

# Evaluating the 10<sup>th</sup> Grade English Coursebook Currently in Use in Afghanistan

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## ABSTRACT

In recent years, the use of (or lack of) of English textbooks in teaching English as a second/foreign language classrooms has become an issue of great debate among English teachers. Regarding the critical role of teaching materials in second language instruction, this study was an attempt to evaluate the English Coursebook taught at the 10<sup>th</sup> grade in Afghan schools from the perspectives of both teachers and students. To this end, 30 Afghan teachers of English were asked to fill out a piloted, Likert-scale questionnaire whose items tapped different aspects of the book. In addition, 100 Afghan students at the 10<sup>th</sup> grade were given another questionnaire to elicit their opinions on the book. After collecting and analyzing the data, the results indicated that, except for the pictures and illustrations used in the book, other aspects including 'meeting syllabus objectives', 'compatibility with Afghan socio-cultural norms', 'teachability', and 'effectiveness of the testing system' are confirmed by the teachers. In addition, except for the paper quality and suitability of the illustrations and pictures, the students agreed on the effectiveness of the book in vocabulary development, topic selection and sequence of the exercises.

**Keywords-** Coursebook, Analysis, Syllabus, Teachability.

order of language items, and fostering motivation in the learner.

Teaching English by Exel was intended to be used for class book review, teaching materials assessment, and instructional writing, as well as for training teachers. Teaching Exel is meant to be used for book and lesson evaluation and teaching materials training, as well as to assist teachers in their teaching skills-learning. The research method includes fifteen different subject headings. To prepare a child for study, you must take him/her through physical exercises, and review the method of teaching to it, through studying the topic in detail, assessing its material, giving instructions for the various methods and assignments, making an emphasis on vocabulary, having a grammar assignments, implementing lessons, using language drills, and gauging success. In the preparatory phase, the student is exposed to eight different types of training, languages, instructional techniques, aids, and made aware of the difficulties, thus experiencing something of a different kind, all of which lead to a more challenging activity, and environment, among others. Cloze (2005) made the final suggestion in the Index of Readability section was to use Clozes, as a test of fact-recall operation, to calculate index levels.

## I. INTRODUCTION

The use of course books in ESL classes has arguably expanded much farther, with their frequent attendance at postsecondary educational institutions, such as colleges, private schools, and K-12 schools. In addition, administrators and English teachers want ready-made syllabi because they're possibly pre-packaged lessons that teachers will follow. In other words, textbooks have emerged as the most pervasive language learning method. Richards and Rodgers (2001) argue that course books are important because they describe the subject matter and enable you to cover the material on your syllabus.

Along the same line, Kheirabadi and Alavi (2014) mentioned that Coursebooks play a great role in enlivening educational context. Because of this possible vitality, Abbas-Nejad (2012) proposed a list of criteria based on which Coursebook evaluation can be conducted. This list includes sequence of language items, Coursebook content, developing communicative skills,

## II. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The students in Afghanistan who are interested in global business would require language skills. They would be willing to profit from quality opportunities such as heading to college in countries that have progressed in their schooling. In spite of it, many Afghan students feel desperate in achieving such positions because they often find their English Coursebook overwhelming. Such being the case, there can be some legitimate doubt as to how compatible their English Coursebooks are with their real needs. As a result of this, conducting further evaluation on Coursebooks to see if they match with the students perceived needs seems highly urgent.

One additional issue concerns the textbook: With all the various methods and textbooks present on the market, developing content for a class has become more complex. As the assessment of a book is taken into consideration, this becomes evident. The return on investment for teachers and policy makers may be

especially significant in reviewing comprehensive readings, as they can make better decisions based on extensive research about which books would work for their individual students. In light of each book's weaknesses and strengths, educators should choose the best possible one. essentially, one is distinguishing 'positive' and 'negative' aspects' in terms of the books that can help and those that may hinder, in the classroom (Cunningsworth, 1995). The same story can perfectly be applied to Afghan educational system. Indeed, conducting Coursebook analysis in this context can have a tremendous contribution to the pedagogy by arming the involved authorities with broader insight to the course books. Keeping what was said in mind, one of the primary objectives of the current study is to see how fit the English Coursebook taught at the Afghan schools is concerning the cultural and social aspects in this country. Put simply, this study has investigated the appropriacy of the content of the targeted Coursebook regarding the values and norms reigning Afghan settings.

### III. SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

It's an inescapable need to use textbooks in whatever educational environment that one cares to put it seems that there is a need to imagine Today's classroom environment consists of books, lesson plans, and instructional tools, not just as a tool, but also as a reference and measure. Teachers all over the world use textbooks to help them present information in a smooth and easy manner, so textbook authors have a significant impact on curriculum delivery. Usage of books in class may be seen to be reviewing them and recommending new books in addition to other resources. While this is so, teaching and course books themselves may be an extremely critical talent, evaluating them is an essential skill for all instructors.

Rather, it is important that publications that are considered for classroom use must be checked any time their content is changed or altered. A research, as outlined by Gene Sperling (2008, from the standpoint of gathering, processing, and evaluating content, describes the method of assessment in TESOL classrooms. This methods allow judgments about accomplishment and projects more competitive because of that gives you the ability to learn so you can make wise choices. The course textbook is recommended for research via this analysis is an English course book that is used in Afghan primary school textbooks at the tenth year level. Afghan students can gain more understanding if they have an understanding of the target language preceding it (English) so it is really critical that the course book is properly evaluated. Without a doubt, the success of this course would have implications for the upcoming assignments. We must grow into being compassionate adults. If we take control of the primary phases, we will be able to become more compassionate adults. In this view, Palmer (1990)

believes that if we are attentive to the following stages will be enhanced (p. 13).

Besides, this, the discovery has served as a platform for continued advancement in scientific knowledge as well as a way to achieve better understanding. More-or-less theoretical since it established the characteristics of a good at the ground level of English. One is that because English is today's main language of inter-national contact, the assessment of this book and other titles will soon be extremely important. As the rest of these assessments proved useful, it may have been helpful to the Ministry of Education, who could use this information in planning for other teacher training programmes elsewhere.

Additionally, the Coursebook was looked at as a realistic survey for teachers to provide teachers with valuable information as to how to teach the course in question. The thing to keep in mind is that this assessment would help not only instructors, but Coursebook designers, as well as others who are responsible for designating and establishing the instructional methods, academic material. The possible benefit may be improvements that a book offers to teachers by giving them more guidance about what the objectives may be, as well as a chance to augment their learning, with a focus on particular elements they could use supplemental resources with. It had a valid findings on course planners and policy makers, so it showed what types of changes ought to be made to further build on what was stated in the text.

### IV. PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The present study was aimed at analyzing different aspects of the English Coursebook taught at the 10<sup>th</sup> grade in Afghan schools. Considering this, the following purposes were determined:

- ❖ This study sought to see whether this book can successfully meet the objectives as mentioned by the syllabus in Afghan schools.
- ❖ This study sought to examine the appropriacy of the pictures and illustrations brought in the book with regard to facilitating and contributing to learning process.
- ❖ This study sought to examine the suitability of the materials of the book from the perspective of the social and cultural values prevailing Afghan context.
- ❖ This study sought to see if the materials brought in the book can be smoothly taught and how far the popular teaching methods such as communicative language teaching can be applied over them.
- ❖ This study sought to examine the effectiveness of the testing system designed for this book, as asserted by the teachers.
- ❖ This study sought to see how far this book meets the learners' needs which are clarified based on the needs analysis conducted.

## V. RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The current study was an attempt to provide statistically valid answers to the following questions:

- 1) To what extent are the syllabus objectives met by the English Coursebook taught at the 10<sup>th</sup> grade in Afghan schools?
- 2) To what extent are the appearance and illustration designs of the English Coursebook taught at the 10<sup>th</sup> grade in Afghan schools appropriate?
- 3) To what extent are the socio-cultural components of the English Coursebook taught at the 10<sup>th</sup> grade in Afghan schools suitable?
- 4) To what extent are the materials included in the English Coursebook taught at the 10<sup>th</sup> grade in Afghan schools teachable and how far do they lend themselves to the popular teaching methods?
- 5) To what extent is the testing system designed for the English Coursebook taught at the 10<sup>th</sup> grade in Afghan schools effective?
- 6) To what extent does the English Coursebook taught at the 10<sup>th</sup> grade in Afghan schools meet the learners' needs, as observed via needs analysis?

## VI. RESEARCH HYPOTHESES

Based on the questions posed above, the following null hypotheses were formulated in this study:

- 1) The syllabus objectives are not met by the English Coursebook taught at the 10<sup>th</sup> grade in Afghan schools.
- 2) The appearance and illustration designs of the English Coursebook taught at the 10<sup>th</sup> grade in Afghan schools are not appropriate.
- 3) The socio-cultural components of the English Coursebook taught at the 10<sup>th</sup> grade in Afghan schools are not suitable.
- 4) The materials included in the English Coursebook taught at the 10<sup>th</sup> grade in Afghan schools are not teachable and they do not lend themselves to the popular teaching methods.
- 5) The testing system designed for the English Coursebook taught at the 10<sup>th</sup> grade in Afghan schools is not effective.
- 6) The English Coursebook taught at the 10<sup>th</sup> grade in Afghan schools does not meet the learners' needs, as observed via needs analysis.

### *The Role of Coursebooks in Language Learning*

As Mares (2003) points out, Coursebooks are "designed to give cohesion to the language teaching and learning process by providing direction and support aimed at providing classroom practice for learners" (p. 89). A Coursebook can be viewed as a published book specifically made to aid language learners to enhance their linguistic and communicative skills (Sheldon, 1998). It is usually bundled with other instructional resources such as a workbook, teacher's CDs, and may help the student expand their vocabulary. As far as the significant

role of ELT teaching is concerned, ELT textbooks have a vast significance, and are nearly everywhere used in that particular (Hutchinson & Torres, 1994).

### *Advantages and Disadvantages of Using Coursebook*

In a learning environment where learners are encouraged regarding their surroundings, the pace of language acquisition can be vastly improved (Tomlinson, 2008). Teachers will often use textbooks to see how they are doing in terms of performance and improvement because of the details included in the texts. Using course books may be advantageous in the ELT in that they enable you to gauge how much progress has been made on a subject and they provide an indication of whether you are keeping with your course material. simulation instruction and books have the same purposes as route maps in helping the students understand their teaching progress; McGrath, O'Neil, (2002) offers guidance in teaching strategies and techniques, as well as examples for delivering lessons and lessons provide students with visuals) (Tomlinson, 2008).

... When course books can act as a guide for the learning and teaching processes, there is not enough in them to handle the specific learning and teaching needs of all students, except when accounting for different settings, these books cannot be relied on to adequately to include class-wide approaches (Tomlinson, 2003; Ur, 1996; Williams, 1998). In that case, they can come to depend on their course books, or lose all respect for the instructors if they aren't able to get their lessons right from the books (Tomlinson, 2008). Rather than ensuring students retain the material while moving past book knowledge, this could contribute to detrimental scenarios where instructors merely show the students what they know (McGrath, 2002; Reynolds, 1974). For Tomlinson (2010) believes that the textbook is less likely to provide students with some practical skills since only a limited amount of people really try to help prepare the materials that represent learning values in their everyday environment (Reynolds, 1974; Tomlinson, 2010).

## VII. METHOD

### *Participants*

In the present study, the participants comprised two groups. The first one included 30 Afghan teachers who were asked to fill out a questionnaire designed for the evaluation purposes. Here, majoring TEFL – Teaching English as a Foreign Language – or having a credited teaching certificate was a primary requirement for selection. Most of them were also sufficiently experienced with at least 6 years of teaching experience. A randomly selected group of various colleges and universities were put teachers from all over Afghanistan in the general categories in one category in order to serve as fair samples. Since instructors had to meet such criteria in order to be selected for participation in the report, such as their love of English and 6 years of teaching experience, they were picked based on certain factors.

The second group of the participants in this study included 100 language learners studying at the 10<sup>th</sup> in Afghan schools. Here again, the selection was random-based, to care for the same consideration as mentioned above. The mean of the participants' age was 15. Also, to neutralize the effect of gender, 50 of them were boys and the other 50 were girls. These students were asked to fill out the questionnaire related to needs analysis, as will be explained later.

#### **Design**

The purpose of this study was to evaluate one of the English Coursebooks taught in Afghan context. Such being the case, the design was survey in nature. Here, in the current study two questionnaires were distributed to elicit various aspects of this book from both teachers' and students' perspectives in Afghanistan.

#### **Instrumentation**

The instruments employed in the present study included two parts:

- Teachers' questionnaire
- Learners' questionnaire

The first instrument used was a questionnaire to examine Afghan English teachers' opinions on different features of the English Coursebook. The questionnaire was designed according to a five-point Likert scale from strongly disagree to strongly agree.

1. **Strongly Disagree (SD=1),**
2. **Disagree (D=2),**
3. **Not Decided (Nd=3),**
4. **Agree (A=4),**
5. **Strongly Agree (SA=5)**

The questionnaire included some statements which were directly related to the purposes of the study. It means each of them tabs one of the research questions posed by the study. These statements all came from various questionnaires available in the literature and already used in other studies (Mukundan, 2006; Zohrabi, 2011).

### **VIII. DATA COLLECTION PROCEDURE**

As the first step of this study, the teachers were selected on a random basis. Then they were asked to fill out the questionnaire related to Coursebook evaluation. On the other side, the students participating in this study were randomly chosen from different schools in Afghanistan and asked to fill out the questionnaire related to them. Prior to that, however, both groups were clearly briefed about the research purposes as well as possible gains out of the results. This was to encourage them to act more responsibly especially on the side of the students. The questionnaires were given information about the research findings that the researchers discovered, since the questionnaires didn't impact their final grades and therefore, they were completely free to address any questions they had.

### **IX. DATA ANALYSIS**

In order to statistically analyze the positive and negative aspects of the English Coursebook taught at the 10<sup>th</sup> grade in Afghanistan, the results obtained from the questionnaires filled out by the teachers and the students were analyzed via applying statistical and referential calculations.

#### **Results**

Since Coursebook evaluation has proved critical in the process of teaching and learning of a foreign language, the current study was an attempt to evaluate the English course book taught at the 10<sup>th</sup> in Afghan schools. In fact, the aim here was to see to what extent the given book is compatible with the standards and needs as expressed by both Afghan teachers and learners. To this end, 30 Afghan teachers and 100 Afghan students respectively teaching and studying at the 10<sup>th</sup> grade were asked to fill out a piloted questionnaire pertaining to different aspects of the book. The results obtained from the two will be analyzed in this paper, using descriptive and inferential statistics. More specifically, each question will be put against the analyzed data related to that so as to provide a valid answer to the question.

#### **Research Question One:**

The first research question of the present study was intended to investigate the extent to which the syllabus objectives are met by the English Coursebook taught at the 10<sup>th</sup> grade in Afghan schools.

In order to answer this question, the responses given by the teachers and related to this research question were compared. Four items of the questionnaire distributed among the teacher participants were related to investigating the first research question of the present study. After allocating scores 1 to 5 to the five options of the Likert Scale from Strongly Disagree to Strongly Agree respectively, the means of the responses were calculated. It was found that the highest mean belonged to item 3 of the questionnaire, i.e. the Coursebook is effective in increasing the students' vocabulary domain, while the lowest mean was obtained for item 4, that is, the primary function of the grammatical structures is to promote communicative activities. They were 4.17 and 3.27 out of 5 respectively. The other two items, that is, item 1 with a mean of 3.63 and item 2 with a mean of 3.70, fell somewhere in between. The average of the responses given turned out to be 3.69 out of 5. This shows that the responses are close to Agree.

#### **Research Question Two:**

The second research question of the present study examined the extent to which the appearance and illustration designs of the English Coursebook taught at the 10<sup>th</sup> grade in Afghan schools are appropriate.

Here, one item of the questionnaire, i.e. the appearance and design are appropriate and student-friendly, was intended to examine the second research question of the present study. The means of the responses were calculated. It indicated a mean of 2.2 that most of the language teachers were against the belief that the

appearance of the textbook was suitable and friendly. In fact, as many as 15 of them disagreed on this idea.

**Research Question Three:**

The third question investigated the extent to which the socio-cultural components of the English Coursebook taught at the 10<sup>th</sup> grade in Afghan schools are suitable.

Here again, the teachers' questionnaire contained one item to investigate the third research question of this study. It can be concluded that the mean of this item is 3.07, meaning nearly half of the respondents were not sure that reading passages were culturally and socially appropriate reading materials.

**Research Question Four:**

The fourth research question of the present study tapped the extent to which the materials included in the English course book taught at the 10<sup>th</sup> grade in Afghan schools are teachable and how far they lend themselves to the popular teaching methods.

Concerning this question of the study, three items of the questionnaire were considered to examine it. After calculating the mean, the results are as follows. The highest mean belongs to item 9 of the questionnaire, i.e., the vocabulary items can be taught by applying popular teaching methods such as communicative method, while the lowest belongs to item 8, that is, the grammatical points can be taught by applying popular teaching methods such as communicative method. They were 4.27 and 3.37 out of 5, respectively. The other item, that is, item 7 with a mean of 3.97 stands in the middle. The average of the responses given turned out to be 3.87 out of 5. This indicates that the responses are close to Agree and thus language teachers believed that the materials are easily teachable and vocabulary and grammatical points can be taught by applying popular teaching methods such as communicative method.

**Research Question Five:**

The fifth research question aimed at examining the extent to which the testing system designed for the English Coursebook taught at the 10<sup>th</sup> grade in Afghan schools is effective.

Three items of the questionnaire related to the teachers were assigned to examine the fifth research question. Following the same procedure for allocating numbers 1 to 5 to the options, the means of the responses were calculated. In this case, the highest mean belongs to item 12 of the questionnaire, i.e., the final test designed for this book is efficient enough to discriminate strong and weak students, with a mean of 3.97. Meanwhile, the mean of item 10 was also high, it was 3.93. Moreover, the average of the responses given turned out to be 3.91 out of 5. This shows that the responses are close to Agree. The fifth research question shows that most of the respondents corroborated that the final exam covers the most important parts of the Coursebook. Furthermore, a large portion of the participants agreed that the time of the final test is quite suitable. A big share of the respondents also affirmed that the final test clearly discriminates strong and weak students.

**Research Question Six:**

The sixth research question of the present study investigated the extent to which the English Coursebook taught at the 10<sup>th</sup> grade in Afghan schools meet the learners' opinions.

Eleven items of the questionnaire distributed among the Afghan students in this study were interpreted to investigate the last research question. Here, the same procedure as the above was followed. According to the obtained information, the highest mean belongs to item 5 of the questionnaire, i.e., the Coursebook explains the meaning of the unknown concepts clearly, while the lowest mean was obtained for item 2, that is, the paper used in the book is qualified enough. They were 3.93 and 2.32 out of 5 respectively. The average of the responses given turned out to be 3.30 out of 5, meaning the responses are close to Agree.

## X. DISCUSSION

The outcomes of this study showed that Afghan students and teachers have almost similar opinions on course books in general. Both classes considered the course book to be almost satisfactory in fulfilling their language learning and teaching needs. Except for a few points, the findings revealed that both groups were highly pleased with the course book. This course book, like every other, has its own set of benefits and drawbacks. As a result, it's only logical that there are several flaws in this novel. The key thing to remember is that the book's benefits overshadow its drawbacks. This is the study's main conclusion. To begin with, teachers considered the book's approach to language learning and teaching to be useful. The majority of the teachers claimed that the book's approach was in accordance with the Afghan school curriculum. In reality, the book's goals were considered to be consistent with those of the syllabus.

Furthermore, both the instructors and the students considered the course-tasks book's and exercises to be beneficial. The practises and exercises were not only successful but also fun for the students, according to the results. This is an important topic in the book and having fun when teaching English to teenagers is really important. Both parties, though, have one critique of the pictures and diagrams. In particular, all teachers and students agreed that the book's pictures and drawings are insufficient to aid learning. The students have voiced their dissatisfaction with the paper quality. Students believed that the book's paper could have been of higher standard. Before looking at the book's teachability and commitment to communication development, it's worth remembering that the English language has long been used exclusively for communication. Indeed, English has been a must for foreign exchange and commerce. As a result, communicative language teaching (CLT) has arisen as a modern approach to language instruction. This methodology has emphasised contact as a key teaching philosophy, seeing language as a tool for speakers to

better communicate themselves in a variety of communication circumstances. The importance of communicative skill was highlighted in this respect, since it relates to the ability to use language properly depending on the context, the positions of the participants, and the essence of translation (Richards, 2001, p. 23-36). The importance of communication was increased at the time. The communication method will help you set targets and negotiate proposals (Phillips, 1999, p. 15). With this account in mind, the finding that the majority of teachers thought the book was appropriate for communicative instruction is a huge plus. In reality, since the majority of the Afghan teachers who took part in the study accepted that the English taught in the 10<sup>th</sup> grade lends itself well to communicative teaching methods, this book gains unparalleled importance in Afghan English teaching pedagogy. Another argument worth mentioning is that of history. The need to familiarise students with and improve their knowledge of English culture is seen as a need. The Afghan society, on the other hand, should not be alienated by English teaching. Mingling men and women in various social situations, as is the presumption of much of the English lessons in the novel, is a good illustration of this. This social feature, on the other hand, is uncommon in Afghan culture. With this in view, it's clear to understand why Afghan teachers are confused about the adequacy of the English book in terms of cultural and social aspects.

In addition to the above, the book's topics were examined in this review. In general, the importance of topics in a course book resides in the supply of substantive and dependable material to promote inspiration and contribute to meaningful conversation opportunities (White, 1988). The Afghan students have said that the topics are well-chosen, which makes studying easier for them. This, too, may be deemed a positive aspect of this course book. Last but not least, the assessment framework created for this book has earned a lot of praise from students. Testing and appraisal, according to Bachman (1990), occupy a special role in every pedagogy since they will "lead to make correct – and wrong – decisions" (p. 36). The suitability of this book's assessment scheme can be found yet another plus for the English Coursebook taught in Afghan schools in the 10<sup>th</sup> grade.

## XI. CONCLUSION

The primary purpose of this study was to conduct an evaluation of the English Coursebook taught at the 10<sup>th</sup> grade in Afghan schools. A number of concluding remarks can be drawn from the findings. First of all, this English Coursebook is a well-designed, well-written book which provides a great deal of support for learning. As has been noted, the book offers a good balance of work on communication. Indeed, since enhancing communication skills is among the primary purposes of any English teaching program, this can be

deemed as a tremendous value of the English Coursebook taught at the Afghan 10<sup>th</sup> grade. In addition, the authors of this book have considerable efforts to provide numerous opportunities to engage learners in terms of topics, language and skills. Here, the topics are deliberately chosen in way to optimally invite students' attention, which happens to be a critical requirement for efficient learning. The language input is useful and relevant, especially the material focusing on the vocabulary systems, although the grammar system is not ideal, as expressed by the teachers. This clearly indicates that some revisions on grammar content should be considered by the authors in the subsequent editions of the given book. The primary disadvantages, however, lies in the improper selection of the pictures and illustrations, which have been blamed by both Afghan teachers and learners. In this regard, it should be admitted that, since visual aids play a significant role in clarifying the materials in any Coursebook, there seems to be an urgent need to revise the illustrations provided in the English Coursebook given. In general, however, the book's faults readily outweigh its strengths and faults can be eliminated by further adaptation, revision, and supplementation.

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