Comparing English Textbook of Seventh Grade of Iranian High School with English Textbook of Second Grade of Guidance School: Critical Discourse Analysis Approach

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Abstract – Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) is an analytical type of discourse research which mostly studies how we present, produce and reproduce social power abuse, dominance, and inequality using text and speech in the socio-political framework. Supporters of CDA also offered a complex theoretical framework which is necessary for analyzing discourse and power. This framework shows an overview of all different ways by which we can produce power and domination through text and speech. One place to integrate text and talk is textbooks, which are indispensable part of every curriculum. Textbooks can be seen as all teachers' guide, whether inexperienced or experienced. Because of the importance of textbooks in educational contexts, the current study investigated the teachers and students' perceptions of English textbook of grade seven and compared it with English textbook of second grade of guidance school in Iran. For this purpose, two series of questionnaires were distributed among 60 students and 30 teachers. The analysis revealed that teachers mostly agreed that the new English textbook, which is currently used in Iranian schools, is highly improved with respect to different textbook evaluation items. They also believed that previous English textbook was not as appropriate as the current one. Moreover, students believed that there were considerable differences between these two series of English textbooks. Language teachers, language learners, textbook designers and textbook publishers can benefit from the findings of the present study.

Keywords: CDA; Ideology; English textbook of grade seven; English textbook of second grade of guidance school; Teachers and students' perception

1. INTRODUCTION

The topic of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) is the relationship between discourse and power. Supporters of CDA also offered a complex theoretical framework which is necessary for analyzing discourse and power. This framework shows an overview of all different ways by which we can produce power and domination through text and speech. One place to integrate text and talk is textbooks which are priceless part of any existing curriculum. Many teachers attend their classes by presenting textbooks' contents which are accessible. It can be said that textbooks play the role of a guide for both experienced and inexperienced.

Textbooks have long been recognized as primary and authoritative sources of knowledge, a mainstay in educational systems worldwide (Altbach, 1991). They have also been viewed as "neutral conveyors of ideas" by educators, as well as, the general public (Giroux, 2005). Over the years, researchers like Apple and Christian-Smith (1991), Henry A Giroux (2005), and Gee (2008) have promoted the notion that textbooks are political in nature, dictating what constitutes legitimate curriculum and how cultural and linguistic differences are portrayed in mainstream society. As Apple and Christian-Smith argued (1991), textbooks are political, because of being published in the political and economic limitations of markets, resources, and power. Richards (2001) believes that the significant role of textbooks in language classrooms has been accepted widely. There has still been some discussion about the real role of textbooks in EFL settings because of their usage potential and limitations. Hutchinson and Torres (1994) believe that the textbooks' importance is so expansive that makes them a universal element in ELT classrooms. They also argue that only relevant textbooks make a teaching and learning situation complete. Penny (1996) sees textbooks as clear frameworks which guide teachers and learners to understand what they did and what they are going to do. She also points out that comparing to other materials such as learning kits, photocopied worksheets or computer, textbooks are really cheap tools.

Van Dijk (1993, 2003), Fairclough (2013), Abdollahzadeh and Baniasad (2010), Tahriri and Moradpour (2014), PourhassanMoghaddam, Lotfi and Haghverdi's (2013) studies showed the importance of CDA and critical textbook evaluation, but more investigation is needed to find out the realstatus of textbooks applied in educational setting of Iran. Especially whenthe field doesn't have any proof generated by in-depth examination into what ideologies are manifested in the textbooks, what are commonly applied in Iranian schools, what kinds of ideologies and to what extent are presented in these books, for conveying specific ideologies, what linguistic devices are used. Because of the importance of the textbooks and lack of CDA-oriented research in this area, this paper is going to assess two textbooks which are used in Iranian schools. More specifically, the current study aimed to identify ideologies that are manifested in the Iranian junior high seventh grade English textbook and compare it with guidance school second grade English textbook by using CDA. The study sought a group of Iranian EFL teachers and learners' opinions about these two English textbooks which are commonly applied in this context. These English textbooks may change, degrade or upgrade learners' views towards the social problems. Such a study can improve the professional critical thinking of authorities in the realm of TEFL in Iran and ultimately of the language learners themselves. In this respect, Ruth Wodak and Meyer (2009) assert knowing that a text is rarely the work of just one person is an important CDA perspective related to the notion of power. So texts usually represent challenges between different discourses and ideologies which want to be dominant (p.199). Furthermore, the neglected part in the current CDA research is that previous studies did not provide a picture of this issue that what are the types of ideologies presented in the textbooks and how these ideologies can be lexically reproduced. Thus, this study helps to draw a more vivid picture of the issue at hand.

2. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

CDA lies within the framework of Critical Applied Linguistics. The roots of CDA lie in post-structuralism theories, critical linguistics, together with critical theory. Yet, the major influences within CDA draw primarily from post-structuralist and the Foucault and Bourdieu's work in sociology, as well as the neo-Marxist tradition (Luke, 1988). The idea that discourse constructively forms and shapes human identities and actions, which is one of the pillars of CDA, stems from post-structuralism. Upholding the Foucauldian tradition, CDA researchers preserve to discourses, which are seen as instutionalized instantiations of power. Moreover, the truth production is seen to be controlled by power regimes and both social identities and meaning are believed to be originated from discursive nature of interactions. Kachru (1986) believes that in this theory, people are always in the position to simultaneously undergo and exercise power. Bourdieu's work (1990) in sociology has also been extremely influential in CDA, where he believes that interactions and practices with texts function as a form of cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1990).

The CDA goal is presenting the way "linguistic-discursive practices" are connected to "socio-political structures of power and domination" (Kress, 1990) by focusing on "the importance of discourse in the gaining power and challenging for it" (Van Dijk, 1993). Fairclough (2013) explains that CDA examines the "opaque" relationships that exist between "(a) different kinds of events and texts and discourse and (b) more extended socio-cultural contexts, relationships and processes; to examine the way power and struggle for it ideologically form such procedures, events and texts (p.132). According to Burns and Morrell (2005), CDA views language as a "form of social action, which constructs social reality". In CDA framework, discourse is regarded both socially organized as well as socially shaped, implying a dialectal relationship. This fact generates concerns about the way discourse is organized and prompted in course books, which are presented to the language learners. One contribution to this debate would be an analysis of the course books in order to identify the ideologies and linguistic strategies used to represent them.

2.1. Definition of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA)

CDA is an analytical type of discourse research which mostly studies how we present, produce and reproduce social power abuse, dominance, and inequality using text and speech in the socio-political framework (Van Dijk, 2003). CDA explicitly opposes social inequality in the research and is going to find and reveal any social discrimination and finally remove it.

The Critical Theory of Frankfurt School offered some CDA principles before the Second World War (Rasmussen, 1996). 'Critical linguistics' that emerged at the end of the 1970s was the beginning of the current emphasis on language and discourse (Mey, 1985). Psychology, sociolinguistics and the social sciences' 'critical' developments, some of which generated in early 1970s are CDA complements (Calhoun, 1995; Fox & Prilleltensky, 1997; Hymes & Anderson, 1974; Singh, 1996; Thomas, 1993; Turkel, 1996; R Wodak, 1996). CDA can be considered as a reaction against the dominant formal paradigms of the 1960s and 1970s. Other 'approaches' in discourse studies can be considered a direction, school or specialization

but CDA is different and is not a direction, school or specialization, it is a different 'perspective' throughout the whole field for theorizing, analysis and application (Van Dijk, 2003). A more or less critical perspective can be found in many different areas like pragmatics, conversation analysis, narrative analysis, rhetoric, stylistics, sociolinguistics, ethnography, or media analysis.

2.2. Discourse Analysis and Society

The explicit awareness of critical discourse analysis role in society is vital for itself. By joining a tradition which denies the existence of a 'value-free' science, they argue that science is originally a part of social structure, is affected by it, and is generated through social interactions. They believe that such relations should be investigated in their own right, and scholars should practice based on such insights instead of rejecting or neglecting the relation between scholarship and society. We like it or not, theory is socio-politically formed, described and explained. Therefore, an inherent part of the discourse analytical enterprise is considering the role of scholars in society and their policy, i.e. in solidarity and cooperation with controlling groups researches are conducted by discourse analysts (Ruth Wodak, 2013).

3. METHODOLOGY

3.1. Research Design

In this study, two groups of participants, both teachers and students, were required to fill out the questionnaires. The participants who agreed to take part in the study were a group of language teachers and their students. Since one major objective of this study was to compare teachers' perceptions of two different English textbooks, only those teachers were selected to participate in the study that had been teaching English in the second grade of guidance school and are currently teaching in the seventh grade. The instrument used was a Likert-scale questionnaire to gather the participants' opinions about these two English textbooks. To achieve the goal, a Likert-scale questionnaire was distributed among a number of 30 teachers and 60 students. The rationale for using this questionnaire was for teachers and students to evaluate the textbooks based on the characteristics including the textbook appearance, layout, methodology, activities, language skills, language content, topic content, flexibility and assessment.

3.2. Research Context

In order to receive EFL teachers and their students' perceptions of the types of ideologies presented in the seventh grade English textbook and then compare it with the ideologies implied in the second grade English course book, which has been commonly used in previous educational setting, a number of 60 students from different schools in Isfahan and Najafabad were selected. We assumed that the students' language was equally proficient and they were not attending any private English language institutes at the time of data collection procedure. Also, a group of 30 teachers who have been teaching English textbooks in guidance

schools before, and were teaching seventh grade English textbook at the time of data collection, were sampled because we wanted to see how much (if at all) they are aware of the textbooks' ideological patterns, besides gathering their opinions about the chosen material. The teachers were teaching in Isfahan and Najafabad English language institutes.

3.3. Instruments

3.3.1. Questionnaires

To understand what the attitude of the students is towards English textbooks, a 15-item questionnaire, which was designed by Abdollahzadeh and Baniasad (2010), was applied. The questionnaire was administered to English language learners in both state-run schools and private English language schools. This questionnaire had 15 Likert scale items. Furthermore, to investigate English teachers' awareness of the ideologies manifested in the textbooks, a 47-item questionnaire was piloted and distributed among the language institute teachers. The questionnaire, which was designed and developed by Abdollahzadeh and Baniasad (2010), consisted of 47-item Likert-scale items and was distributed among 30 English teachers.

3.3.2. English Textbooks

In Iran's guidance educational system, English courses are compulsory. The students begin studying English when they are senior high school students. The guidance school second grade English textbooks are mainly focused on some introductory points, like teaching the alphabet, elementary grammatical structures, simple and easy conversations, short reading passages, etc. The intended English textbook has been authored by the Ministry of Education in Iran and was divided into sections such as "dialogue", "grammatical patterns", "oral drills", "write it down", "speak out", "new words" and "expressions". However, the seventh grade English textbook has a different organization. This book shifts its attention towards language functions and consists of different sections including "conversation", "sounds and letters", "listening and reading" and "speaking and writing".

3.4. Data Analysis Method

Three types of analyses were conducted to answer corresponding research questions. The presented ideologies and their frequency in each selected textbooks were the first thing to be analyzed. To discover the ideologies the content and pictures were analyzed. For content analysis, we examined conversations, texts, and articles and searched for their underlying ideologies. To make ideologies' categorization reliable, the pictures ideologies were examined as well. A second rater analyzed the textbooks for more exactness and certainty. After that as a measure of inter-rater reliability we assess the correlation. Analysis of quantitative data, i.e. data obtained from questionnaires, was done by using Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS).

4. RESULTS AND FINDINGS

This section focuses on the analysis of teachers' and students' perceptions of Iranian junior high seventh grade English textbook and guidance school second grade English textbook. More specifically, it has presented the analysis of teachers' opinions about the English textbook which is currently used in the seventh grade and compares the results with the teachers' views about English textbook which was previously applied in the guidance school second grade. This process was repeated for students' perception of these two English textbooks. Data for the participants' views of the textbook were collected from a Likert-scale questionnaire which was designed by Abdollahzadeh and Baniasad (2010).

4.1. Analysis of Teachers' Perceptions

Since one major objective of this study was to compare teachers' perceptions of two different English textbooks, only those teachers were selected to participate in the study that had been teaching English in second grade of guidance school and are currently teaching in seventh grade. The following table provides a descriptive analysis of the teachers' opinions.

Table 1: *Descriptive Analysis of Teachers' Perceptions towards Seventh Grade English Textbook*

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
appearance	15	1.33	3.67	2.3333	.84515
methodology	15	1.25	3.75	3.0333	.69351
layout	15	2.88	3.75	3.4167	.24398
activities	15	1.67	3.78	3.0667	.72350
skills	15	2.86	3.71	3.4190	.22566
content	15	1.50	3.75	2.9667	.86534
topic	15	2.25	3.75	3.2833	.43164
teachability	15	1.50	3.75	3.2667	.55474
assessment	15	1.75	3.75	3.3000	.61383
Valid N (listwise)					

As shown in the above table, most statements of the questionnaire were supported by the teachers. These statements evaluated the teachers' views towards items including methodology, layout, activities, language skills, topic content, teachability and flexibility and finally assessment. It means that most of the teachers agreed or strongly agreed that the methodology applied in the textbook was based on latest research, learning-centered, appropriate for young learners in the teachers' context and also could be easily adapted to suit various approaches. According to teachers' responses, the textbook layout and design were

appropriate and clear, varied and attractive and were clearly structured and sequenced. Furthermore, the textbook included a detailed overview of the functions, structures, and vocabulary that would be taught in each unit. The activities, according to teachers' views, encouraged meaningful language use, incorporated individual, pair and group work, and promoted creative, original and independent responses. The textbook provided an equal focus on all four language skills and there was sufficient material for integrated skill work. The topics of the book were realistic and likely to appeal to young learners. Moreover, the topics were relevant and encouraged learners to express themselves. As pointed out by teachers, the book provided sufficient support for the teachers to meet their learners' needs and expectations by benefiting the activities. The book also provided opportunities to localize and personalize activities. Finally, the book provided adequate opportunities for learner assessment and provided periodical revisions for diagnostic purposes. Figure 1 clearly illustrates the teachers' viewpoints about the textbook.
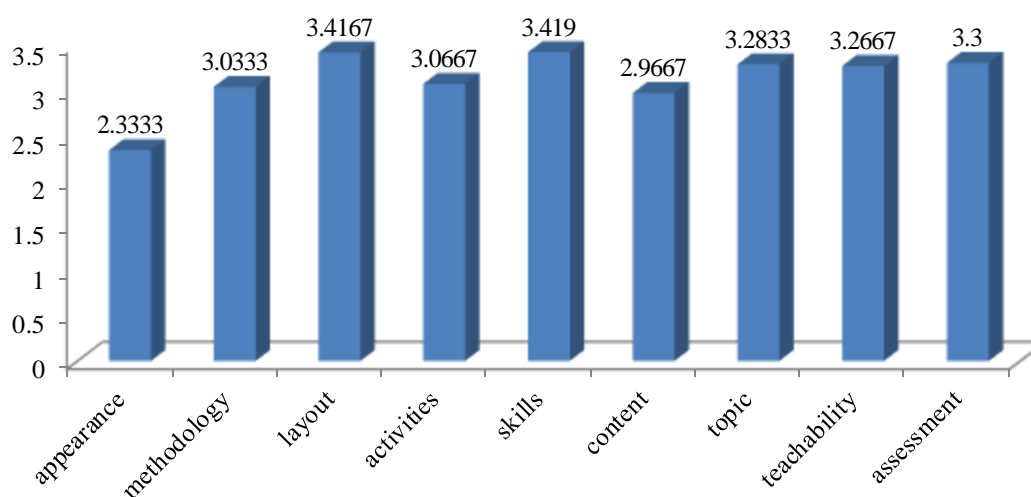

Figure 1: Teachers' Perceptions of Seventh Grade English Textbook

As shown in the above figure, the mean scores of most items in the questionnaire were above 3, while the mean score of "appearance" and "content" were below 3. It means that teachers had negative views towards these two items. Since one aim of this study was to compare the teachers' viewpoints about the new and old versions of English textbooks used in Iranian schools, the teachers' perceptions of English textbook which was commonly used in second grade of guidance school were also collected. The following table summarizes the findings.

Table 2: *Descriptive Analysis of Teachers' Perceptions of Second Grade of Guidance School English Textbook*

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
appearance	15	1.00	3.67	1.8000	.82424
layout	15	1.88	2.88	2.3750	.30981
methodology	15	1.00	4.00	1.8833	.90073
activities	15	1.33	3.33	1.7704	.46664
skills	15	1.00	1.71	1.4095	.22823
content	15	1.00	3.50	2.1000	.81174
topic	15	1.50	4.00	2.1000	.64642
teachability	15	1.00	3.25	1.7000	.54445
assessment	15	1.00	2.25	1.5333	.33894
Valid N (listwise)					

Unlike those presented in Table 1, the mean scores of most of the items in the above table were below or equal one. It means that most teachers did not have a positive and favorable attitude towards this textbook. This negative view included teachers' perceptions of the textbook appearance, methodology, activities, language skills, teachability and assessment. The only three items, which took high score from teachers, were the textbook's layout, language content and topic content. The following figure clearly shows the findings obtained from the teachers who had previously taught English in second grade of guidance school.
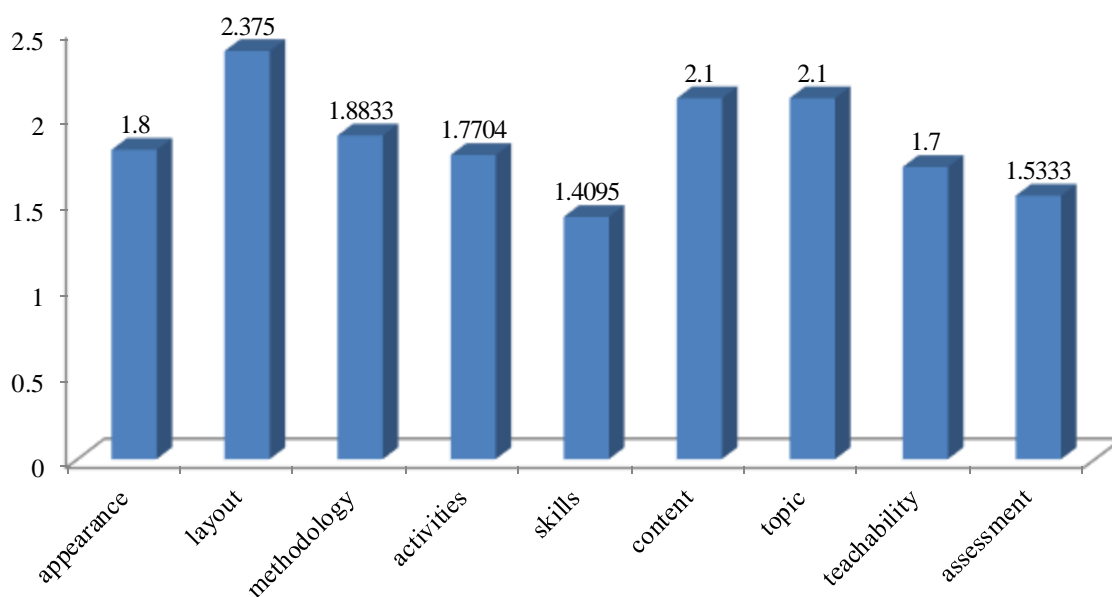

Figure 2: Teachers' Perceptions of Second Grade of Guidance School English Textbook

4.2. Analysis of Students' Perceptions

The other main goal of this research was to compare the students' perceptions of the English textbook which was commonly used in second grade of guidance school and the one which is currently applied in the seventh grade. In order to reach this goal, two groups of students were invited to fill out the questionnaire which was previously given to the English teachers. What follows is a summary of students' viewpoints which had been previously studying English in guidance school. We named these students as "previous English students". The following table presents previous English students' perceptions of English textbook commonly used in guidance school second grade.

Table 3: *Previous English Students' Perceptions*

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
appearance	30	2.67	3.00	0.8444	.16914
layout	30	1.63	1.88	1.7667	.11244
methodology	30	1.75	2.25	1.0167	.25371
activities	30	2.00	2.33	1.1926	.15695
skills	30	1.57	2.00	1.7905	.19757
content	30	2.75	3.25	1.0167	.25371
topic	30	1.50	1.75	1.5333	.08644
teachability	30	1.75	2.25	1.0000	.22743
assessment	30	2.00	2.00	2.0000	.00000
Valid N (listwise)					

As expected, the students did not have positive views towards English textbook commonly used in second grade of guidance school. It means that the students hold a negative view towards the textbook appearance, layout, methodology, activities, language skills, language content, topic content, the textbook teachability and flexibility. The mean score even went below 1 in the item which is related to the textbook appearance. Figure 3 clearly illustrates the findings.
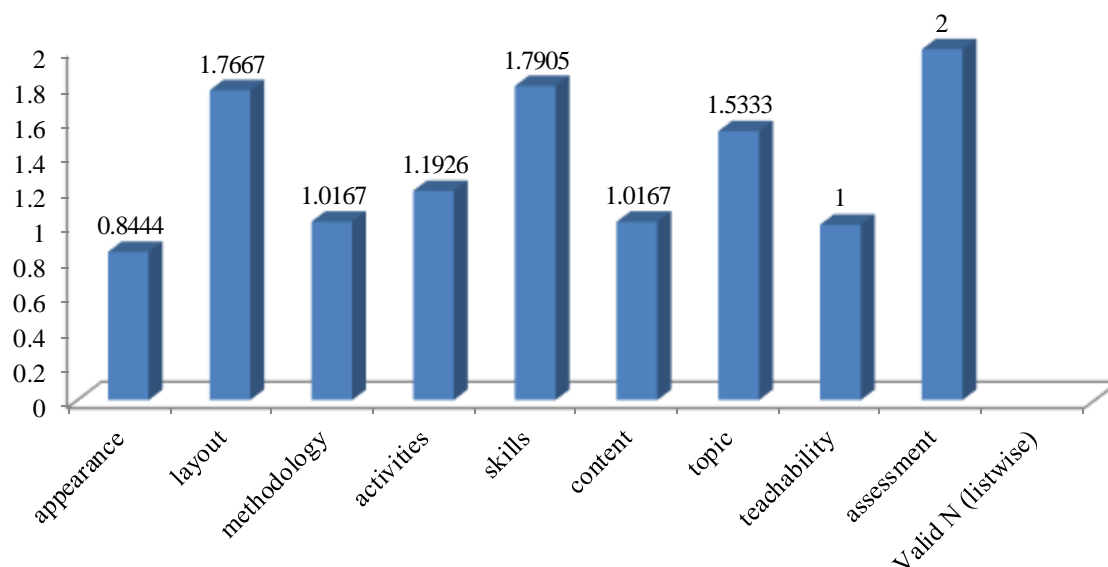
Figure 3: Previous English Students' Perceptions

Overall, as shown in Table 3 and Figure 3, the previous students' perceptions of English textbook in the guidance school second grade were not favorable. In order to compare these students' opinions about English textbook with students' perceptions of the English textbook which is currently applied in the seventh grade, the same questionnaire was given to the students which are English students in this level. This group of students is called as "current English students' perceptions". The following part summarizes the results obtained from this group of participants.

Table 4: Current English Students' Perceptions

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
appearance	30	1.33	3.33	4.4556	.65789
layout	30	2.38	4.00	3.0792	.42100
methodology	30	2.25	4.00	3.2833	.56375
activities	30	2.11	3.67	4.9000	.44093
skills	30	2.29	4.00	3.1238	.46060
content	30	1.75	3.50	3.5750	.52173
topic	30	2.25	4.00	4.2417	.42286
teachability	30	1.75	4.00	3.0167	.64971
assessment	30	1.75	3.75	2.9167	.53067
Valid N (listwise)					

As shown in Table 4, most of the mean scores, which are related to different items of textbook, were equal or above 3. According to the current students' viewpoint, the three items which were greatly and particularly favored by students (the mean scores above 4) were the textbook's appearance, activities and topic content. Compared with previous students' perception of the English textbook, the current students, generally speaking, were in favor of the English textbook which is currently applied in Iranian schools. The only item which gained mean score below 3 was the textbook assessment. It means that students believed that the textbook does not contain adequate assessment materials such as progress tests and periodical revisions. Furthermore, the students were disagreed that the textbook provides adequate opportunities for learner assessment. The following figure shows current English students' perceptions of their English textbook.
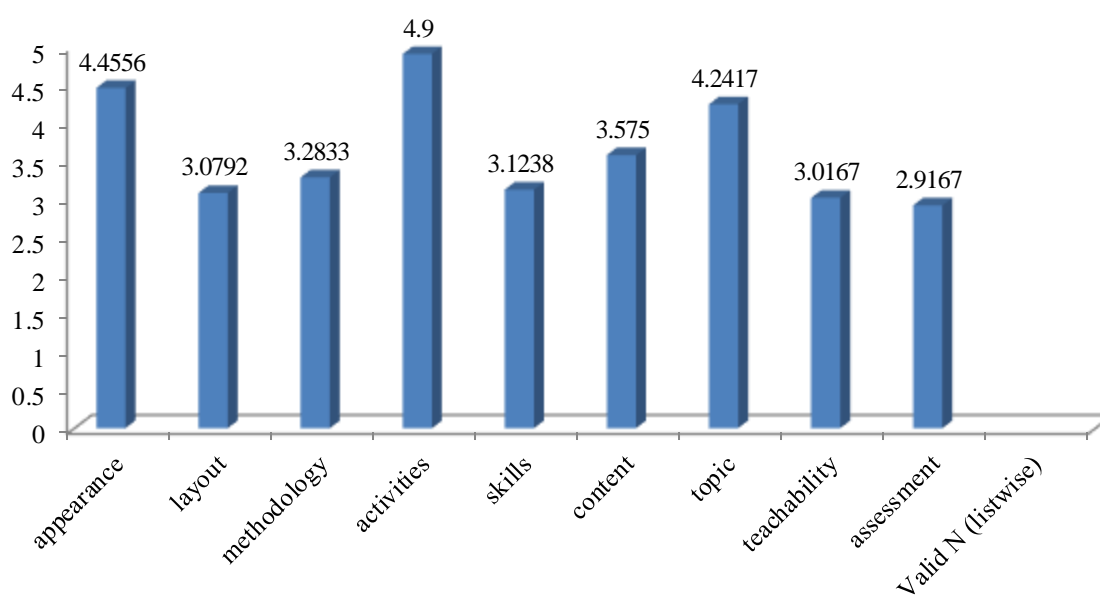

Figure 4: Current English Students' Perceptions

5. DISCUSSION

5.1. Teachers' Perceptions of Textbooks

As the analysis of teachers' questionnaire showed, most of the items in teacher questionnaire about the seventh grade English textbook were supported by them. These statements assessed the teachers' opinions about items including layout, methodology, language skills, activities, topic content, teachability and flexibility and finally assessment. In other words, most teachers agreed upon the fact that, overall, this textbook favors characteristics such as recent research-based methodology, learning-centered and easily-adapted layout. Moreover, teachers believed that the textbook included a detailed overview of the functions, structures, and vocabulary that would be taught in each unit. Unlike this textbook, teachers believed that the guidance school second grade English textbook lacked

attractive appearance, sound methodology, relevant activities, appropriate teaching of different language skills, and balanced assessment.

Many researchers offered pro-textbook and anti-textbook views in ELT settings. The pro-textbook view argues the potential and necessity of textbooks. On the other hand, the anti-textbook view discusses textbooks' limitations. Hutchinson and Torres (1994) pointed out that textbooks are language classroom's universal element. They also believe that teaching and learning situation is incomplete without textbooks. Penny (1996) stated that explicit framework by which students understand what they did and what they are going to do is provided by textbooks. She also argues that comparing to other kinds of teaching materials textbooks are the least expensive and need less time to be prepared. In addition, Harmer (2001) believes that the products of many years of researches are textbooks so they can be teachers and learners' priceless sources.

The finding is consistent with what Penny (1996), Sheldon (1988) and Richards (2001) state; teachers complained that textbooks do not meet learners' needs. Teachers' ideas about the irrelevancy of the subject, content and topics and students' interests and proficiency is also consistent with Penny (1996), Richards (2001) and Sheldon's (1988) findings. Moreover, these results confirm the findings of Aminuddin's research (2009) concluding that teachers believe textbooks lack content appropriateness which cause them not to meet learners' needs. 'Using textbooks was wasting time', the anti-textbooks teachers who participated in the present study believed.

5.2. Students' Perceptions of Textbooks

Similar to teacher participants, student participants had negative attitude toward the English textbook commonly used in the guidance school second grade. In other words, the results revealed that the students hold a negative view towards different characteristics of the textbook including appearance, layout, methodology, activities, language skills, language content, topic content, the textbook teachability and flexibility. Comparing the students' opinions on the seventh grade English textbook, the results showed that the students favored the textbook characteristics such as appearance, activities and topic content. In contrast with previous students' perceptions of the English textbook, the current students, overall, were in favor of the English textbook which is currently applied in Iranian schools.

Extensive advantages, disadvantages and limitations of the textbooks are generally accepted. Penny (1996) shows textbooks' inadequacy to suit every learner. She further argues that learners are not interested in irrelevant or boring topics of the textbooks. Sheldon (1988) and Richards (2001) also add that writers and textbook providers develop them for worldwide markets. Consequently, a mismatch exists between what writers develop and what is really needed in actual settings. Richards (2001) believes that textbook developers are not involved in conducting language learning and teaching research.

6. CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS

The present study explored the teachers' perceptions of junior high school seventh grade and guidance school second grade English textbooks and then compared these two textbooks using CDA. The findings indicated that teachers' perceptions of seventh grade textbooks were positive, while they had negative viewpoints about textbook previously applied for second grade of guidance school. The results of this study further revealed that students hold positive viewpoints about the English textbook which is commonly applied in our educational setting, whereas, as expected, they had negative perception of the previously used English textbook.

Language teachers, language learners, textbook designers, and textbook publishers can benefit from the findings of the present study. The findings suggest that a good language teacher should adopt a critical outlook towards the characteristics of the textbook used in his language classrooms. Consequently unlike many teachers, s/he may discuss CDA issues with the students with a critical point of view. Moreover, the findings show that reflection and self-analysis makes teachers professionally knowledgeable and expert. For instance, by having a critical point of view, teachers can be more sensitive to whatever happens in the classroom. Furthermore, it is recommended that educational system provides strategies by which teacher can handle the shortcomings and ideologies behind CDA representation in ELT textbooks. In fact, the way a particular textbook presents CDA discourse is what a teacher should think about.

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