

**Perspectives of Teachers and Students on High School English Text Books of Tamil Nadu:  
An Appraisal**

**A. Kumar**  
Research Scholar (Part- Time)  
Madurai Kamaraj University  
Madurai  
&

**Dr. A. Chandra Bose**  
Assistant Professor  
Department of English  
The Madura College  
Madurai

**Abstract:** Textbooks play significant role in teaching and learning continuum. Due to this reason, curriculum wings have had continuous check and monitoring in devising goals and standards in textbooks for schools. During last decade, English textbooks have been changed consistently regarding their contents, appearances and teacher guide manuals etc in order to obtain better results from teachers and students. Studying factors responsible for teaching efficiencies is an important area of research. This study attempts to probe the competency of English Language learners of Ramanathapuram, Tamilnadu in high schools from English text books provided in their curricula.

**Keywords:** Teacher perspectives, Student perspectives, English Books sufficiency, English competence, English language teaching (ELT)

**Introduction:** India aspiring to lead in knowledge-based societies took responsibility of the constitutional obligation for equal education for all students. Indian Government's commitment to this cause reflected in the realities of enacting its vision with an aim to build a democratic, egalitarian, secular and human society. Education which paves the way for social development with equality globally can be achieved through the English language.

Thus, English the common lingua franca between people, countries' economies, and scientific institutions is an important language in the Indian education system [1]. English language has made inroads beyond native language barriers to become the second language nationally [2]. The benefits of English language learning can be found in several studies [3] [4]

which provide empirical evidence that English skills can increase personal economic status and effectively advance a country's economic development.

Subsequently, the use of English became one of the highest duties of teachers in Indian schools [5]. English-teaching's main goal was to create uniformity in curriculum, textbooks, syllabus and teaching methodologies. Textbooks, one of many materials used in schools, are a knowledge resource and an aid that assists students in acquiring concepts on subjects [6]. An English textbook, by definition, is "a book specially designed to help language learners to improve their linguistic and communicative abilities. Units covered under the syllabus are presented through different genres like stories, fantasies, dialogues, and reports. A course book also plays an important role in teaching, it facilitates students in learning activities because a course book offers advantages which constitute useful resources [7].

In educational innovations, textbooks play a crucial role as agents for change because they provide a picture of what the change is going to look like [8]. From a pedagogical-psychological perspective, there is general agreement that teacher perspectives determine what actually happens in classrooms [8]. In this regard, teaching perspectives are defined as an interrelated set of beliefs and intentions that guides their attention and serves as a basis for actions in the classroom. This study attempts to provide more insights into the perspectives of teachers and students on English language learning from English texts provided in High schools of Ramanathapuram District of Tamil Nadu.

**Perspectives of Teachers:** Textbooks offer teacher and students a remarkable advantage in any educational system. Many scholars emphasize the importance of textbooks in the process of language teaching and learning for both teachers and learners, because textbooks are the primary agents conveying knowledge to learners. Teachers agree that price, accessibility, and updates are the strong points of the newly published textbooks.

Teachers believed the newly-published textbook provides a balance of activities, encourages sufficient communicative and meaningful practices. Teachers were also satisfied with content and felt they were relevant to student needs as an English language learner. On the authenticity of language components (vocabulary, grammar, pronunciation) and the four language skills (writing, reading, listening, speaking) they agreed that the books needed few modifications in line with its predecessors.

Teacher perspectives did not have significant differences based on gender or experience. The Teachers were attracted to the physical appearance of the English text books, availability of teacher's guide book and coherence amongst the lessons. In practical teaching the Teachers felt that the books had a good focus on oral and communicative skills. They taught English grammar inductively which helped promote students' problem solving spirit. Other advantages of the books according to them were the inclusion of work books and audio CDs. Teachers also pointed out disadvantages in the English Text Books. The disadvantages were a lack of a story line, no reference to later units, limited writing activities \*and ignorance of English language culture. The time allocated for language learning was not enough as it reduced students reading and writing time.

**Perspectives of Students:** Textbooks occupy important stature in the teaching and learning triangle of education. As far as the language teaching is concerned, importance of textbook increases with every learning and teaching phase. Textbooks relate considerable importance in the academic growth and success of students at all levels of education [10]. Student assessment helps teachers gather their learning outcomes.

Teacher's assessment happens both orally and in a written form, They are executed through class/monthly tests and periodic examinations. These assessments also help teachers make their future plans. Student deficiencies are identified and plans are made to improve them. Many students perceived that teachers can make the learning process transparent and easy to accommodate learning outcomes. Teacher's topics and preparations, homework, examinations help in a defined learning path. Learning and assessment are closely linked and assessment is essential to develop language skills.

Teacher's habit of presenting a lesson in the class and questioning helps a teacher understand the level of student understanding. In this way a teacher can take necessary steps for student improvement. Summative assessment taken at the end of the year by checking answer scripts and awarding of grades to evaluate student learning is a deciding factor for their promotion into the next class. Teachers identify student difficulties through term examinations and take preventive steps for student improvement in summative assessments.

Some students felt teachers were still in a traditional approach, and changes could be made in the assessment system. Though reading and writing assessment followed in classes are

appropriate, pair/group activities for students could further their learning. Teacher's oral readings, followed by silent reading by students are not useful. Memorizing and writing on an answer script kills student creativity. The use of modern teaching aids such as computers, OHPs can engage the students in a better way. Students also felt that marks for listening and speaking skills of students when included in summative assessments can help students improve their listening and speaking skills.

**Methodology:** Most specifically in the field of language learning, importance of textbooks becomes more essential and undeniable as they perform the major guiding tool in giving learning input and providing help and insistence to the language learning. At times, students and teachers fail to get much help from the textbook due to certain reasons that consequently hinder students' progress and performance in learning English as a second language.

Since, it becomes difficult to evaluate and assess textbooks and their benefits in relationship with the curriculum standards and students achievements [11], the present study aims to investigate the effectiveness and reliability of English textbooks of High Schools in Tamilnadu. The population parameter of this study comprised of six schools from Ramanathapuram District of Tamilnadu. Additionally, teachers teaching in these schools were also the population of the study. The ratio of male and female students was taken equally.

156 students and 24 teachers were selected from government and private schools. The government schools considered for the study were GHS, Peravoor, Ramanathapuram, GHS, S.Tharaikudi, Kadaladi, GHSS, Ramasampatti, Kamuthi. The private schools taken for the study from Ramanathapuram were A.V.M.S Matriculation Higher Secondary School, , LOUIS LEVEL MATRIC HR.SEC. SCHOOL, and K. SHATHIRIYA NADAR MATRIC SCHOOL. The study attempts to answer the following questions

- To what extent English textbook of school is effective in providing English Proficiency skills amongst students according to students' viewpoint
- How effective, English language teachers, relate the content and materials of textbooks towards their teaching practices and obtaining learning outcomes
- To what extent English textbook of schools has been achieving curriculum goals and learning standards as devised by curriculum wing
- Difficulties students come across while taking help from English textbook while learning

**Data Collection:** Data was collected using a questionnaire to elicit responses from respondents. The questionnaire consisted of four parts. The first part of questionnaire consisted of demographical information, second part about importance of textbook, third part was about content, vocabulary, skills, and activities. The fourth part consisted of objectives, appearance of textbook, methods of teaching and assessment. Factors related to validity and reliability issues were treated and settled during the process of pilot testing.

**Results:** Data obtained from students' questionnaires were analyzed using descriptive statistic technique. The interpretation of data collected from the questionnaire is detailed in this section. The results are tabulated on a scale of 1-5 namely Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Neutral (N), Disagree (DA) and Strongly Disagree (SD) where SA=5. Table 1 lists the analysis on Subject and content.

Table 1- Subject and content

Statements	SA %	A %	N %	D %	SD %	Mean Score
Relevance to Student Needs	20.50	13.50	11.50	11	43	2.57
Generally realistic	34.50	27.00	5.50	21.50	11.50	3.52
Interesting and motivating	27.50	26.50	6.00	22.50	17.50	3.24
Sufficient variety	17.00	17.50	18.00	25.00	22.50	2.82
Not culturally biased	21.00	17.00	13.50	22.00	25.50	2.83
Contents are logical	22.50	21.50	5.00	12.50	13.50	2.52
Target language culture	37.50	35.50	7.50	7.00	12.50	3.86
Contains real-life issues	7.50	17.50	22.50	27.50	32.50	2.62
Variety of literary genres	19.00	33.00	15.00	17.50	15.50	3.23

Table 1 data reveals that majority of the students claimed that the material is not relevant to students need or not realistic. A large number of respondents opined that textbook lacks

sufficient variety of language skills. However, some of them claimed that target culture was presented in the text as the mean score was 3.86; and real life issues have been discussed in the whole story as the measured mean score is 3.52. However, the stories are not presented in logical sequence and this novel lacks variety of literary genres. Table 2 lists the analyzed data on Vocabulary and grammar.

Table 2 - Vocabulary and grammar

Statements	SA %	A %	N %	D %	SD %	Mean Score
Repetition of new words	22.50	41.00	8.50	8.00	9.50	3.28
Too many unknown words	49.00	12.50	16.00	20.00	2.50	3.86
Adequate number of exercises	8.50	11.50	9.50	22.50	48.00	2.1
Makes vocabulary learning easier	29.00	31.00	5.00	25.00	10.00	3.44
Easy presentation of grammar	22.50	41.50	10.00	12.00	14.00	3.47
Organization of grammar	44.50	20.00	9.00	12.00	14.50	3.68
Progression of grammar	23.00	9.00	15.50	17.50	65.00	2.98
Brief examples of grammar	8.00	19.50	2.50	29.50	25.50	2.1
Presentation in a variety of ways	9.50	18.00	22.50	13.50	11.50	2.26

According to Table 2 data, The respondents stated that there was little or no repetition of new words in the book. Moreover, the data also revealed that students disagreed with the statement that the words were presented in variety of new ways. However they affirmed that they come across some most difficult words while reading text. Majority of the students told that exercises related to vocabulary learning were remote in the textbook. On the other hand grammar and grammatical rules were not presented in a logical sequence. There were very few grammar exercises with few examples of grammatical rules in this book that created difficulty in developing the understanding of the readers. Table 3 lists details on Exercise and activities

Table 3- Exercise and activities

Statements	SA %	A %	N %	D %	SD %	Mean Score
Conducive toward new language	15.50	14.00	9.50	38.00	23.00	1.89
Encourage collaborative work	21.50	27.00	19.50	12.00	20.00	3.18
Facilitate use of grammar rules	18.00	15.00	10.00	27.00	22.00	2.56
Help to improve reading skills	18.50	46.50	3.50	13.50	18.00	3.35
Help to improve their writing skills	28.00	36.00	9.00	11.50	15.50	3.49
Incorporate individual, group work	31.50	28.00	11.00	10.50	19.00	3.36
Increase students' desire to learn	26.50	24.50	9.00	16.50	23.50	3.14
Interactive or task-based activities	25.00	29.00	13.50	15.00	17.50	3.29
Modified or supplemented easily	40.50	16.50	9.50	12.00	26.50	3.48
Promote creative responses	13.00	17.00	14.00	34.00	22.00	2.65
Promote critical thinking	16.50	13.00	12.00	18.00	40.50	2.65
Speaking activities	11.00	8.00	12.50	32.00	36.50	2.25

Table 3 presents statistics on the exercises and activities given in English Textbooks. The results revealed that majority of participants disagreed with the statement that these activities increase the students' desire to learn and encourage them to collaborate with others. Moreover, exercises also lack task-based activities and in the use of grammar rules. Participants also stated that these activities cannot be modified according to the students or learning needs. A large number of members strongly disagreed that these exercises and activities are conducive towards learning new language. Additionally members stated that these activities do not help in improving reading skills nor writing skills or even speaking skills.

**Discussions:** The students articulated dissatisfaction with the subject and content of the textbook and stated that there were no sufficient variety in subject and content of the textbook. Moreover, they claimed that subject and content of the textbook was not realistic and it lacks variety in offering challenges to them. Additionally, there is no logical and functional organization between subject and content of the textbook.

They found the subject material culturally biased as well. Only some students claimed that textbook provides them the opportunity to think critically and change their worldviews. In contrast to this, some students were dissatisfied about the vocabulary and grammar items; the grammar exercises and adequate vocabulary were not included in the textbook. They further added that new vocabulary words were introduced in the text without any repetition which makes learning vocabulary difficult.

Moreover, some students were not satisfied with the grammar exercises present in their textbook. Regarding the exercises and activities included in English textbook, majority of students claimed that exercises were not designed to encourage group work or even independent work. They cannot modify them according to their needs. Findings also show that textbook lacks task-based exercises and some students gave negative response on the contents and information. They did not find appropriate balance of the four language skills.

Other sub-skills were also neglected in the books like listening for gist, note-taking, skimming for information etc. Additionally, students express their view that textbook did not encourage inductive approach towards learning language and it doesn't fulfill students' expectations. The findings signify that majority of the students were not completely satisfied with learning objectives of textbook. However, related to some statements they show agreeable response that the objectives were measurable. On the whole, findings show that textbook did not fulfill the need of students at intermediate level.

Moreover, the data also indicates that students were not completely satisfied with the textbook as these textbook did not raise their interest in doing further English language studies. Most of the students were dissatisfied about the appearance of textbook; they said that font size, format of the print and design of textbook was not appropriate. Moreover, it did not motivate them; neither appealed their interest towards learning language. The findings of the study show that majority of students claimed that their textbook did not fulfill the criteria of providing an effective course for English language proficiency.

On the subject of this question majority answered that the course book did not accomplish the criteria of good course book, the curriculum does not congregate interest in view of the fact that the examinations are just based on the theme of the texts which is outdated and of no



authentic importance to the target learners. The textbook failed to inculcate English proficiency skills among learners. During investigation of textbooks and traditional language learning process, many textbooks are not up to date and may include language learning activities which are proved ineffective.

Some textbooks provide guidance about activities which are not helpful for teachers and they fail to recognize the modern teaching methods according to students needs due to insufficient contents in textbooks. Many ELT textbooks are often regarded as the “tainted end-product of an author’s or publisher desire for quick process. Findings reveal that most of the respondents thought that their most important aspire was to be capable to articulate in English confidently.

In accumulation oral proficiency is the most favored language ability of the preponderance. On the other hand a comparatively higher proportion of the respondents assumed that the course book did not develop their speaking and listening skills. In the same way majority of learners did not stumble on the activities in the textbook. Concurrently extremely remarkable rate of the proportion supposed that neither the textbook enhanced their skills when taken as whole, nor increased their interest in language learning.

Astonishingly (allowing for the majority’s negative observations about the different aspects), overall respondents articulated dissatisfaction about the utility and effectiveness of textbook. Textbooks provide structure and curriculum for an educational program. They help standardize instruction and maintain equality; but the text book being used at intermediate level is unable to provide variety of learning resources. Moreover, it is unable to provide effective language models and input for visual learning materials.

The findings also show that majority of teachers and students claimed that textbook being taught at grade 12 is unable to provide helpful indication for self-directed learning because it lack effective resources for presentation material. Effective source means a source of ideas and activities which can train teachers in order to achieve objectives as devised by curriculum wing. The objectives devised by curriculum wing, allow the teacher to set the learning process for students according to their experience.

These objectives help to manage the lesson, discussion and provide process to learning and an authentic plan of action to teachers. However, the findings of the study displayed that the majority of the teachers believed that the chosen theme and material were not fulfilling the needs of ESL learners. To sum up, it is stated that majority of teachers claimed that textbook which is being taught at grade 12 does not fulfill learners need. They further added that this book did not provide them any help to develop an atmosphere where second language learning process becomes easy.

They further added that textbook does not fulfill the demands of current age and provide no help in achieving goals as devised by curriculum wing. Textbook becomes source of guidance, motivation, inspiration and satisfaction for the students to fulfill their academic goals and objectives. Richards (2001) insists upon the vitality and usability of the textbooks by stating that textbooks are integral for any learning and teaching continuum.

However, it is also important that textbooks must fulfill the purpose what they are designed for. Quite often, teachers and learners could not get as much benefit from textbook due to insipid material and vague activities provided in them. The findings of the study suggest that this book lacks consciousness or no notice towards students' concerns. That's why when students learn English language with the help of this textbook they face great difficulty.

In addition the chosen text is not still ethnically suitable in view of the fact that they are out-of-date and the students can relay to only some part of it. Taken as a whole, the textbook is not catering to the learner's affective and educational requirements. More than that, teachers face great difficulty while preparing lectures for the students or execute their teaching from this textbook. They have to modify and change exercises according to the learners' needs. In addition, the materials do not contribute much in the development/improvement of fluency and accuracy, language ability, critical ability and creative writing.

## **Conclusion**

The evaluation in present study highlighted a varied set of weaknesses which were found in the English Text Books of High schools in Tamilnadu. The book is being taught in private and government schools for many years. However, students feel discomfort and face many problems during their academic life at intermediate level. The book under discussion is void of attraction,

interest and involvement. A large majority of the students affirm that book fails to provide relevant and effective linguistic skills among learners. Furthermore, findings also divulge that teachers don't use interest grabbing teaching activities while teaching textbook to learners. On the whole, it is inevitably needed to make appropriate and cogent modifications in the syllabus and materials being taught at intermediate level. Textbooks play significant role in teaching and learning process. Its importance is increased many times in case of language textbooks as teachers and students lack relevant and authentic material. Based upon the findings of this study and information gathered from other secondary data, it is strongly recommended to integrate innovative, interest grabbing and skill oriented materials in English textbooks. The contents of the textbooks must be in accordance with curriculum goals and learning objectives. Last but not least, it is also suggested to include instructional kits and teacher guides related to English textbooks. It will help teachers in their effective teaching and expedite the students' learning process.

### **Delimitations of the Study**

The study was delimited to the high schools of Ramanathapuram District of Tamilnadu. The study was further delimited to evaluate the English textbooks of High Schools.

### **References**

- [1] Jenkins, J., Cogo, A., & Dewey, M. (2011). Review of developments in research into English as a lingua franca. *Language Teaching*, 44(3), 281-315. doi:10.1017/S0261444811000115.
- [2] McKay, S. L. (2003). Teaching English as an international language: the Chilean context. *English Language Teaching Journal*, 57(2), 139-148. doi:10.1093/elt/57.2.139.
- [3] Ku, H., & Zussman, A. (2013). Lingua franca: The role of English in international trade. *Journal of Economic Behavior & Organization*, 75(2), 250-260. doi:10.1016/j.jebo.2010.03.013.

- [4] Azam, M., Chin, A., & Prakash, N. (2013). The returns to English-language skills in India. *Economic Development and Cultural Change*, 61(2), 335-367. doi:10.1086/668277.
- [5] Gonzales, V. (2004). *Second language learning. Cultural adaptation processes in international graduate students in U.S. Universities*. New York; NY: University Press of America.
- [6] N. Pusporini, Thesis: “A Content Analysis on English e-Book for Junior High School Grade VII, “English in Focus”” (Malang: Faculty of Letter State University of Malang, 2009)
- [7] T. Jakovos, “Selecting an English Course book: Theory and Practice”.*Theory & Practice in Language Studies*.Vol 1 no. 7.
- [8] Hutchinson, T. & Waters, A. (1987). *English for specific purposes: A learning-centered approach*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- [9] Preiss, D. D. (2009). The Chilean instructional pattern for the teaching of language: A video-survey study based on a national program for the assessment of teaching. *Learning and Individual Differences*, 19(1), 1-11. doi:10.1016/j.lindif.2008.08.004
- [10] Azizifar, A., Koosha, M., & Lotfi, A. (2010). An Analytical Evaluation of Iranian High School ELT Textbooks from 1990 to the present. *Social and Behavioral Sciences*, 3, 36-44.
- [11] Lathif, M. (2015). *An Evaluation of English textbook for the Eighth Grades of Junior High School*. Faculty of languages and arts Yogyakarta State University.

