

How Afghan English teachers perceived English textbooks

What this research was about and why it is important

This study examined gender, textbook type, and EFL teachers' perceptions of English textbooks. When teachers perceive textbooks negatively, it leads to ineffective use and negatively impacts student learning. The study found that the teachers viewed the textbooks positively. The participants reported that the textbooks incorporated the four language skills equally and the activities relevant to the four language skills. Additionally, they felt that the textbooks reflected English language culture and were culturally appropriate for Afghan students.

What the researchers did

- The researchers selected 60 English instructors randomly from both universities and language schools.
- They collected through a 30-item survey, which addressed demographic information, textbook perceptions, and functions, as well as reflections on how language skills and culture were presented in the textbooks.
- They analyzed the data using statistical software to determine how English teachers perceive textbooks and identify the relationships between their gender, textbook type, and perceptions.

What the researchers found

- The teachers viewed English textbooks positively, believing they were appropriate for the Afghan context.
- The participants believed that the textbooks equally addressed speaking, listening, reading, and writing skills.
- The teachers considered the textbooks to contain sufficient activities pertaining to the four language skills. They stated that textbooks widely reflected English language cultural issues.
- The textbooks played various roles (e.g., assignments, assessments, planning, and preparing for classes).
- A relationship was not found between the gender of the teachers (male and female) and how they perceived the English textbooks, indicating that gender was not a factor in how the teachers perceived the textbooks.
- Nevertheless, textbook types and teachers' perceptions of those textbooks are related, meaning the type of textbook affected their perceptions.

Things to consider

- There were positive perceptions among the teachers because the textbook presented topics relating to their students' interests and needs, provided clear objectives and instructions, and served various functions.
- The textbooks will be more effective if they include all four language skills activities and make them engaging and interactive.
- The participants reported that their students had no difficulty understanding English culture due to shallow presentation (e.g., sport, appearance, and clothing), but the textbooks should present a more comprehensive presentation of local culture.
- The participants in the current study were positive about textbooks (served as a source for learners and teachers and used for homework, assessments, class planning, and syllabuses) despite some previous studies suggesting textbooks limit teachers' creativity.
- While textbooks should not be gender biased, the Afghan textbooks published locally are to a greater extent biased towards women than those published internationally (e.g., women are underrepresented).
- No textbook can meet all students' needs and interests in every situation.
- The existing textbooks published locally do not appropriately present English culture.
- In their study, the researchers recommended that teachers should not simply cover some sections of the textbook and ignore the rest but explore other English materials in their classrooms and be creative.
- A larger sample of teachers could be surveyed in future studies. Interviews and observations could also be used to gain a deeper understanding of participants' perceptions of textbooks.
- Further studies may also examine how learners' perceptions of textbooks are influenced by how English language culture and local cultures are reflected in textbooks.

Material, data, open access article: N/A.

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