

Chapter 3

Evaluation of Indian Primary Level English Language

Textbook Using the Checklist Method: Teachers’

Perspective

3.1 Introduction

English language education is a vital component of global communication. Hence, the quality of textbooks is crucial for effective teaching-learning. The teaching of English is seen to be incomplete without implementing the use of an appropriate textbook. Relying so much on textbooks is evident in the curriculum and program syllabi, as teachers often have textbooks as their main reference for teaching. This paper overviews a study that systematically evaluated National Council of Education Research and Training (NCERT) English textbooks for primary grades using the checklist method. The checklist under consideration was developed by Denir & Ertas in 2014. The checklist comprised 54 questions based on a systematic review of 23 checklists. For the sake of the study, 14 teachers’ feedback was collected based on the developed checklist. Feedback from the teachers gathered through the designed checklist adds valuable insights into the textbook’s real-world application, highlighting its strengths and weaknesses. Considering multiple parameters, our study reveals that 78% of the questions in the checklist were answered in the affirmative, indicating that the textbooks under our consideration were aptly designed and suitable for the learners; however, they require some changes to be made, especially in the Skills and Sub-skills section.

3.2. The Present Checklist

The checklist we considered for evaluation in our study was developed by Yusuf Denir and Abdullah Ertas in 2014. The checklist was prepared after reviewing 23 extant checklists. The proposed checklist is divided into four sections, namely: Subjects and Contents with nine items; Skills & Subskills with 24 items; Layout and Physical Make-up with 7 items; and finally, Practical Consideration with 14 items. The Skills & Sub-skills section has seven sub-sections: Reading, Listening, Speaking, Writing, Vocabulary, Pronunciation, and Grammar.

There were 54 questions in total, to which the teachers had to answer either YES or NO. The list of 23 checklists taken into consideration along with the year, while preparing the checklist are enlisted in the table below: -

Table 3.1: List of 23 Checklists taken into consideration

Sl. No	Checklist	YEAR
1	Shatery & Azargoon	Undated
2	Litz	2005
3	Byrd	2001
4	Ersoz	Undated
5	Demir & Ertas	2014
6	Razmjoo	2010
7	Lawrence	2011
8	Mukundan et al	2011a
9	Cunningsworth	1995
10	Williams	1983

11	Mukundan et al.	2011b
12	Daoud & Celce-Murcia	1979
13	Rahimpour & Hashemi	2011
14	Tekir & Arikan	2007
15	Tok	2010
16	Peacock	1997
17	Halliwell	1992
18	Ghorbani	2011
19	Garinger	2002
20	Wen-Cheng et al.	2011
21	Abdelwahab	2013
22	Tanner & Green	1998
23	Skierso	1991

The present checklist has the following features: -

1. The inclusion of large, ambiguous, and rigid questions, which may be interpreted differently by many assessors, was deliberately avoided, as recommended by Tomlinson (2003). This checklist has been designed to include succinct and easily understandable elements, ensuring no space for uncertainty or misrepresentation.
2. The checklist includes a supplementary section at the bottom, allowing practitioners to provide further comments or feedback. This will prove beneficial in highlighting aspects that may elude capture by the assessment checklist.

3. The magnitude of the checklist, as determined by the number of items it contains, is a critical aspect that must be duly considered. Mukundan et al. (2011a) assert that the existing checklists found in the literature suffer from either brevity or excessive length, rendering them inadequate for fulfilling the criteria of a suitable evaluation tool. While many evaluation checklists may consist of only twenty or fewer parts, others (Skierso, 1991; Abdelwahab, 2013) have more than one hundred items. The current checklist has 54 elements, striking a balance between being sufficiently comprehensive for a complete review and avoiding excessive length.
4. The suggested evaluation checklist does not encompass discriminatory factors such as gender, colour, culture, and similar attributes.

3.3. Major works on Textbook Evaluation using a Checklist

The role of the teacher in the curriculum is defined by Bhanegaonkar and Mahfoodh (2013), who also state that "teachers are a key factor in the successful implementation of curriculum changes, particularly in textbooks" (p. 2). According to Cunningsworth (1995), for the evaluation of textbooks, it is important to take into consideration the viewpoints of textbook users, i.e., the students and the teachers. Similarly, teachers must utilise textbooks to supplement their lessons in every language classroom. The use of textbooks and their adaptation is a crucial component of teachers' professional development.

Hemsley (1997) enlists three kinds of ELT materials evaluation. These include:

1. an intuitive, impressionistic approach;
2. a formal prior-to-use evaluation and;
3. a process approach.

The intuitive, impressionistic approach is based on the *prima facie* impression, so it is done by going through the materials. The second approach is a systematic and comprehensive one. It is usually based on closely examining the material using careful checklists or questionnaires. The third one, the 'process approach,' involves predictive evaluation and choice of material, followed by a post-use retrospective evaluation.

A vast body of research exists where the evaluation of textbooks has been carried out using the Checklist Method from the teacher's standpoint. A study by Kodriyah, Albakri & Hakim (2024) aimed to thoroughly comprehend English teachers' opinions regarding their need to textbook evaluation. Five English language teachers with over a decade of teaching experience. A semi-structured interview with multiple questions was undertaken to collect the data. The findings revealed that most teachers of English in Indonesia are now unfamiliar with the textbook evaluation process. Although the majority lack familiarity with the textbook evaluation process, interview findings indicated that the teacher respondents concurred on the significance of evaluating a textbook as a crucial aspect of classroom instruction. This evaluation should occur before or after teaching sessions, as it aids teachers in making informed material selections.

In Hamidi et al. (2016), a comparative and contrastive study was conducted on two prevalent English textbooks, *New Interchange 2* vs. *Four Corners 3*, focusing on subjects such as Subject matter, Vocabulary and structure, Exercises, Illustrations, and Physical make-up. The assessment was carried out by a group of four teachers specialising in English language teaching. They utilized the checklist developed by Daoud and Celce-Murcia in 1979 as a structural foundation for their examination. The research findings indicated that there was not a statistically significant difference between the two textbooks. However, the researchers identified distinct strengths and shortcomings associated with each book. Their study found that *Four Corners 3* had a greater degree of engaging subject matter and

enhanced clarity in its content compared to New Interchange 2. In contrast, it turned out that New Interchange 2 had a better arrangement of structural points, while its exercises demonstrated a closer alignment with the prescribed structural rules being taught.

A similar focus group study was conducted by Mukundan et al (2011). The objective of the study was to present a comprehensive checklist to evaluate the ELT textbooks. The resulting checklist encompasses five key areas: Aims and Objectives, Content and Approach, Language and Accuracy, Usability and Practicality, and Physical and Utilitarian. The study emphasizes the importance of involving experienced ELT teachers in the development of evaluation checklists to ensure that the criteria reflect the practical needs and considerations of classroom teaching. The resulting checklist provides a valuable tool for teachers, material developers, and evaluators to make informed decisions about selecting and using ELT textbooks.

In their 2012 study, Alemi and Sadehvandi conducted a comprehensive evaluation of the Pacesetter Series, an English as a Foreign Language (EFL) coursebook series, by gathering viewpoints from 64 teachers of EFL in Iran. This research aimed to assess the effectiveness and suitability of the Pacesetter Series as a teaching resource in the Iranian EFL context. The research revealed that the educators generally concurred that Pacesetter effectively caters to the requirements of students within a communicative curriculum. However, they also expressed two noteworthy concerns: First, the series fails to emphasize speaking skills' importance adequately. Secondly, the assimilation of European culture into various skills and activities might lead to dissatisfaction and confusion among Iranian teenage learners of foreign languages since they may lack familiarity with some elements of the target language's culture. The authors, therefore, suggested that teachers who utilise the Pacesetter Series can enhance the development of speaking skills by including

supplementary activities and resources. Additionally, teachers were recommended to demonstrate awareness of the cultural disparities between their students and the culture associated with the target language and modify instructional activities accordingly.

Regarding textbook evaluation in India Rangaraju (2017) conducted a thorough analysis of the English textbooks produced by the National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT). Rangaraju performs a thorough examination of these textbooks, with a specific emphasis on elements such as the pertinence of the content, the levels of language skill, the pedagogical methods used, and how well they match with educational goals. The research seeks to evaluate the efficacy of these textbooks in promoting English language acquisition among students in Indian schools. Rangaraju used a blend of qualitative and quantitative research approaches to assess the textbooks. This included analysing the content, conducting surveys, and interviewing educators and students. The research aimed to evaluate the strengths and problems in the NCERT English textbooks, providing valuable insights into areas that should be improved. The thesis tries to offer significant suggestions for curriculum designers, policymakers, and educators to improve the quality and efficacy of English language instruction in India. Furthermore, it adds to the wider conversation on the creation of educational plans and teaching resources in the domain of English language instruction.

In Southeast Asia, including Thailand, Western-published English Language Teaching (ELT) textbooks dominate classrooms despite the availability of local alternatives. A study by Ulla, 2019 investigated how non-native English-speaking teachers in Bangkok perceive and use these textbooks. The major research objectives were to explore teachers' perceptions of Western-published ELT textbooks in Thai EFL classrooms and examine how teachers actually use these textbooks and the challenges they face. For this, Ulla

conducted semi-structured interviews with 15 non-native English-speaking teachers from various Bangkok schools. The key findings of the research were:

Positive views: Teachers valued the perceived accuracy, up-to-datedness, and variety of Western ELT textbooks. They also viewed them as helpful for their own language development and classroom management.

Concerns: Some teachers expressed concerns about the cultural appropriateness of Western content, its relevance to Thai learners' needs, and potential limitations in fostering critical thinking skills.

In a recent work in 2020, Roberts, Aziz, & Matore, attempted to enlist criteria of a good ELT textbook using the Malaysian teachers' perception. Through interviews with seven ESL teachers, Roberts identifies eleven key criteria for a good ELT textbook. These include Layout and Design, Illustration, Supplementary Materials and Resources, Teacher's Manual, Clarity of Instructions, Content, Activities, Culture and Cultural Introduction, Level, Flexibility, and Conformance. Roberts concluded that these criteria, as perceived by Malaysian teachers, should inform the selection, development, and evaluation of ELT textbooks for effective English language teaching in the country. The study highlights the importance of considering teacher perspectives and tailoring textbooks to the specific needs and cultural context of Malaysian learners.

We found in the literature on textbook evaluation that whether it is the field of textbook evaluation or the creation of a checklist, teachers' feedback has been meticulously used, as is evident from the above studies. When and how should a textbook be evaluated to determine its appropriateness in an English classroom? The assessment is essential and required. Being aware of this can aid the teacher in providing the content to the class more effectively. Similarly, teachers' perspectives provide a pragmatic viewpoint on the

operational efficacy of English language textbooks within actual classroom environments, guaranteeing that these textbooks are not just theoretically robust but also practical, pertinent, and engaging in application. Their input is essential for enhancing the design and execution of the textbooks being used.

3.4. Methodology

Six CBSE schools from West Bengal that follow NCERT curriculum were chosen randomly. The researcher visited these schools to elicit the data from the teachers. The schools were situated mainly in urban and semi-urban areas. A total of 14 teachers were given the checklist (proposed by Ertas and Demir in 2014) to elicit responses in either Yes or No. At the end there was space provided for them to add extra comments wherein they could enlist the strengths and weaknesses of the textbook. The interview was in face-to-face form where the researcher sat with the teachers and elicited responses. However, a google form was also circulated among the teachers to elicit response online but it could not be carried out because the teachers did not fill the form owing to the length of the checklist. Therefore, the researcher had to rely upon physical interview. The original checklist had 56 questions, but we reduced it to 54. The researchers then tabulated the responses from each teacher to calculate the affirmation percentage of the textbooks under consideration. Section-wise affirmation percentage was also calculated to identify the strengths and shortcomings of the textbooks precisely. According to Demir and Ertas, if the total affirmation percentage comes out to be 80% and above, this would indicate that the textbook under consideration is apt for the situation and it does not require any modification. However, if the affirmation percentage is between 60%-80%, the textbook under consideration needs some modification and has some shortcomings but it can be used in the situation after incorporating those modifications but if the affirmation percentage is

below 60%, the textbook under consideration cannot be used in the situation. The Checklist is illustrated in Appendix A.

3.5. Results and Discussions

Responses from 14 teachers were taken based on the checklist prepared. The textbooks taken under our consideration received 78 % affirmative responses from the teachers. Their score is tabulated in the table below (Table 3). Agreement percentages are rounded off to the nearest decimal place.

Table 3.2: Teachers' Response

RESPONDENTS	AFFIRMATION	RESPONDENTS	AFFIRMATION
RESPONDENT 1	78%	RESPONDENT 8	67%
RESPONDENT 2	89%	RESPONDENT 9	67%
RESPONDENT 3	63%	RESPONDENT 10	80%
RESPONDENT 4	80%	RESPONDENT 11	83%
RESPONDENT 5	80%	RESPONDENT 12	83%
RESPONDENT 6	72%	RESPONDENT 13	89%
RESPONDENT 7	78%	RESPONDENT 14	81%
MEAN SCORE	78%		

Eight teachers (57%) gave a score of 80% and above, indicating that they are satisfied with the textbooks under consideration. However, six of the fourteen teachers

(43%) were dissatisfied with the textbooks. The teachers' satisfaction has been shown in the pie-chart below. The overall agreement percentage was 78%, indicating that the textbooks under our consideration can be used, but some alterations must be made. The table below (Table 2) shows the section-wise agreement percentage of the teachers.

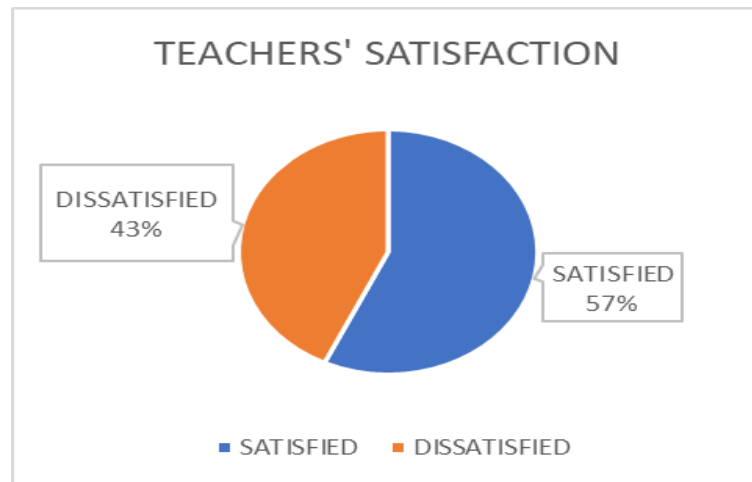


Fig 3.1: Teachers' Satisfaction

Table 3.3: Section-Wise Affirmation

Section	Mean score (total score)	Affirmation
Subject and Content	7.21 (9)	80%

Skills and Subskills	17.75 (24)	74%
Layout and Physical Design	5.78 (7)	83%
Practical Consideration	11.14 (14)	80%

*Agreement percentages are rounded off to the nearest decimal place

As the table above shows, Layout and Physical Design have the highest percentage of affirmation, followed by Subject and Content, Practical Consideration, and Skills and Sub-skills. This indicates that comparatively less emphasis is placed on enhancing language skills. It is evident from the table above that the section on Skills & Subskills received the affirmation percentage of less than 80 while other sections performed comparatively well with an affirmation percentage of 80 and above. Delving further in the section of Skills & Subskills, the table below shows the mean score and affirmation percentage for each of the seven skills involved in the Skills & Sub-skills section. The total number of questions is written in brackets. The affirmation percentage has been rounded off.

Table 3.4: Affirmation In Skills & Sub-Skills

Skills & subskills	Overall score (total score)	Mean score (total score)	Affirmation
READING	30 (42)	2.14 (3)	71%
WRITING	39 (42)	2.78 (3)	93%

LISTENING	24 (42)	1.71 (3)	57%
SPEAKING	35 (42)	2.42 (3)	83%
GRAMMAR	47 (70)	3.35 (5)	67%
VOCABULARY	58 (70)	4.14 (5)	83%
PRONUNCIATION	17 (28)	1.21 (2)	61%

Seven of the teachers, i.e., 50%, gave an affirmation of 33% and below to the Listening Skills. Pronunciation received the least agreement percentage, i.e., 61%, while writing received the highest agreement percentage, i.e., 93%. Most of the teachers were not satisfied with the grammatical elements present in the textbooks as well (which is 67%). One of the teachers' remarks, "Grammar items should be introduced in the book with more activities and exercises." The same has been validated by yet another teacher. Another teacher remarks, "Grammar portion must be included systematically.". Similarly, teachers showed dissatisfaction with the language skills being incorporated in the textbooks. One of them says, "More exercises to foster the skills of language need to be incorporated in textbooks of primary grades." A teacher suggested, "Materials for Listening skills should be included." Another teacher who was not satisfied with the textbooks under consideration remarks, "The textbook can be revised keeping in mind the introduction of 21st-century skills and more examples of effective pedagogical strategies in the teaching-learning process."

3.6. Conclusion

Textbooks are a central element of any language learning-teaching program. Therefore, it becomes immensely important to evaluate the textbooks followed in the schools, namely the NCERT textbooks. As we have already noticed a dearth in the literature pertaining to textbook evaluation in the Indian context, this work will seek to facilitate researchers working on textbook evaluation in the Indian subcontinent. Our study suggests that the NCERT textbooks followed in the schools for Grades I-III are aptly designed for the learners. Still, some sections can be considered for improvement, which, as we hypothesized, was the section on Skills and Subskills, which includes Grammar, Vocabulary, Pronunciation, and the four Language Skills: Listening, Speaking, Reading and Writing. (LSRW). Although the research depicts that the Writing, Speaking and Vocabulary skills are aptly suited for the textbook, the other skills need to be focused on.

Based on the findings, we can suggest that Reading, Pronunciation, Listening, and Speaking skills be given more importance while designing the textbooks, as is evident from the teachers' responses (all these skills received an affirmation of less than 80%). Curriculum planners can delve into the results mentioned above to identify the probable areas in the textbooks that need improvement. Teachers can design activities that incorporate these skills to compensate for the shortcomings of the textbook. Future studies can investigate the parents' perspective towards the textbooks used in the classroom as they too are important stake holders of the textbooks. The direct consumers of the textbooks in this case study are too young (5/6 to 7/8 years old only) to provide any comments on the content of the textbooks. Also, since the schools chosen were mostly situated in the urban and semi-urban areas, future study can also delve into analysing teachers' perspective from rural settings as their perception might differ from urban teachers using the textbooks..With

this overall evaluation of the textbooks, we will move to the content-specific evaluations of the textbooks in the next two chapters.