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## **EVALUATION OF THE EFL TEXTBOOK “FOUR CORNERS” FROM THE PERSPECTIVES OF STUDENTS**

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### **ABSTRACT**

The purpose of this study was to assess the effectiveness of an intermediate textbook titled “Four Corners” from the perspective of students. The evaluation of the textbook was conducted on the basis of ten criteria, the selection and organization of content in the textbook, level of the learners, the physical appearance, the content, the exercises and activities, the vocabulary and grammar, the clarity of instructions, the supporting sources, the development of learner autonomy, and the consideration of learning style differences based on Cunningsworth (1995). This study was conducted at four language institutes in Tonekabon, Mazandaran Province, Iran. Both quantitative and qualitative data were obtained through a questionnaire administered to 180 students and interviews with them. A Key English Test (KET) was administered to the subjects. The criterion for the selection of the students was that their score should be one standard deviation below the mean. Their English proficiency level was expected to have been intermediate. Frequencies and percentages were calculated for each item to describe the overall picture of how the students rated the textbook in terms of ten criteria. Also chi square for each criterion was calculated. Data collected through interviews were transcribed, content analyzed and grouped according to 10 criteria used in this study for the evaluation of the particular textbook.

The results revealed that students felt positive about the most of the characteristics of the textbook. They found the textbook effective in terms of coverage of four language skills. However, it was found that the reading passages needed to be simplified in terms of both vocabulary load and structures. Majority of the students mentioned that the level of the textbook was not appropriate for their level. It also indicated that the materials failed to consider learning style preferences of the learner. On the other hand, one of the strengths of the textbook was the artwork’s being up-to date and helpful for the students to understand the lesson. Besides, it was mentioned that the activities and exercises in the textbook appeal to their interest. Furthermore, all the students indicated that the textbook could provide them with the opportunities to be aware of their weaknesses and strengths.

**Keywords:** *Evaluation of Textbook, Four Corners, Perspective of Students, Learning Style Preferences*

### **INTRODUCTION**

English, as a global language, is one of the dominant mediums in great number of areas such as politics, economy, and international education. English is the major tool to communicate with the all people around the world and the main language used for international trade and academic study (Wang, 2010). That is why people want to learn English as a foreign or second language in their countries especially in Iran. Educational materials in general and textbooks in particular have an important role in this process.

In educational programs textbooks are reliable resource for teaching and learning process, but they depend on the pedagogical environment in which they are used. "While the quality of ESL reading textbooks has improved dramatically in recent years, the process of selecting an appropriate text has not become any easier for most teachers and administrators" (Wen *et al.*, 2011). As one of the three fundamental facets of any educational context (the other two being learner and teacher), textbooks have always been regarded as a crucial basis underlying teachers' decision making on what to teach and how to teach, and for learners' general achievement. Thus, the selection of appropriate textbooks has been among the most important issues which have preoccupied the teachers' minds since long ago.

According to Nunan (1988) materials and course books are among the most fundamental components within the curriculum and more than simply lubricate the wheels of learning. At their best, they provide

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concrete models for desirable classroom practice. They act as curriculum models and at their very best they fulfill a teacher development role" (p. 98).

In Iranian context, textbook selection and evaluation have been turned to fundamental issues in both academic and non-academic arenas due to increasing desire particularly among the young learners to acquire English.

Although academies and universities use somewhat predetermined textbooks, and there is a partially fixed schedule to follow, there is a high degree of variation in the use of instructional material in institutes in Iran. Hence, based on the objectives of different institutes, a variety of materials are used.

There are various reasons for textbook evaluation. The first important reason is the need to adapt new textbooks. The second reason as Cunningsworth (1995) stated is to recognize specific strengths and weaknesses in textbooks which have been already in use. The third one is its usefulness in teacher's development and professional growth. Therefore, such activities also permit teachers to make optimum use of their strong points and strengthen the weaker areas by adapting and substituting materials from other books. The other reason is to understand that no course book can be suitable for any kind of learners, so teachers must be able to appraise, adjust, and establish materials appropriate for their particular class.

Literature revealed that there are a lot of studies regarding the textbook assessment in an EFL context. A large number of authors and scholars have applied different textbook evaluation patterns or checklists to appraise different textbooks or materials.

A number of researchers employed checklist or questionnaire approaches, to evaluate some of the widely used textbooks/ course books among which (Birjandi and Alizadeh, 2012; Riasati and Zare, 2010; Sahrahgard *et al.*, 2009) are typical examples. Birjandi and Alizadeh (2012) conducted a study to investigate the extent to which the *Top Notch*, *Interchange*, and *English File* series include critical thinking skills. Using a checklist mainly based on Bloom's taxonomy, they concluded that the books mainly tapped knowledge, comprehension, application, and building community of thinkers' abilities.

Also, it was endeavored to appraise the general educational value and appropriateness of the *Interchange* textbooks from the Iranian EFL teachers' viewpoints (Riasati and Zare, 2010). The results revealed that most teachers acknowledged the usefulness and appropriateness of the textbooks. In spite of these advantages, some weaknesses were recommended for this series such as dearth of complementary teaching materials, too many testing exercises, and inadequate number of Teacher's Manual.

In addition, Sahrahgard *et al.*, (2009) carried out an in-depth examination of the third edition of *Interchange*. They found that *Interchange* 3rd edition suffers from some weak points such as a lack of reference to teachers and learners. The next shortages were the overreliance on input enhancement techniques, ignoring the significant role of self-directed activities in task completion. However, there were also some positive sides in the series, including its great emphasis on pair work and meaningful interaction.

Tok (2010) went about the evaluation of another ELT textbook, known as *Spot On*, which is utilized in primary public schools in Turkey. To conduct the research, initially 46 English teachers were randomly chosen by the researcher, and then a five-point Likert type questionnaire was disseminated among them. The practicality of the aforementioned textbook was judged in terms of a number of salient features such as its tasks and activities, design and layout, language type, content and subject. Based on the obtained results, this course book was found not to be sufficient enough in addressing the learners' real needs.

The present study endeavors to assess the effectiveness of the textbook titled "Four Corners" according to the selection and organization of content in the textbook, level of the learners, the physical appearance, the content, the exercises and activities, the vocabulary and grammar, the clarity of Instructions, the supporting sources, the development of learner autonomy, the consideration of learning style differences. Thus, the current research attempts to investigate these underpinning questions:

- 1) To what extent is the textbook effective according to the mentioned criteria?
- 2) What are the strengths and weaknesses of the textbook?

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### **MATERIALS AND METHODS**

#### **Participants**

A total of 180 female learners participated in this study. The participants came from a range of different institutes in Tonekabon, Mazandaran Province, Iran. A Key English Test (KET) was administered to the subjects. The criterion for the selection of the students was that their score should be one standard deviation below the mean. Their English proficiency level was expected to have been intermediate. 4 language institutes where the textbook was taught were selected. Then, 3 classes were selected from every institute. 15 learners were selected randomly in each class. All the selected learners were subject to interview.

#### **Instruments**

In this study a questionnaire was used to show the participants' points of views regarding the textbooks studied for this survey. 10 categories, selection and organization of content in the textbook, level of the learners, the physical appearance, the content, the exercises and activities, the vocabulary and grammar, the clarity of Instructions, the supporting sources, the development of learner autonomy, the consideration of learning style differences were selected based on Cunningsworth (1995). Moreover, the textbook was series. It accorded with the criteria proposed by Tomlinson (2011). For example, the layout of the textbook was attractive and effective to motivate and encourage students to do activities. A five point Likert-type scale, ranging from 1 to 5, was used to show the participants' levels of agreement with a list of statements. The reliability of the questionnaire was calculated in the inter-rater manner as to be .79.

The questionnaire was composed of two sections. The first section requested background information such as gender, English course grade, mother's educational level, father's educational level and mother's occupation and father's occupation. In the section, students were also asked to state the reason of learning English as a foreign language and whether they like to learn English or not. The second section of the questionnaire consisted of 55 items related to ten criteria determined through literature review to conduct a material evaluation.

Interview was used to collect the information related to perceptions of students on the effectiveness of the textbook they used. The other aim was to get their suggestions in improving the textbook. An interview guide comprising the 10 open-ended questions related to ten criteria mentioned above was prepared by the researcher.

#### **Procedures**

In this study both quantitative and qualitative data were obtained through student questionnaire and interviews for the evaluation of the textbook. Data collection procedures were carried out on July 2014. Participants were asked to answer the questions of the questionnaire. The time required to complete the questionnaire was approximately 30 minutes.

Students were interviewed by the researcher using the interview schedule. The interviews were conducted with 180 students between 19th and 24th July. The interviews took approximately 15 minutes individually.

Students were informed about the purpose of the study (textbook evaluation), and were told that their scores would not be affected by their answers to the questionnaire. It was stated that all the data would be kept confidential and no one would have access to them except the researcher.

#### **Data Analysis**

This study produced both qualitative and quantitative data through questionnaire and interviews. Frequencies, percentages were calculated to describe the overall picture of how the students rated the textbook in terms of ten criteria. Chi square was also calculated for each criterion. Data collected through interviews were transcribed, content- analyzed and grouped according to 10 criteria used in this study for the evaluation of the particular textbook. SPSS 16 was used to analyze the data collected for this study.

### **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

The results of the survey seeking the learners' attitudes toward each of the textbook are presented in this section.

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**Selection and Organization of Content in the Textbook**

The first criterion, selection and organization in the textbook, was measured through three items in the students’ questionnaire and the responses are presented in Table 1.

**Table 1: Frequencies and percentages of the items on the selection and organization of content in the textbook**

Item no	Item	1		2(%)		3(%)		4(%)		5(%)		x <sup>2</sup>
		F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	
1	The task and activities are organized from simple to complex.	--	--	14	8.2	51	28.0	65	35.7	50	27.5	147.98
												Df=9
												P=0.000
2	I can follow the units in the textbook easily.	--	--	--	--	55	30.2	81	44.5	43	23.6	
3	The reading passages in the units and listening, writing and speaking activities coming afterwards are presented in an integrated way.	4	2.2	19	10.4	61	33.5	64	35.2	32	17.6	

*1=Strongly Disagree 2=Disagree 3=Somewhat Agree 4=Agree 5=Strongly Agree*

As table 1 indicated, more than one third of the students (35.7 % agreeing with the related item) stated that tasks and activities were organized as moving from simple to complex. 28 percent of the students stated that they somewhat agreed with the statement. Also, 27.5 percent of the participants strongly agreed with the related item.

In relation to item number 2, “students can follow the units in the textbook easily”, more than one third of the students (44.5%) agreed with the question, and 30.2 percent of them somewhat agreed with it.

Regarding the third question of this criterion, 64 learners (35.2%) agreed that reading passages, listening, writing, and speaking activities were presented in an integrated way. Moreover, 61 students somewhat agreed with the item.

The interview results with the students revealed that most of them expressed that the reading passages in the units and listening, writing and speaking activities coming afterwards were presented in an integrated way in the textbook. However, some of them stated that the tasks and activities were not organized as

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moving from simple to complex. They mentioned that the difficulty level of the task and activities in the first units were not much more different from the ones in the last units.

Furthermore, the result of chi square showed that there was a significance difference among the students' attitudes regarding selection and organization of the textbook  $\chi^2_9 = 147.98, p < 0.001$ .

**The Level of the Textbook**

The second criterion, level, was measured through five items in the students' questionnaire and the responses are presented in Table 2.

**Table 2: Frequencies and Percentages of the items on the level of the textbook**

Item no	Item	1(%)		2(%)		3(%)		4(%)		5(%)		$\chi^2$
		F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	
4	The textbook is above the level of the students.	-	-	26	14.3	50	27.5	73	40.1	31	17.0	165.2
5	The reading passages in the textbook are difficult for the students.	2	1.1	52	28.6	67	36.8	45	24.7	14	7.7	Df= 12 P= 0.000
6	The writing activities in the textbook are difficult for the students.	46	25.3	77	42.3	41	22.5	9	4.9	6	3.3	
7	The listening activities in the textbook are difficult for the students	-	-	13	7.1	59	32.4	66	36.3	42	23.1	
8	The speaking activities in the textbook are difficult for the students.	11	6.0	78	42.9	68	37.4	17	9.3	5	2.7	

*1=Strongly Disagree 2=Disagree 3=Somewhat Agree 4=Agree 5=Strongly Agree*

As table 2 indicated, more half of the students (46.1 % agreeing or strongly agreeing with the related item) stated that the textbook was above their level. More than one quarter of the students (16.7 %) somewhat agreed with the statement.

69.2 percent of the students agreed with the item and stated that reading passages were difficult for them, and less than one third of them disagreed with the item.

As for the writing activities, 67.6 percent of the respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed with the next item “the writing activities in the textbook are difficult for the students.” Less than one quarter of the students (22.5%) found writing activities difficult. On the other hand, more than half of the students (68.7% agreeing or strongly agreeing) stated that the listening activities were difficult for the students. However, for the last item “the speaking activities are difficult for the students”, nearly half of the respondents (48.9%) disagreed or strongly disagreed with the related item.

The interview results with the students indicated that most of the students believed that the textbook was above their level. They mentioned that reading passages were difficult for them in terms of vocabulary

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and sentence structures. As for the listening, most of the students stated that due to the CDs being understandable in terms of sound clarity, they had no difficulty in understanding listening activities. Furthermore, the result of chi square showed that there was a significance difference among the students' attitudes regarding level of the textbook  $\chi^2_{12} = 165.2, p < 0.001$ .

**Physical Appearance of the Textbook**

The third criterion, physical appearance, was measured through ten items in the students' questionnaire and the responses are presented in Table 3.

**Table 3: Frequencies and Percentages of the items on the physical appearance in the textbook**

Item no	Item	1(%)		2(%)		3(%)		4(%)		5(%)		$\chi^2$
		F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	
9	The cover of the textbook is attractive	54	29.7	78	42.9	29	15.9	12	6.6	7	3.8	120.2
10	The layout of a page is quite attractive	7	3.8	26	14.3	70	38.5	51	28.0	26	14.3	Df=15
11	I can follow the layout of a page easily.	-	-	8	4.4	49	26.9	80	44.0	43	23.6	
12	The layout in the textbook encourages the students to do the activities.	-	-	12	6.6	41	22.5	78	42.9	49	26.9	P= 0.000
13	The textbook is durable in terms of use.	3	1.6	15	8.2	71	39.0	71	39.0	20	11.0	
14	The artwork (pictures, illustrations, graphs, tables etc.) in the textbook is up-to-date.	-	-	-	-	11	6.0	89	48.9	80	44.0	
15	The artwork (pictures, illustrations, graphs, tables etc.) in the textbook is helpful to me to understand the lesson	5	2.7	63	34.6	80	44.0	27	14.8	5	2.7	
16	The font type in the textbook helps students to follow the units easily	-	-	8	4.4	36	19.8	80	44.0	56	30.8	
17	The colors in the textbook look attractive	-	-	4	2.2	23	12.6	82	45.1	71	39.0	

1=Strongly Disagree 2=Disagree 3=Somewhat Agree 4=Agree 5=Strongly Agree

As table 3 indicated, the majority of the students (72.6% disagreeing or strongly disagreeing) did not think that the cover of the textbook is attractive. Only 26.3 percent of the students had positive attitudes towards the cover of the textbook. 80.3 percent (disagreeing or strongly disagreeing) perceived the layout attractive. While 18.1 percent thought that the layout of a page was unattractive. Furthermore, more than half of the students (63.6% agreeing or strongly agreeing) believed that they could follow the layout of a page easily. Moreover, more than half of the students (69.5%) thought that the layout in the textbook

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encouraged students to do the tasks and activities. Half of the subjects agreed and strongly agreed with the question that the textbook is durable in terms of use, and 39 percent somewhat agreed. Also, 9.8 percent disagreed and strongly disagreed with the related item.

Regarding the next item, “the art work in the textbook was helpful to the learners to understand the lessons”, nearly half of the students agreed with the related item, and 37.3 percent of them disagreed about the helpfulness of the artwork in the textbook.

The findings concerning the attractiveness of the colors in the textbook, most of the students (96.7%) stated that the colors were attractive, and only 2.2 percent disagreed with this item.

**Table 4: Frequencies and Percentages of the items content in the textbook**

Item no	Item	1(%)		2(%)		3(%)		4(%)		5(%)		$\chi^2$
		F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	
18	The topics of the units are interesting for the students.	-	-	19	10.4	56	30.8	58	31.9	47	25.8	96.4
19	Reading passages and examples in the textbook are related to our daily lives.	1	.5	26	14.3	92	50.5	53	29.1	8	4.4	Df=11
20	The reading passages in the textbook are quite long.	61	33.5	85	46.7	34	18.7	-	-	-	-	P=0.000
21	The units in the textbook provide sufficient coverage of skills (speaking reading etc.).	--	--	--	--	29	15.9	85	46.7	66	36.3	
22	I think topics providing us some knowledge would facilitate our English.	2	1.1	8	4.4	39	21.4	85	46.7	46	25.3	
23	The units in the textbook include topics which are up-to- date.	--	--	4	2.2	27	14.8	93	51.1	56	30.8	
24	Topics covered in the units encourage students to communicate in the target language with each other.	--	--	32	17.6	82	45.1	55	30.2	11	6.0	
25	The textbook includes topics that reflect our culture as well	30	16.5	104	57.1	46	25.3	--	--	--	--	

1=Strongly Disagree 2=Disagree 3=Somewhat Agree 4=Agree 5=Strongly Agree

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Interviews with students also verified the findings of the questionnaire. The students were asked, “What do you think about the physical appearance of the textbook (cover, layout artwork etc)?” All the students stated that the layout of a page was attractive. In fact, one of the students stated that she didn’t get bored when she opened the pages of the textbook. They concluded that the layout in the textbook encourage them to do the tasks and activities. On the other hand, all of the students seemed to be positive about artwork. However they still suggested the physical appearance of the textbook is made more interesting by including more pictures that could both enhance their learning and motivation.

Furthermore, the result of chi square showed that there was a significance difference among the students’ attitudes regarding physical appearance of the textbook  $\chi^2_{15} = 120.2, p < 0.001$ .

### **Content in the Textbook**

The fourth criterion, content in the textbook, was measured through 8 items in the students’ questionnaire and the responses are presented in Table 4.

As table 4 indicated overall, more than half of the students (57.7 % agreeing or strongly agreeing) thought that the topics of the units were interesting for them. 30.8 percent of the subjects somewhat agreed with the related item, and only 10.4 percent thought that the topics in the textbook were not interesting. 153 students out of 180(84%) expressed that reading passages in the textbook were related to their daily life. Furthermore, 80.2 percent of the learners stated that the reading passages were quite long and only 18.7 percent somewhat agreed with this item. Moreover, 15.9 percent of the students somewhat agreed that the units in the book provided sufficient coverage of the skills, and 83percent agreed and strongly agreed with the item. 93.4 percent stated that the topics providing them some knowledge would facilitate their English. Only 5.5 percent disagreed with this question.

Most of the students (96.7% agreeing or strongly agreeing) stated that the topics were up-to date. Only 2.2 percent disagreed with the related item.

148 students out of 180 (81.3 % somewhat agreeing, agreeing or strongly agreeing with the related item) believed that the topics covered in the units encouraged students to communicate in the target language among them.

With regard to the item number 25, 98.9 percent of the participants thought that the textbook did not include topics that reflected their culture.

In the interviews students were asked the following question about the content of the textbook: “what do you think about the content of the book? Is it effective enough to help you to gain language skills? If not, what are your suggestions about the content?” Interviews with the students revealed that all the students stated that the titles of the units seemed up-to-date, interesting, and related to students’ daily lives. All the students expressed that the reading passages in the units were too long and included too many unknown words and complex sentence structures. They also emphasized such negative factors made the passages too difficult for them to comprehend and do the related tasks. Students highlighted that they lost interest to the lesson when they could not get out of the difficulty in understanding the reading passages and as a result they became unwilling to do the reading activities.

As for the coverage of four language skills, all the students expressed that the textbook seemed effective in helping students acquire four language skills (reading, writing, listening speaking), but they stated that the reading passages were too long, most of the times they had to summarize the passages so that they could comprehend them. This might indicate that the reading passages were above the level of the students. For example, for the writing skills, 147 students out of 180 stated that the writing sections of the textbook seemed adequate. It can be concluded that they found the textbook effective in terms of this particular criterion.

Furthermore, the result of chi square showed that there was a significance difference among the students’ attitudes regarding content of the textbook  $\chi^2_{11} = 96.4, p < 0.001$ .

### **Exercises and Activities in the Textbook**

The fifth criterion, exercises and activities in the textbook, was measured through 12 items in the students’ questionnaire and the responses are presented in Table 5.

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**Table 5: Means, Standard deviations and Percentages of the items on exercises and activities in the textbook**

Item no	Item	1(%)		2(%)		3(%)		4(%)		5(%)		$\chi^2$
		F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	
26	The exercises and activities in the textbook are interesting.	--	--	19	10.4	116	63.7	40	22.0	5	2.7	131.6
27	The activities and exercises in the textbook are appropriate for our levels	5	2.7	36	19.8	94	51.6	37	20.3	8	4.4	Df=17 P=0.000
28	The activities and exercises in the textbook increase my desire to learn English.	52	28.6	73	40.1	31	17.0	14	7.7	10	5.5	
29	The activities and exercises in the textbook increase my participation in the lesson	11	6.0	81	44.5	59	32.4	18	9.9	10	5.5	
30	The activities in the textbook sufficiently encourage collaborative work (group and pair work).	2	1.1	13	7.1	78	42.9	59	32.4	28	15.4	
31	The reading activities and exercises in the textbook help me improve my reading skills.	6	3.3	45	24.7	87	47.8	33	18.1	33	18.1	
32	The activities in the textbook help me improve my writing skills	1	.5	22	12.1	74	40.7	61	33.5	22	12.1	
33	The speaking activities in the textbook encourage me to use English in the classroom.	8	4.4	70	38.5	69	37.9	19	10.4	14	7.7	
34	The speaking activities in the textbook provide me use English outside the classroom in daily life.	34	18.7	87	47.8	52	28.6	7	3.8	--	--	

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35	The listening texts in the textbook are interesting.	5	2.7	42	23.1	83	45.6	44	24.2	6	3.3
36	I find the conversations that I listen through the tape-recorder clear and understandable	--	--	12	6.6	47	25.8	75	41.2	46	25.3
37	The listening activities in the textbook help me to improve my listening skills.	8	4.4	17	9.3	64	35.2	72	39.6	19	10.4

1=Strongly Disagree 2=Disagree 3=Somewhat Agree 4=Agree 5=Strongly Agree

As table 5 indicated 161 students out of 180(88.4) believed that the exercises and activities in the textbook were interesting. Only 10.4 percent of the students (disagreeing) found the exercises and activities uninteresting, and 76.3 percent of the participants thought that the activities and exercises in the textbook were appropriate for their level while only 22.7 percent (disagreeing or strongly disagreeing) pointed out that they were appropriate. More than half of the students (68.7% disagreeing or strongly disagreeing) expressed that the activities and exercises in the textbook did not increase their desire to learn English. While only 30.2 percent of the students agreed that the activities and exercises in the textbook increased their desire to learn English. Slightly more than half of the students (50.5 % disagreeing or strongly disagreeing) did not think that the activities and the exercises in the textbook increased their participation to the lesson, and 47.8 percent of them agreed with the related item. Moreover, 90.7 percent of the subjects stated that the activities in the textbook encouraged collaborative work. Only 8.2 percent disagreed with this item.

More than one third of the students (28%) expressed that reading activities in the textbook didn't help them improve their reading skills. 84 percent agreed that these activities improved their reading skills. Furthermore, 86.3 percent of the learners thought that the writing activities improved their writing skills, and only 12.6 percent disagreed with the related item. 42.9 percent of the students (87) stated that speaking activities in the textbook didn't encourage them to use English in the classroom. 56 percent of them agreed somewhat agreeing, agreeing, and strongly agreeing) with the item. Regarding item number 34, 66.5 percent stated that the speaking activities didn't provide them use English outside the classroom in daily life. And, more than half of them (32.4%) agreed with this item. Concerning the next item, 73.1 percent stated that the listening activities were interesting, and less than one third of the students (25.8%) disagreed with the item. In addition, 92.3 percent agreed that the conversations in the textbook were clear and understandable, and only 6.6 percent disagreed with the related item. In relation to the last item of this criterion, less than one quarter of the subjects disagreed that the listening activities in the textbook didn't improve their listening skills, and 85.3 percent agreed with this statement.

In the interviews conducted with 180students, they were asked to respond the question 'what do you think about the exercises and activities in the textbook? Of the 180 students interviewed, 115 of them pointed out that the activities and exercises in the textbook appealed to their interest. Besides they also mentioned that the activities and exercises seemed to be above their level due to the confusing sentence structures and vocabulary load. It was stated that due to such reasons mentioned above, the activities and exercises discouraged involvement of the students in the learning process.

As for the development of the students' reading skills, they agreed that the textbook was effective in helping them to improve their reading skills; however, they explained that the reading passages were long and difficult to comprehend. They overwhelmingly agreed that those reading passages included too many unknown vocabulary items and complex sentence structures. They stated that warm-up activities were adequate. However, they had difficulty in doing the reading exercises due to the reasons mentioned

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above. As for the writing skills all the students found the textbook effective in improving students' writing skills, and several students (87 students) did not agree that the speaking activities helped them to use the target language in the classroom.

Furthermore, the result of chi square showed that there was a significance difference among the students' attitudes regarding exercises and activities in the textbook  $\chi^2_{17} = 131.6, p < 0.001$ .

**Vocabularies and Grammar in the Textbook**

The sixth criterion, vocabulary and grammar, was measured through 4 items in the students' questionnaire and the responses are presented in Table 6.

**Table 6: Frequencies and Percentages of the items on vocabulary and grammar in the textbook**

Item no	Item	1(%)		2(%)		3(%)		4(%)		5(%)		$\chi^2$
		F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	
38	There are too many unknown words in the textbook.	1	.5	25	13.7	99	54.4	54	29.7	1	.5	127.2
39	The textbook includes adequate number of exercises and activities to revise the new vocabulary.	27	14.8	96	52.7	57	31.3	--	--	--	--	Df= 7 P= 0.000
40	The vocabulary exercises in the text book make vocabulary learning easier for me.	11	6.0	87	47.8	78	42.9	4	2.2	--	--	
41	The grammar points in the textbook are presented in a clear and understandable way.	8	4.4	69	37.9	74	40.7	28	15.4	1	.5	

1=Strongly Disagree 2=Disagree 3=Somewhat Agree 4=Agree 5=Strongly Agree

As table 6 indicated, more than 84 percent of the respondents somewhat agreed, agreed, and strongly agreed that the reading passages consisted of too many unknown vocabulary items. Less than one quarter of them (14.2%) disagreed (disagreeing and strongly disagreeing) with the statement.

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More than half of the students (67.5%) of the participants expressed that the textbook did not include adequate number of exercise and activities to revise the new vocabularies. Moreover, less than one third of the learners (31.3%) agreed with the related item. Regarding the next item, “the vocabulary exercises in the text book made vocabulary learning easier for the students, more than half of the students (53.8%) disagreed with this statement, and 45.1 percent agreed with it. Regarding the next item, 56.6 percent of the subjects agreed (somewhat agreed, agreed, and strongly agreed) that the grammar points in the textbook were presented in a clear and understandable way, and 42.3 percent disagreed with the related item.

The interview analyses showed that all the students overwhelmingly agreed that the reading passages included lots of unknown words. They stated that the vocabulary items were inappropriate to their level as well. Due to the reasons mentioned above, those students stated that the vocabulary exercises in the textbook did not facilitate vocabulary learning for them. Students stated that vocabulary load was not reasonable for their level. They indicated that due to the redundancy of the vocabulary items, looking up the meanings the words took much more time than doing the reading tasks. 85 students mentioned that the textbook did not equip them with strategies for handling the unknown words as well. They complained that the vocabulary items were not practiced and recycled in other units as well. Therefore, quantitative and qualitative results indicated that students were in strong agreement on the idea that that the textbook was not effective in terms of vocabulary teaching.

Furthermore, the result of chi square showed that there was a significance difference among the students’ attitudes regarding vocabulary and grammar of the textbook  $\chi^2 = 127.2, p < 0.001$ .

**Clarity of Instructions**

The seventh criterion, clarity of instructions, was measured through only one item in the students’ questionnaire and the responses are presented in Table 7.

**Table 7: Means, Standard deviations and Percentages on the clarity of instructions**

Item no	Item	1(%)		2(%)		3(%)		4(%)		5(%)		$\chi^2$
		F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	
42	I understand the instructions in the textbook easily.	--	--	--	--	44	24.2	81	44.5	5	30.2	120.3 Df= 2 P= 0.000

1=Strongly Disagree 2=Disagree 3=Somewhat Agree 4=Agree 5=Strongly Agree

As table 7 indicated, 74.7 percent of the students agreed, and strongly agreed that they understood the instructions in the textbook easily. Only 24.2 percent of the students somewhat agreed that the instructions in the textbook were comprehensible. This indicated that the students seemed sure about the clarity of the instructions in the textbook.

In contrast to the views of the quantitative findings, all the interviewees expressed that even though their students understood the instructions, they still felt a need for the guidance of the teacher concerning the instructions.

Furthermore, the result of chi square showed that there was a significance difference among the students’ attitudes regarding clarity of instruction of the textbook  $\chi^2 = 120.3, p < 0.001$ .

**Supporting Sources**

The eighth criterion was measured through only five items in the students’ questionnaire and the responses are presented in Table 8.

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**Table 8: Frequencies and Percentages of the items on the supporting sources**

Item no	Item	1(%)		2(%)		3(%)		4(%)		5(%)		$\chi^2$
		F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	
43	I can use the workbook as an independent source book.	--	--	--	--	45	24.7	91	50.0	44	24.2	122.1
44	The workbook serves as an extra load in terms of the grammar and the vocabulary learnt in the classroom.	--	--	5	2.7	67	36.8	86	47.3	22	12.1	Df=7 P= 0.000
45	The workbook helps me revise what I have learnt in the classroom.	--	--	--	--	40	22.0	89	48.9	51	28.0	
46	The workbook consists of sufficient number of exercises.	--	--	1	.5	45	24.7	95	52.2	39	21.4	

1=Strongly Disagree 2=Disagree 3=Somewhat Agree 4=Agree 5=Strongly Agree

As table 8 indicates, 74.2 percent of the students agreed (agreeing or strongly agreeing) believed that they could use the workbook as an independent source book. Almost one quarter of the students (24.7%) somewhat agreed with the item. Moreover, 96.2 percent (somewhat agreeing, agreeing, and strongly agreeing) stated that the workbook served as extra load in terms of the grammar and the vocabulary learned in the classroom. Only 2.7 percent disagreed with this item.

Furthermore, less than one quarter of the students (22.0% somewhat agreeing) didn't believe that the workbook helped them revise what they had learned in the classroom and 76.9 percent agreed with this statement. Only .5 percent of the respondents (disagreeing) thought that the workbook did not consist of sufficient number of exercises. While 98.3 percent of the students agreed with the statement.

The interview results indicated that students regarded workbook as an independent book.

All the students agreed that the particular parts helped them to revise what they had learned in the previous unit.

Furthermore, the result of chi square showed that there was a significance difference among the students' attitudes regarding supporting sources of the textbook  $\chi^2 = 122.1, p < 0.001$ .

**Development of Learner Autonomy**

The ninth criterion, learner autonomy, was measured through six items in the students' questionnaire and the responses are presented in Table 9.

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**Table 9: Frequencies and Percentages of the items on the development of learner autonomy**

Item no	Item	1(%)		2(%)		3(%)		4(%)		5(%)		$\chi^2$
		F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	
47	The reading texts and activities in the text book help me to gain different points of views.	--	--	12	6.6	103	56.6	62	34.1	3	1.6	163.9
48	The reading texts and activities in the text book foster my creativity.	7	3.8	84	46.2	74	40.7	15	8.2	--	--	Df= 10
49	The reading texts and activities in the text book raise my interest and curiosity.	--	--	84	46.2	86	47.3	10	5.5	--	--	P= 0.000
50	The activities in the text book help me evaluate what I have learnt.	--	--	--	--	53	29.1	94	51.6	33	18.1	
51	The textbook allows me to be more aware of my weaknesses while developing language skills (reading, writing, listening, speaking).	4	2.2	22	12.1	86	47.3	64	35.2	4	2.2	
52	The textbook allows me to be more aware of my strengths while developing language skills (reading, writing, listening, speaking).	--	--	9	4.9	73	40.1	85	46.7	13	7.1	

1=Strongly Disagree 2=Disagree 3=Somewhat Agree 4=Agree 5=Strongly Agree

As table 9, 56.6 percent of the students somewhat agreed that the reading texts and activities in the text book help them to gain different points of views, and more than one third of them (35.7%) agreed with the related item. Only 6.6 percent disagreed with it. Half of the participants did not think that the reading texts and activities in the textbook fostered their creativity. 48.7 percent stated that the reading texts and activities in the textbook fostered their creativity.

More than half of the respondents (52.8% agreeing and strongly agreeing with the related item) thought that the reading texts and activities in the textbook raised their interest and curiosity while 46.2 percent disagreed with this statement, 23.8 percent of the students somewhat agreed that the reading texts and activities in the textbook raised their interest and curiosity. More than half of the students (69.7% agreeing or strongly agreeing) believed that the activities in the textbook helped them to evaluate what they had or had not learned. Almost one third of them (29.1%) somewhat agreed with the related item.

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86 students out of 180 (47.3%) somewhat agreed that the materials allowed them to be more aware of their weaknesses in developing the four skills (reading, writing, listening, speaking), and 57.4 percent agreed with this statement. Moreover, 53.8 percent agreed (agreeing and strongly agreeing) stated that the materials allowed them to be more aware of their strengths in developing the four skills (reading, writing, listening, speaking), and 40.1 percent somewhat agreed with this item. Only 4.9 percent of them disagreed with it.

In the interviews students were asked to respond the question ‘Do you think the textbook consist of activities and exercises to improve your autonomy?’ All the students stated that the textbook did not provide sufficient opportunities to encourage them to be creative. They also thought that the materials helped them to gain different points of views. Regarding the extent to which the textbook allowed learners to be more aware of their strengths and weakness, all the students indicated that the textbook could provide them with the opportunities to be aware of their weaknesses or strengths.

Furthermore, the result of chi square showed that there was a significance difference among the students’ attitudes regarding development of learner autonomy of the textbook  $\chi^2_{10} = 163.9, p < 0.001$ .

**Consideration of Learning Style Differences in the Textbook**

The tenth criterion, the consideration of learning style differences?’ was measured through three items in the students’ questionnaire and the responses are presented in Table 10.

**Table 10: Frequencies and Percentages of the items on consideration of learning style differences in the textbook**

Item no	Item	1(%)		2(%)		3(%)		4(%)		5(%)		$\chi^2$
		F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	
53	The units in the textbook include sufficient number of visuals (graphs, diagrams, tables, pictures, etc).	12	6.6	83	45.6	71	39.0	14	7.7	-	--	158.4 Df=6 P= 0.000
54	The units in the textbook include sufficient number of activities that allow us learn through listening.	14	7.7	106	58.2	59	32.4	1	.5	-	--	
55	The units in the textbook include sufficient number of activities that allow us learn through moving in the classroom.	37	20.3	110	60.4	31	17.0	2	1.1	-	--	

1=Strongly Disagree 2=Disagree 3=Somewhat Agree 4=Agree 5=Strongly Agree

As table 10 indicated, more than half of the students (452.2% disagreeing or strongly disagreeing) did not believe that the units in the textbook included sufficient number of visuals. While 7.7 percent of the students agreed with this statement, 39 percent of the students somewhat agreed with the related item. Most of the students (65.2 % disagreeing or strongly disagreeing) did not believe that the units in the textbook included sufficient number of activities that allowed them to learn through listening, and slightly less than one third of the participants (32.9) agreed with the related item. Similarly, most of the students (80.7 % disagreeing or strongly disagreeing) did not think that the units in the textbook consisted of

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sufficient number of activities that allowed them to learn through moving in the classroom, and more than one quarter of them (18.1% somewhat agreeing and agreeing) seemed to have positive attitudes about this statement.

**Table 11: The strength and weaknesses of the textbook “Four Corners” from the perspectives of the students**

<b>Strengths</b>	<b>Weaknesses</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ The artwork (pictures illustration graphs, tables, etc. in the textbook is up-to-date and is helpful for students to understand the lesson.</li> <li>❖ The textbook is durable in terms of use.</li> <li>❖ Titles of the reading passages are interesting and up-to-date.</li> <li>❖ The use of color in the textbook seems to be appropriate for the students.</li> <li>❖ The activities and exercises encourage pair work and group work.</li> <li>❖ The instructions are clear for the students.</li> <li>❖ Reading passages and examples in the textbook are related to their daily lives. and the topics are up –to-date</li> <li>❖ The presentation of grammar in the textbook is clear and understandable.</li> <li>❖ The topics are interesting.</li> <li>❖ The recordings are clear.</li> <li>❖ The activities and exercises really develop students’ four language skills (reading, writing, speaking, and listening).</li> <li>❖ Students find the conversations that they listen from the tape recorder clear and understandable.</li> <li>❖ The layout in the textbook has a motivating effect for the students to do the exercises.</li> <li>❖ Activities and exercises appeal to the students’ interest.</li> <li>❖ Activities and exercises seem to be above the students’ level.</li> <li>❖ The workbook helps students to revise what they have learnt in the classroom.</li> <li>❖ Materials help the learners gain different view point.</li> <li>❖ Textbook allows learners to be aware of their strengths and weaknesses.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ There are lots of unknown words and confusing sentence structures in the reading passages</li> <li>❖ The tasks and activities are not logically sequenced.</li> <li>❖ The level of the textbook is high for the students.</li> <li>❖ The reading passages in the textbook are difficult for the students.</li> <li>❖ The reading passages in the textbook are quite long</li> <li>❖ The exercises and activities are not interesting for the students and they do not increase their desire to learn English either.</li> <li>❖ The cover of the textbook is not attractive for the students.</li> <li>❖ The activities do not increase students’ participation in the lesson.</li> <li>❖ The reading texts and activities in the textbook do not foster students’ creativity</li> <li>❖ The units in the textbook do not include sufficient number of activities that allow the learners to learn through listening and moving in the classroom.</li> <li>❖ The textbook do not include adequate number of exercises to revise new words.</li> <li>❖ Vocabulary exercises don’t facilitate vocabulary learning.</li> <li>❖ Vocabulary items are inappropriate to the students’ level.</li> </ul>

The results of interviews with students seemed consistent with the findings of the questionnaire. Of the 180 students, 110 students stated that the artwork didn’t seem helpful for them to understand the information in the text. Moreover, they pointed out that there could be more visuals such as pictures, and authentic photographs which would appeal to their interest.

Regarding the opportunities to allow learning through listening, all the students stated that such sections failed to enable them to learn through listening due to the technical problems.

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Similar to the findings of the quantitative analyses, all the students stated that the units in the textbook did not include sufficient number activities facilitating learning through moving in the class. They suggested that there should be more activities that would meet their needs.

Furthermore, the result of chi square showed that there was a significance difference among the students' attitudes regarding learning style differences of the textbook  $\chi^2_6 = 158.4, p < 0.001$ .

Table 11 shows the mostly stated positive and negative characteristics of the textbook by the students.

### **Conclusion**

The results of analyses revealed that the textbook was effective in terms of selection and organization of content features. While the results of the questionnaire indicated that the tasks and activities in the textbook moved from simple to complex, in the interview students highlighted that the tasks and activities were not sequenced properly. This might imply that the students might not very much aware of the organization and grading of the materials. This reveals the necessity of informing and orienting the students about the organization and linkage of the materials in the textbook. The learners should know that the skills, tasks and activities are graded in terms of difficulty throughout the textbook. Breen and Candlin (1987) points out that the selection and organization of content in the materials is quite important. They stressed that organization of the materials should be done in such a way that learners can work on them and internalize the content. Materials should be organized for simple and familiar 'thing' to more complex and 'less familiar'. Breen and Candlin (1987) also mentioned the importance of continuity in the materials. They indicate that after the determination of the content, it is divided up, logically sequenced and finally provided with particular continuity.

On the other hand, the results revealed that students felt positive about the integration of writing, listening and speaking activities coming after the reading passages.

Integration of skills is essential in a sense that it can enable students to gain a deeper understanding of how communication works in the foreign languages as well as becoming more motivated when they see the value of performing tasks and activities in the class (Mc Donough and Shaw, 1993).

Results suggested that students were negative about the difficulty level of the textbook. Furthermore, they believed that the reading passages in the textbook were difficult for them. Students perceived writing and speaking activities as not being appropriate to their level. However, the appropriateness of the level of materials to the language level of students is one of the mostly mentioned criteria in evaluating a textbook or a teaching material by researchers (Breen and Candlin 1987; Cunningsworth, 1995; Dougill, 1987; Grant, 1987; Sheldon, 1987; Skierso, 1991; Zenger, 1982).

The quantitative and the qualitative data revealed that the students' perceptions about the physical appearance of the textbook with regard artwork and colors used were positive. In addition, the students agreed that the cover of the textbook and the layout of a page were appealing to their interest.

All of the authors mention about the physical attractiveness of the materials and textbooks to motivate the students to study and to encourage them to take part in the teaching/learning process. Griffiths (1995) points out that interesting, attractive, colorful, well-illustrated materials are more favorable for learners. Moreover, Mc Donough and Shaw (1993) also indicate clarity of layout and visuals such as tables, charts and diagrams as the two important criteria for textbook evaluation. Similarly, Skierso (1991) also proposes criteria for the evaluation of physical appearance of the materials in relation to such aspects as motivational attractiveness, organizational clarity and function, effectiveness in presentation, relativity, linkage and integration, effective and clear use of artwork, illustrative clarity simplicity and motivational atmosphere created within the language teaching materials. In fact, all these imply that appropriate layout and physical make-up contribute a lot to student learning and motivation. At this stage it is possible to say that "Four corner" has achieved to create positive feeling on the students, which can be considered as a success in terms of the motivational attractiveness of the layout and the cover of the textbook. It should also be noted that the results concerning the motivational effect of the layout in the particular textbook and the attractiveness of the cover of the textbook are similar to the results of Ayman's (1998) study. Thus, this further implies that 'motivational attractiveness' is an aspect that seems to be neglected in the materials.

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When the perceptions of students on the content were taken into consideration, it can be concluded that they did not find the textbook effective in terms of this particular criterion. According to the results, the students agreed that the reading passages in the textbook were quite long. Students highlighted the fact that reading passages consisted of too many unknown vocabulary items and confusing sentence structures. The findings also indicated that the topics facilitated the improvement of four language skills in the classroom. The students believed that the topics of the units encouraged them to communicate in the target language with each other. However, as Cunningsworth (1995) states a really communicative textbook promotes meaningful communication among its users through relevant and interesting topics. Tomlinson (1998) also points out that learners should be given opportunities to use the target language to fulfill communicative purposes.

The results revealed that students agreed that the activities and exercises appealed to their interests. They believed that the activities and exercises were above their level. Students stated that the activities and exercises in the textbook failed to increase the students' desire to learn English. They also tended to agree that the activities and exercises in the textbook did not increase the students' participation in the lesson. Students thought that the activities and exercises encouraged collaborative work.

Quantitative and qualitative results indicated that students were in strong agreement on the idea that the textbook was not effective in terms of vocabulary. They also agreed that the reading passages involved too many unknown words. Students thought that the presentation of grammar seemed clear and comprehensible.

Besides, students complained that the newly learned vocabulary items were not recycled in subsequent lessons. Cunningsworth (1995) emphasizes that recycling of vocabulary is an important consideration. He points out that learners should meet vocabulary items on several occasions and rather in different context so that they can fix those items in memory, gain fluency in using them and come up with a full understanding. Hinkel (2006) emphasized that a word should be encountered 12-20 times in order to be learned from a context. This further implies that textbook writers need to check that new items are recycled appropriately in the course.

The quantitative data revealed that students were sure about the clarity of instructions. It is obvious from the results that clarity of instruction is another aspect of language teaching materials that need to be examined because it helps to facilitate learning and spend time on the activities themselves rather than understanding how they should be coped with or what should be done. It should be stated that clarity of instructions is, in fact, critical to any language teaching materials. In other words, it is an important aspect which can be applied to any teaching materials. Thus, as Tomlinson (1998) point out it is one of the 'universal criteria' which is applicable to any specific unit of materials.

The results revealed that most students regarded workbook as a source book, and they agreed that the particular parts helped them to revise what they had learned in the previous unit. It is important that a textbook should be accompanied with other helping sources such as the workbook, which would provide additional practice for the learners. In all the criteria or checklists suggested by different authors such as Zenger (1982), Dougill (1987), Sheldon (1988), Skierso (1991), there is a part related to supporting sources. The findings of this study indicated that students do not use the workbook very effectively, which is known to be the main supplementary source of the particular textbook.

The results indicated that students perceived the reading activities and exercises in the textbook as not being conducive in learner autonomy, and that they did not involve opportunities that encouraged creativity. They also thought that those reading texts and activities helped them gain different points of views. Also, they involved too many unknown vocabulary which were above their level as well. As a result, the reading passages and the related activities did not appeal students' interests and did not foster creativity. Also, the results revealed that students didn't agree that the units in the textbook included sufficient number of activities facilitating learning through moving in the class. They suggested that there should be more activities that would meet their needs. They suggested that there could be more visuals such as pictures, and authentic photographs which would appeal to their interest.

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This study evaluated "Four Corners" textbooks from the students' perspectives based on the mentioned criteria. Other study Evaluated "Four Corners" textbooks in terms of cognitive processes using bloom's revised taxonomy. This study was a macro evaluation and examined the overall effectiveness of the textbook. The results revealed that students felt positive about the most of the characteristics of the textbook. Majority of the students mentioned that the level of the textbook was not appropriate for their level, and the textbook provided them to be aware of their weaknesses and strengths. However, other study revealed the prevalence of the processes of remembering and understanding in the textbooks. Also, creating process constituted the lowest percentage of processes in both textbooks.

Furthermore, the lower-order categories (i.e., remembering, understanding, and applying) were more frequently represented than the higher-order ones (i.e., analyzing, evaluating, and creating). However, the chi-square test did not show a significant difference between *Book 2* (a less advanced-level textbook) and *Book 3* (a more advanced-level textbook) in terms of the 6 levels of cognitive skills. The results indicate that the above textbooks, much against expectations, fail to engage learners so well in the activities requiring higher levels of cognitive ability, prerequisites of autonomous language learning.

The findings of the present study hold important implications for material developers. Different sections of the textbooks can be modified by the textbook developers in order to improve their quality. Teachers may also get insights from the findings and employ different strategies to compensate for the weak points of the textbooks. Moreover, the results of the current study are expected to assist all instructional stakeholders such as institutional/academic administrators to come into closer terms with the vitality of conducting ongoing textbook evaluation and needs analysis surveys, and applying the upshots of such appraisals and reappraisals for the betterment of English course books and materials.

One of the limitations of this research study is the number of the participants. The number of students who participated in the study is limited and this may have affected the results of the study. If the number had been greater, the results would have been more representative of the target population.

This study evaluated the effectiveness of the textbook titled "Four Corners" from the perspective of female students, so the current study can be done on male students to examine whether or not they have the same attitude towards the text book. Also, teachers' attitudes towards the textbooks should be investigated.

Moreover, a further study can be constructed for the other textbooks that are designed for the other levels in the series in order to observe the cohesiveness. The study can be replicated to evaluate the book in relation to other criteria. Finally, the pragmatic aspects of this textbook should be investigated in other studies.

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