of 0.76. While 90% agree to the fourth statement that the textbook have increased the motivation and confidence of the learners and teachers with a mean of 4.20 and SD of 0.61. The Chi square analysis showed 121.2 with  $p \leq .000$  which indicated that the differences in the teachers' attitude towards the aims and achievements of the textbook they use are statistically significant. Similarly, result of the chi square for the skills section of the checklist showed 94.4 with  $p \leq .000$ , language layout showed 130.5 with  $p \leq .000$ , technical consideration 126 with  $p \leq .000$ , meaning the differences in teachers opinion are statistically significant. Overall the four main categories of the checklist revealed means of 4.02 (SD 0.74), 4.11 (SD 0.74), 4.00 (DS 0.84) and 4.10 (SD 0.7) for aims and achievement, skills, language type, and technical consideration section of the checklist respectively. Therefore, there conclusion was that the teachers are satisfied with the textbook they are using and they recommended that EFL instructors and the Iranian language institutes to always evaluate their textbooks before selection.

Lordhi et al (2019) used a survey approach to find out opinion of students learning English as a second language regarding the suitability or otherwise of the textbook (Good-bye Mr. Chips) they

are using for more than two decades. Their population comprised of all college and higher secondary school students (grade 12) at intermediate level in Multan districts, Pakistan out of which a sample of 200 were drawn. They used a questionnaire to collect data. It has four sections that cover first demographic information, secondly importance of the textbook, third section covers content, vocabulary, skills and activities and for the fourth part objectives, appearance, methods of teaching and assessment. The questionnaire had 37 items all together. Data collected were analysed using descriptive statistic technique. Findings revealed that a large number of respondents opined that the textbook they are using lacks sufficient variety of language skills with a mean of 2.2. Furthermore, the textbook lacks consciousness of learners needs, hence, the students articulated their dissatisfaction with the subject and content of the textbook. Other major findings include the textbook in use lacks consciousness of students concerns, not ethically suitable, out-dated and teachers face difficulties when preparing for lessons using this particular textbook. Therefore they recommended that there is a need to make appropriate and cogent modifications in syllabus and materials at the intermediate level and the need to include instructional kits and teachers guide in English textbooks. They also recommended that textbooks should be revised from time to time.

Most textbook evaluation checklists developed by various researchers like Daoud & Celce-Murcia (1979), David, (1983), Cummingworth (1995), Ur (1996), Ellis (1997), McDonough & Shaw (2003), or adapted such as Mukundan, Nimehchisalem, & Hajimohammadi (2011), Rahimpour & Hashemi (2011), Sahragard & Rahimi (2018) and Lordhi et al (2019) seem to agree on the following as basic features to be considered in evaluating a text irrespective of subject matter:

1. Authorship (What training or experience does the author have to qualify him to write this particular book? does the author's point of view best serve the present needs?)
2. Content of the textbook (is the content in conformity with the overall curriculum objectives? Are the information in the content accurate and relevant? Are the concepts clearly developed in depth? Is there a smooth interface between key stages of learning? Is the level of difficulty appropriate for the learners? Are there biased information or not? Are there suggested references to facilitate self-directed learning?).
3. Teaching and learning activities (Are the instructions clear? do the activities for teaching and learning lead to the development of learners' cognitive skills? do the activities develop positive values and attitudes in the learners? is there variety in the learning activities provided? do the activities aid in the attainment of specified objectives?)
4. Structure and organization (how logically arranged are the content? is there table of contents and titles/headings? are there appropriate use of summaries, overviews and students guide to facilitate learning).
5. Language (can learners read the text independently and be able to comprehend? is the language accurate and within the level of the learners? are there provision of support for understanding and use of subject-specific vocabularies and expressions?).
6. Textbook layout (is there logical and consistent layout with appropriate use of space and margin for easy reading? are there adequate and catchy illustrations that will facilitate students learning? is the font size and type appropriate?)

To a large extent, Rahimpour and Hashemi (2011) evaluation checklist addressed most of the above critical questions regarding textbook evaluation. However, areas like structure and organization (specifically issues like logically arranged table of content/headings and sub-headings) and textbook

layout (appropriate use of space and margin) were not captured in their evaluation instrument. Therefore, these are the areas that were added to their original instrument.

The problem of this study is that most textbooks used in schools are only recommended by school boards or local Education Authorities irrespective of laid down criteria for selecting of appropriate ones which consequently slows down students' comprehension efforts. This further affects their performance in other subjects since English is the language of instruction, examinations and also the language used in most textbooks. This study therefore evaluated the prescribed English language textbook used by English teachers and students at the senior secondary school level in public schools in Gombe metropolis from the teachers' perspective to find out its appropriateness or otherwise towards the attainment of the overall goals of teaching English language at the senior secondary school level and make recommendations accordingly.

### **Research Question**

The following research question guided this study:

1. To what extent is the English language textbook used at the senior secondary school level appropriate to the learners from the teachers perspective with regards to aspects like:
  - i. vocabulary
  - ii. reading
  - iii. grammar
  - iv. language use
  - v. general layout and
  - vi. practical concerns?

### **Methodology**

This is a cross sectional survey research design with a target population of all twenty six (26) senior secondary school English language teachers in all public senior secondary schools in Gombe metropolis. A sample of seven (7) teachers from four senior secondary schools were selected through purposive sampling technique and used for the study. These teachers are from schools that use Intensive English for Senior Secondary Schools (1, 2, and 3) Published by AFRICANA FEB Publishers and authored by: Benson, O. , O. , Benett, N. A., Emeka, J. O., and Sam, M. O.,

### **Research Instrument**

The evaluation checklist used by Rahimpour and Hashemi (2011) was adapted and modified by adding two questions on aspect of physical make-up of the text. One item was also deleted (under practical concerns). This is because the items require information regarding how the text being evaluated is similar in content and physical make-up with other texts in use. The original version of the instrument has forty six (46) items and after the addition of two items and deletion of one item, the adapted version comprised of forty seven (47) items. The adapted version of the checklist was scrutinized by two English language experts for face and content validity before it was pilot tested in two senior secondary schools that do not form part of this study. The items in the questionnaire are grouped and analysed under separate headings (vocabulary, reading, grammar, language, physical make-up, and practical concern). Frequency counts and percentages were ascertained for each statement in the checklist.

**Findings****Table 1. Vocabulary Component of the Textbook**

S/N	Vocabulary	Not at all ( )	Not satisfactory	To some extent	To a great extent
1	Does the vocabulary lead throughout the textbook seem to be reasonable for the students of each level?			5 (71.4)	2 (28.6)
2	Are the vocabulary items systematically graded from simple to complex items?		1 9 (14.3)	2 (28.6)	4 (57.1)
3	Are the vocabulary items presented in a variety of ways?		1 (14.3)	2 (28.6)	4 (57.1)
4	Are the vocabulary items repeated in a subsequent lessons for reinforcement?	1 (14.3)	1 (14.3)		5 (71.4)
5	Are the vocabulary items introduced in motivating and realistic contexts?			4 (57.1)	3 (42.9)
6	Do the new views receive sufficient practice through different kinds of exercise		2 (28.6)	2 (28.6)	3 (42.9)
7	Do the vocabulary exercise promote internalization of the previously and newly introduced items?				

*Figures in parenthesis ( ) are in percentage*

From Table 1, majority of the respondents (57.1% to 71.4%) opine that the vocabulary section of the Intensive English language textbook they are using is satisfactory either to some extent or to a great extent.

**Table 2. Reading Component of the Textbook**

S/N	Vocabulary	Not at all ( )	Not satisfactory	To some extent	To a great extent
8	Are the texts interesting for the students?		1 (14.3)	3 (42.9)	3 (42.9)
9	Is the text authentic piece of language?			3 (42.9)	4 (57.1)
10	Does the text cover a variety of topics and themes?			1 (14.3)	6 (85.7)
11	Do the topics dealt with meet local and national standards?			2 28.6)	5 (71.4)
12	Are the topics up-to-date?			4 (57.1)	3 (42.9)
13	Does the text serve as a window into learning about the target language culture?		1 (14.3)	3 (42.9)	3 (42.9)
14	Does the text present information in a way that the students will understand?			3 (42.9)	4 (57.1)
15	Is the content age-appropriate?		1 (14.3)	1 (14.3)	5 (71.4)

16	Are there enough exercise and activities accompanying the texts?	1 (14.3)	6 (85.7)
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**Table 2** depicts the teachers' responses regarding the reading aspect of the textbook with as high as 85.7% affirming that the text covers a variety of topics and themes.

**Table 3. Grammar Component of the Textbook**

S/N	Grammar	Not at all ( )	Not satisfactory	To some extent	To a great extent
17	Is the number of grammatical point introduced in the textbooks appropriate?			3 (42.9)	4 (57.1)
18	Are the grammatical points presented in an increasing level of difficulty?		1 (14.3)	3 (42.9)	3 (42.9)
19	Are the new grammatical points presented in a meaningful context to facilitate understanding?			4 (57.1)	3 (42.9)
20	Are the explanations easy to understand		1 (14.3)	3 (42.9)	3 (42.9)
21	Are there enough examples accompanying the explanations?		1 (14.3)	2 (28.6)	4 (57.1)
22	Do the grammatical points receive sufficient practice through exercises and activities?			3 (42.9)	4 (57.1)
23	Are the grammatical points repeated and reinforced in subsequent lessons?			4 (57.1)	3 (28.6)

**Table 3** shows the result for the grammatical aspect of the textbook. It revealed that most teachers perceive to some extent that the grammar aspect of the English language textbook is appropriate to their needs as it is presented in an increasing level of difficulty, easy to understand and reinforced in subsequent sections among others.

**Table 4 Language Component of the Textbook**

S/N	Language	Not at all ( )	Not satisfactory	To some extent	To a great extent
24	Is the number of language functions introduced in the textbooks appropriate?			4 (57.1)	3 (42.9)
25	Are the language functions presented in meaningful contexts?		1 (14.3)	3 (42.9)	3 (42.9)
26	Does the language functions introduced accompany practice of different kinds?	1 (14.3)		2 (28.6)	4 (57.1)

27	Are the language functions repeated in subsequent sections?	1 (14.3)	3 (42.9)	3 (42.9)
28	Does the language function exemplify English in its authentic use?		3 (42.9)	4 (57.1)

**Table 4** revealed that most teachers opine that language functions in the textbook are appropriate, repeated in subsequent sections and exemplify English in its authentic use. This is reflected in teachers' responses that ranged from 42.9% to 57.1%.

**Table 5 Pronunciation Component of the Textbook**

S/N	Pronunciation	Not at all ( )	Not satisfactory	To some extent	To a great extent
29	Are the pronunciation points presented in meaningful contexts?			4 (57.1)	3 (42.9)
30	Is there enough practice accompanying each pronunciation point introduced?		1 (14.3)	2 (28.6)	4 (57.1)
31	Are the pronunciation points repeated and reinforced in subsequent lessons?	1 (14.3)		4 (57.1)	3 (42.9)

For the pronunciation component, **Table 5** revealed that teachers seem to agree that the pronunciation points are presented in meaningful contexts with enough practice and reinforced in subsequent lessons as shown in their responses ranging from 42.9% to 57.1% for each item in this category.

**Table 6 Physical Layout of the textbook**

S/N	Physical Layout	Not at all ( )	Not satisfactory	To some extent	To a great extent	Mean
32	Is the textbook cover attractive?	2 (28.6)		3 (42.9)	2 (28.6)	
33	Is the paper utilized of satisfactory quality?	1 (14.3)	1 (14.3)	2 (28.6)	3 (42.9)	
34	Are there logically arranged table of content?			2 (28.6)	5 (71.4)	
35	Are the type, size and font appropriate?			3 (42.9)	4 (57.1)	
36	Are there enough illustrations?		2 (28.6)	3 (42.9)	2 (28.6)	
37	Are the illustrations colourful and attractive?	1 (14.3)	3 (42.9)	3 (28.6)	1 (14.3)	
38	Are the illustrations informative and functional?		2 (28.6)	4 (57.1)	1(14.3)	
39	Do the illustrations provide appropriate representation of local and national standards?		2 (28.6)	2 (28.6)	3 (42.9)	
40				3 (42.9)	4 (57.1)	



41	Is there appropriate use of margin?	1 (14.3)	2 (28.6)	4 (57.1)
	Do the size and weight of the textbook seem convenient?			

**From Table 6**, most of the teachers agreed that aspects of physical layout of the Intensive English Textbook like font size, type, margin, size and weight are appropriate. However, aspect of illustration seem to draw a 50:50 response. For instance, 14.3 and another 42.9% are of the opinion that the illustrations are not colourful and attractive while 28.6 and 14.3% think that the illustrations are colourful and attractive.

**Table 7 Practical Concerns**

S/N	Practical concern	Not at all ( )	Not satisfactory	To some extent	To a great extent	Mean
42	Are the objectives explicitly laid out?	1 (14.3)	2 (28.6)		4 (57.1)	
43	Does the textbook support the goals of the curriculum?			3 (42.9)	4 (57.1)	
44	Is the textbook sufficiently challenging for the students?	1 (14.3)		4 (57.1)	2 (28.6)	
45	Does the textbook value the students' interest in further language study?	1 (14.3)		3 (42.9)	3 (42.9)	
46	Does the textbook contain periodic review setting?			4 (57.1)	3 (42.9)	
47	Is the methodology proposed for the teachers appropriate?	1 (14.3)		2 (28.6)	4 (57.1)	

**Table 7** shows respondents opinion regarding practical aspects like being in conformity with the goals and objectives of the English language curriculum, been sufficiently challenging and having periodic reviews among others. One important aspect of these is that while most teachers opine that the methodology proposed for teachers is appropriate, 14.3% think it is completely inappropriate.

### **Discussion of Findings**

The research question that guided this study was :Is the Intensive English language textbook used at the senior secondary school level appropriate to the learners from the teachers perspective with regards to aspects like: vocabulary, reading, grammar, language use, pronunciation, general layout and practical concerns? Hence, results obtained in tables 1 to 7 seem to suggest that the teachers are satisfied with almost all aspects of the textbook except for few aspects under physical layout and methodology proposed for teachers by the textbook. This is shown in teachers' responses that 42.9% think the illustrations in the textbook are not colourful and attractive. Similarly 42.9% (28.6 and 14.3) who opine that the objectives of the lessons are not explicitly laid out. Taken all together, the major findings in this research are in line with that of Sahragad and Rahimi (2018) that the teachers are satisfied with the English language textbook they are using for their senior secondary school students.

## Conclusion

On the whole, the result from the checklist used in this research revealed that most if the teachers feel that the Intensive English language textbook used in various senior secondary schools around Gombe state is appropriate. However, for aspects like illustration under physical layout, teachers need to use extra materials to supplement the textbook. Also, teachers need not stick to the methodology proposed in the textbook only. There is need to use varieties of methods to achieve desired results. This is particularly important as no textbook can give all that is required by both teachers and learners, Richard (2007) cited in Lodhi et al (2019).

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