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AN EVALUATION OF EFL COURSEBOOKS USED IN STATE SCHOOLS IN TURKEY BASED ON TEACHERS' OPINIONS

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LANGUAGE LEARNING | RESEARCH ARTICLE ARTICLE

An evaluation of EFL coursebooks used in state schools in Turkey based on teachers' opinions

Halil İbrahim Şahin

Abstract: Despite the recent technological innovations and methodological developments in the field of education, coursebooks still hold their ground as the most prominent teaching material. In this research, English language teaching coursebooks (i.e. İngilizce 4, Upswing, Count Me In) that are used in state schools in Turkey were evaluated from a descriptive point of view based on the opinions of English teachers. The participants were 100 teachers working at different school levels (i.e., elementary, secondary, and high schools) in Bolu, Turkey. Data were collected using English Language Teaching Textbook Evaluation Checklist developed by Nimehchisalem and Mukundan (2015). Results were analyzed using SPSS 26. In addition to the checklist, to further elaborate on the results of the quantitative investigation, semi-structured interviews were conducted with nine volunteering English teachers, and the results were analyzed using NVivo 12 qualitative analysis tool. According to the results of the questionnaire, more than 75% of the teachers were content with the books in terms of their relation to curriculum and teaching goals. However, the items regarding four skills, pronunciation, and learner-centeredness yielded relatively lower results as compared to the others. The results of the interviews were also in line with the questionnaire. The teachers commented that the books were not efficient enough in fostering students' practical skills.

Keywords: coursebook evaluation, EFL coursebooks, materials development, students' needs, teacher education.

English language teaching has always been a controversial issue in Turkey. Along with many other reasons like the limitations of the curriculum and regulations by the Ministry of National Education (henceforth MoNE), or inadequacies in teacher training programs, coursebooks might be one of the most important factors that affect language learning and teaching. In the Turkish context, as Oktay (2014) stated, the policy of foreign language teaching, teaching environments, teaching strategies, teacher training, and classroom situations affect the teaching conditions negatively. These kinds of problems may be accepted as the main reasons for the failures in foreign language teaching.

Developing materials is a crucial point in education, especially in the field of foreign language teaching. In this process, a lot of aspects such as classroom context, authenticity, integrated skills instruction, teachers' opinions, and students' needs should be taken into consideration. As Tomlinson (2016) pointed out, "materials development for language teaching is very important both as a practical undertaking and as an academic field of study" (p.8). In choosing textbooks, according to Cunningsworth (1995, p.7), "careful selection is made, and that the materials selected closely reflect [the needs of learners and] the aims, methods, and values of the teaching program."

In addition, Sheldon (1988) stated that coursebooks represent for both students and teachers the visible heart of any ELT program. In fact, “the coursebook is the course” (McGrath, 2006) and if language-learning materials are in question, coursebooks immediately come to mind (Tomlinson, 2011). On the other hand, Cunningsworth (2005) pointed out that no coursebook will be ideal for a particular group of learners, but the aim is to find the best possible fit, together with the potential for adapting or supplementing parts of the material where it is inadequate or unsuitable.

Richards (2001) expressed that using coursebooks is advantageous because they provide structure and a syllabus for a program, help standardize instruction, maintain quality, provide a variety of learning resources, are efficient and visually appealing, can provide effective language models and input, and can train teachers. However, using coursebooks can also be disadvantageous because they may contain inauthentic language, they may distort content and may not meet students' needs, they may negatively affect teachers' teaching skills, and they might be expensive.

All the coursebooks that are used in state schools in Turkey have been provided by the MoNE for free since 2003. They are written by experts from both state and public institutions (Board of Education, 2019, p.8), and after a series of reviews and evaluations, a coursebook is chosen to be used in schools for five years (MoNE, 2016, p.9). It can be suggested that, without a satisfactory and continuous flow of data from real classroom environments, actual teachers, or students, any material that is developed for educational purposes would have serious shortcomings. Richards (2014) noted that textbooks are important resources for teachers and learners, and their role in language education should be carefully planned for and monitored. Since they provide much of the input, teachers should also be involved in the decision-making processes of the textbooks they will use.

However, the last wide-scale investigation of the primary and secondary school level coursebooks was done in 2008 by the MoNE. In the research paper, the limitations of the study reveal the insufficiency of the investigation. There are four important statements in the limitations of the study section of the research paper by the Department of Educational Research and Development (2008):

1. The research is limited to the books that are taught during the 2007-2008 educational year.
2. The data collection tools (i.e., teacher and student questionnaires) are implemented online.
3. The teacher questionnaires are applied to the primary/secondary school teachers working in city centers.
4. The results of the study are limited to the statistical analyses that are stated in the methodology section (p.40).

Therefore, motivated by the gap in the literature, the main aim of the current research is to investigate the English language teachers' views on the MoNE English coursebooks. The research was conducted during the 2019- 2020 educational year in Bolu, Turkey. Teachers' opinions about the books they used in their instruction were sought through a questionnaire and semi-structured interviews.

1. Literature review

1.1 Coursebook evaluation tools

Since coursebooks play such an important role in teaching, it requires a careful selection process. To accomplish a careful selection, a careful evaluation should be carried out. There have been a lot of methods, models and checklists suggested for evaluating a coursebook during the selection process.

CATALYST (Communicative, Aims, Teachability, Availability, Level, Your impression, Students' interest, and Trying and testing) test introduced by Grant (1987) or MATERIALS (Method, Appearance, Teacher-friendliness, Extras, Realism, Interestingness, Affordability, Level, and Skills) form designed by Tanner and Green (1998) are examples of

evaluation models. Among the most respected models is the one provided by McDonough and Shaw (1993) which consists of two stages: the first is the external evaluation and the second is internal evaluation. In terms of the timing of evaluation, Cunningsworth (1995) proposes three stages: pre-use, in-use, and post-use evaluation. In addition to these models, checklists are also practical tools for coursebook evaluation. The checklist designed by Sheldon (1988) consists of 53 questions, the checklist by Shih (2000) consists of nine categories, and the eclectic checklist by Demir and Ertaş (2014) which consists of fifty-six items are good examples of them. According to Mukundan, Hajimohammedi, and Nimehchisalem (2011), checklists, which can be both qualitative and quantitative, allow a more sophisticated evaluation of the coursebooks about a set of generalizable evaluative criteria. While qualitative checklists allow an in-depth evaluation, quantitative checklists are more reliable and convenient instruments.

1.2 Previous studies on coursebook evaluation

In a study by Kirkgöz (2009), three English coursebooks (i.e., *Texture*, *Time for English*, and *Trip 1*) used in 4th grades in state primary schools in Turkey were evaluated. Opinions of teachers and students were investigated by a 37-item questionnaire and interviews. It was found that the books were carefully designed to meet the goals and objectives of the MoNE curriculum and to meet young learners' needs and interests. White (2009) also evaluated a coursebook (i.e., *High Impact*) that was used to teach beginning and intermediate English conversation at a private two-year college in South Korea. The ages of the students ranged between 20 and 25. In his study, the evaluation was done using the criteria provided by McDonough and Shaw (1993). It was found out that the coursebook was easily adaptable to fit the focus more precisely on oral production skills, given the autonomy of individual exercises that could be modified or removed.

In their study, Mohammadi and Abdi (2014) investigated 32 teachers and 105 students regarding their opinions about the coursebooks (i.e., *Top Notch*) they used. The level of the students in the study ranged between intermediate and advanced and the ages between 13 and 17. The results of the study suggested that the teachers considered the textbooks suitable for the language learning aims, and they would choose to use the textbook again. It also raised students' interest in studying the English language further.

The teachers' views on English coursebooks used in Turkish state schools were investigated in another study by Dülger (2016). 118 English teachers from primary, secondary, and high schools participated in the study. However, there is no information regarding the names or the levels of the coursebooks or the age group of the students. It was found out in the study that English coursebooks seemed to require revision primarily in the areas like speaking, listening, writing, grammar exercises, pronunciation, and efficient outlay of supplementary materials.

To sum up, there are many things to take into consideration when evaluating a coursebook such as its student-centeredness, authenticity, efficient layout, complementary materials, methodology, and integrated skills teaching. On the other hand, in this evaluation process, some of the most important aspects to pay attention to are teachers' opinions, actual classroom data, and students' needs. In this vein, this study adopted quantitative methods (i.e. questionnaire) to elicit the teachers' opinions about the books the MoNE provided, and qualitative methods (i.e. interviews) to further elaborate on the results of the quantitative investigation. Therefore, this study aimed to answer these questions:

1. What are the perceived strengths and weaknesses of the English language teaching coursebooks provided by the Ministry of National Education?
2. What are the teachers' opinions regarding the course of action to enhance the quality of the coursebooks?

2. Methodology

2.1 The aim of the study

The current study aims to investigate the English language teachers' views on the MoNE English coursebooks (i.e., İngilizce 4, Upswing, Count Me In) from a descriptive point of view. The study was carried out during the 2019- 2020 educational year in Bolu, Turkey. Teachers' opinions about the books they used in their practices were investigated through a questionnaire and semi-structured interviews.

2.2 Research design

The current study adopts an explanatory sequential mixed-method design, which means both quantitative and qualitative methods were used, respectively. Firstly, quantitative data was gathered through questionnaires. Secondly, to elaborate on the results of the quantitative data and to provide a comprehensive account of the research questions, interviews were carried out as a part of qualitative data collection. As Creswell (2011) pointed out, "an explanatory sequential mixed methods design consists of first collecting quantitative data and then collecting qualitative data to help explain or elaborate on the quantitative results (p. 542).

For the quantitative part, English Language Teaching Textbook Checklist developed by Mukundan and Nimehchisalem (2015) was used. According to Dörnyei (2007), "internal consistency reliability is generally seen as the psychometric prerequisite for any multi-item scale in a questionnaire that is to be used as a research instrument" (p. 206). Therefore, a reliability analysis was carried out using SPSS 26, and Cronbach's Alpha value of .976 was obtained. This means that the items in the questionnaire are highly reliable. In addition, as mentioned above, for an in-depth analysis of the teachers' opinions, an interview consisting of three questions was developed based on the items on the checklist.

2.3 Participants

The participants of the study were 100 English teachers working in Bolu. There were 24 male and 76 female teachers in the study. To examine the books at various school levels, teachers working at primary (n=24), secondary (n=49), and high schools (n= 27) were chosen based on convenience sampling. According to Friedman (2012), "convenience sampling is the selection of participants from an audience that is accessible to the researcher at the time" The experiences of the participants ranged between 0-5 years and more than 15 years. Levels of the books that were evaluated ranged from beginner to intermediate according to the classification of MoNE. In the following figure, descriptives regarding the experience of the participants in the study were presented.

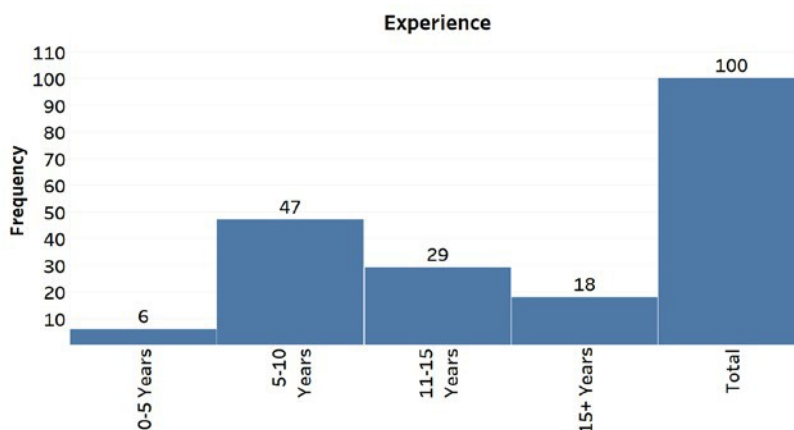


Figure 1. Demographics of the study

2.4. Instruments

2.4.1. Questionnaire

A 39-item checklist developed by Mukundan and Nimehchisalem (2015) was used for quantitative analysis. The checklist was a 5-point Likert scale, and the participants marked their responses on a scale of 1-5 (i.e., 1=never true, 5=always true). The checklist was significant in that it was the most up-to-date coursebook evaluation tool at the time and was the refined version of a previous checklist developed by the same researchers. Throughout the development of the original scale, a vigorous revision and refinement process was carried out through a mixed-method approach before the checklist took its final form. According to Mukundan and Nimehchisalem (2015), in the qualitative part of the refinement process, six experts participated in a focus group study, and in the quantitative part, 207 experts were consulted to express their opinions about the checklist.

One of the most important features of the checklist is that it evaluates the coursebook in terms of various aspects. The evaluation criteria in the checklist consist of two parts which are then divided into several sub-categories. In the first part, namely general attributes, five sub-categories are related to the syllabus and curriculum (e.g. the book matches the specifications of the syllabus), methodology (e.g. the activities can work well in most classroom situations), suitability to learners (e.g. it is compatible with the background knowledge and level of the students), physical and utilitarian attributes (e.g. it is appropriately priced), and supplementary materials (e.g. there is a useful teacher's guide to aid the teacher). In the second part, namely learning-teaching content, there are nine sub-categories which are general content (e.g. tasks move from simple to complex), listening (e.g. tasks are authentic or close to real language situations), speaking (e.g. individual, pair, and group work are given equal emphasis), reading (e.g. length is appropriate), writing (e.g. tasks are interesting), vocabulary (e.g. words are contextualized), grammar (e.g. grammar is contextualized), pronunciation (e.g. tasks are useful), and exercises (e.g. they have clear instructions).

2.4.2. Interviews

To further examine the teachers' opinions about the English language teaching coursebooks used in state schools, semi-structured interviews were conducted with nine volunteering teachers, three of whom are working at primary, three at secondary, and three at high school levels. The interviewees were chosen among the participants of the questionnaire on a volunteer basis. The interviews were carried out face-to-face and recorded to be transcribed thereafter. They were carried out mostly in English, however, to clarify their opinions, the interviewees switched to their mother tongue (i.e., Turkish) from time to time. These parts were then translated and transcribed for analysis. The interview questions were developed based on the items in the questionnaire. Teachers were asked about:

1. Their general opinions about the book they teach (e.g., their experiences regarding the use of the book, the contributions of the book to their practice, difficulties, and the amenities they face when using the book)
2. The strengths and weaknesses of the book (e.g., in terms of four skills, grammar, vocabulary, student-centeredness, authenticity, novelty, and richness in content)
3. Their recommendations to enhance the quality of the book

2.5. Data collection procedure and data analysis

In order to collect quantitative data, the questionnaire was uploaded to Google Forms, and the link was distributed to the physically unreachable participants (n=53) via e-mail and other third-party messaging applications (e.g., WhatsApp, Telegram). On the other hand, the questionnaire was also administered in the print-out form to some of the participants (n=47) that were available at the time of the study. The analysis of the data was done using SPSS 26, and descriptive statistics were used in the analysis process.

For the qualitative part, nine volunteering teachers (i.e., 3 from primary, 3 from secondary, and 3 from high school levels) were chosen on a volunteer basis among the participants of the quantitative investigation. As mentioned above, all of the interviews were carried out face-to-face and recorded to be transcribed and analyzed later. The transcriptions were uploaded to NVivo qualitative analysis tool for coding.

In the coding of the teachers, pseudonyms were used. Every statement of the teachers was coded under the corresponding pseudonym. Figure 2 presents the coding of the teachers. In the first column, the names of the participants, and in the second column, the number of codes that are assigned to each participant are shown. Finally, in the third column, the references each code contains are presented. Ayşen, for example, mentioned 10 codes in 14 different references.

Files			
Name	Codes	References	
Ayşen	10	14	
Gökhan	5	10	
Serdar	7	12	
Erol	10	12	
Necla	8	9	
Ayhan	8	12	
Perihan	9	12	
Suzan	4	4	
Pervin	3	4	

Figure 2. Coding of the teachers

After the coding of the teachers, the coding of the interviews was carried out. According to the statements of the teachers, 20 codes were created. For example, the statement by Pervin showed that the illustrations in the book do not attract students' interests was coded under the code not suitable to students' interests. In Figure 3, some of the codes are presented.

Codes			
Name	Files	References	
Complementary Materials Needed	6	14	
Not Suitable to Students' Interests	7	11	
Interactive Content Needed	6	9	
Listening Activities Not Efficient	6	9	
Speaking Activities Not Efficient	3	5	
Enhancing the Layout Needed	3	5	
4 Skills Not Efficient	4	4	
Poor Vocabulary Teaching	3	4	
Activities Not Efficient	3	3	
Lack of Spiral Approach	3	3	

Figure 3. Sample coding

3. Findings

3.1. Questionnaire

In this part, the findings of the study were presented. The results were categorized according to the original classification of the questionnaire. As seen in Figure 1, the teachers in the study are working at three different levels of the state schools. However, since this was not a comparative study, the mean scores of the responses for the same items by primary, secondary, and high school teachers were unified and given as one mean score. The mean scores were calculated by averaging out the number of the teachers who marked the corresponding item. In order to prevent the visual load, the crosstabs regarding the items were presented in Appendix A. According to the descriptive statistics, the lowest-ranking items of the study were 12th, 35th, 27th, 34th, and 37th; the highest-ranking items were 17th, 36th, 32nd, 1st, and 7th items. The descriptives regarding these items are presented in the following tables.

Table 1. Items in the questionnaire that ranked the lowest

Item	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	SD
12. There is a useful teacher's guide to aid the teacher.	100	1	5	1.86	1.18
35. Tasks are interesting (Pronunciation).	100	1	5	2.23	.98
27. Tasks are interesting (Writing).	100	1	5	2.29	.99
34. Tasks are useful (Pronunciation).	100	1	5	2.30	1.00
37. They are adequate (Exercises).	100	1	5	2.35	.99

As seen in Table 1, the lowest ranking items are about the teacher's guide, pronunciation, writing, and exercises. The 12th item regarding the teacher's guide has got a mean score of 1.86. The number of the teachers that marked the 1st (i.e. never true), 2nd (i.e., rarely true), 3rd (i.e., sometimes true), 4th (i.e. often true), and 5th (always true) points on the item is 55, 22, 9, 10, and 4, respectively (see Appendix A). This means that the participants disagree with the statement there is a useful teacher's guide. The main reason for this is that the MoNE stopped publishing

teacher's guides in 2017. These guides were the books that assisted the teachers in their planning and preparations for the lesson, and which helped them to use the coursebooks more effectively and productively. Instead of the teacher's guide, the Board of Education has been publishing daily, weekly, and yearly lesson plans on their official database. However, as stated by the teachers, those are not facilitative enough. The items regarding pronunciation also ranked relatively lower. The reason behind this, according to the participants, is that although the books fulfill the theoretical aspects of the language, they fail to meet practical needs. Furthermore, like other items concerning the students' interests, writing tasks are also not seen as interesting by the teachers with a mean score of 2.29. Finally, one of the main discontents of the teachers about the book throughout the research was complementary materials, such as exercises. As seen in Table 1, the exercises in the coursebooks were not seen as adequate with a mean score of 2.35. The number of the teachers that marked the 1st (i.e. never true), 2nd (i.e. rarely true), 3rd (i.e. sometimes true), 4th (i.e. often true), and 5th (always true) points on the 37th item is 25, 27, 37, 10, and 1, respectively (see Appendix A).

Table 2. Items in the Questionnaire That Ranked the Highest

Item	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	SD
17. The material is fairly recent.	100	1	5	3.08	1.04
36. They have clear instructions (Exercises).	100	1	5	3.14	1.12
32. Grammar is contextualized.	100	1	5	3.18	1.04
1. The book matches the specifications of the syllabus.	100	1	5	3.70	1.04
7. It is appropriately priced.	100	1	5	4.44	.98

In Table 2, the items in the questionnaire that ranked the highest were listed. The highest-ranking item of the questionnaire is the price of the book with a mean score of 4.44. This is because the books have been published and delivered by the MoNE for free since 2003. As for the items regarding the syllabus, grammar, instructions, and timeliness of the book, the mean scores were 3.70, 3.18, 3.13, and 3.08, respectively. The 1st item on the checklist regarding the syllabus ranked the second highest. The reason behind this is both the book and the syllabus are published by the same institution (i.e., the Board of Education). That the book matches the specifications of the syllabus is a natural outcome of this fact. The items concerning the theoretical aspects of the book, such as grammar, ranked higher on the list. In Table 2, it is seen that the contextualization of grammar has a mean score of 3.18 which is above average. The number of the teachers that marked the 1st (i.e. never true), 2nd (i.e., rarely true), 3rd (i.e. sometimes true), 4th (i.e. often true), and 5th (always true) points on the 32nd item is 7, 20, 27, 40, and 6, respectively (see Appendix A), meaning that the teachers agree with the statement *grammar is contextualized*.

Below, the items on the checklist were examined in detail one by one with respect to the categorization mentioned above. In Table 3, teachers' opinions about the book in relation to the syllabus were investigated under the general attributes category.

Table 3. Descriptives about the book in relation to syllabus and curriculum

I. General Attributes						
A. The book in relation to syllabus and curriculum	n	Range	Min.	Max.	Mean	SD
1. It matches the specifications of the syllabus.	100	4.00	1	5	3.70	1.04
2. Overall, the book has a nice feel.	100	4.00	1	5	2.68	1.00

For the first item on the checklist, the mean score was one of the highest in the study. Teachers thought that the book is highly coherent with the requirements of the syllabus with a mean score of 3.70 out of 5.00. As mentioned above, this is because the developers of both the syllabus and the book are the same. However, for the overall feeling that the book has, the mean score was 2.68. When interviewed, the teachers explained this with the impression they get when they hold the book in their hands. Although the coursebooks seem to be well-organized in terms of the general layout, they failed to give a good impression in terms of colorfulness and appeal.

Table 4. Descriptives about the methodology

B. Methodology	n	Range	Min.	Max.	Mean	SD
3. The activities can be exploited fully.	100	4.00	1	5	2.91	.92
4. The activities can work well in most classroom situations	100	4.00	1	5	2.69	.95

Regarding the methodological aspect of the book, teachers thought that the activities are not very suitable for every classroom context. They also commented that they cannot benefit from the activities to a full extent. The mean scores of these two items are 2.69 and 2.91, respectively.

Table 5. Descriptives about the suitability to learners

C. Suitability to learners	n	Range	Min.	Max.	Mean	SD
5. It is compatible with the background knowledge and level of students.	100	4.00	1	5	2.87	1.11
6. It addresses learning targets	100	4.00	1	5	3.03	1.05

As shown in the table, the teachers expressed their views about the book in terms of its suitability for learners with regard to their levels, ages, needs, and interests. The 6th item regarding the books' utility to address learning targets has a mean score of 3.03. However, the item regarding the students' interests, levels, or backgrounds has a mean score of 2.87, which is below average. These results suggest that the teachers disagree with the *statement the book is compatible with the background knowledge and level of students.*

Table 6. Descriptives about physical and utilitarian attributes

D. Physical and utilitarian attributes	n	Range	Min.	Max.	Mean	SD
7. It is appropriately priced.	100	4.00	1	5	4.44	.98
8. Its layout is attractive.	100	4.00	1	5	2.50	.94
9. It indicates the efficient use of text and visuals.	100	4.00	1	5	2.62	1.01

Items 7, 8, and 9 examined the book in terms of its physical and utilitarian attributes. The mean score obtained from the 7th, an item regarding the price of the book is the highest-ranking item on the checklist. This is because the book is published and distributed by the MoNE for free. Therefore, the teachers agreed with the statement *the book is appropriately priced*. However, the 8th and 9th items concerning the books' attractiveness and efficiency have provided poor results.

Table 7. Descriptives about the efficient layout of supplementary materials

E. Efficient layout of supplementary materials	n	Range	Min.	Max.	Mean	SD
10. The book is supported by suitable materials like a workbook, audio, or multimedia.	100	4.00	1	5	3.06	1.14
11. The book is supported by other materials like reviews and test units.	100	4.00	1	5	2.52	1.17
12. There is a useful teacher's guide to aid the teacher.	100	4.00	1	5	1.86	1.18

The 10th, 11th, and 12th items on the checklist focused on the books in terms of their supplementary materials. As mentioned above, the 12th item regarding the teachers' guide is the lowest-ranking item on the checklist because there has been no teachers' guide provided by the Ministry since 2017. In addition to that, the 10th and 11th items regarding supplementary classroom materials have provided mean scores that are near or below average, the 10th item with a mean score of 3.06, and the 11th item with a mean score of 2.52. The number of the teachers that marked the 1st (i.e. never true), 2nd (i.e., rarely true), 3rd (i.e. sometimes true), 4th (i.e. often true), and 5th (always true) points on the 10th item is 9, 25, 27, 29, and 10, respectively, and on the 11th item, 22, 30, 30, 10, and 8, respectively (see Appendix A).

Table 8. Descriptives about general learning-teaching content

II. Learning-teaching content						
F. General content	N	Range	Min.	Max.	Mean	SD
13. Tasks move from simple to complex.	100	4.00	1	5	2.87	1.06
14. Tasks are varied.	100	4.00	1	5	2.73	.92
15. Tasks support teaching objectives.	100	4.00	1	5	3.03	1.02

16. The language in the textbook is natural and real.	100	4.00	1	5	2.76	1.03
17. The material is fairly recent.	100	4.00	1	5	3.08	1.04

The second part of the checklist investigates the books in terms of their learning-teaching content. Only the 15th and 17th items regarding the books' novelty and their utility to meet the objectives provided mean scores slightly higher than average. 13th, 14th, and 16th items about the tasks and authenticity of the books received mean scores of 2.87, 2.73, and 2.76 respectively.

Table 9. Descriptives about listening

G. Listening	n	Range	Min.	Max.	Mean	SD
18. The book has appropriate listening tasks with well-defined goals.	100	4.00	1	5	2.80	1.11
19. Tasks are authentic or close to real language situations.	100	4.00	1	5	2.81	1.11
20. Various listening contexts such as formal vs. informal contexts are considered.	100	4.00	1	5	2.62	1.11

Items in Tables 9, 10, 11, and 12 examine the books in terms of four skills. As shown in the tables, receptive skills received slightly higher scores than productive skills. The definition of the goals and authenticity of listening tasks received 2.80 and 2.81 mean scores respectively. The books received a 2.62 mean score in terms of the richness of the context in which listening activities took place.

Table 10. Descriptives about speaking

H. Speaking	n	Range	Min.	Max.	Mean	SD
21. Activities are developed to initiate meaningful communication.	100	4.00	1	5	2.55	1.00
22. Individual, pair, and group work are given equal emphasis.	100	4.00	1	5	2.67	.88

In terms of the communicative aspect of the books, item 21 received a mean score of 2.55. This is evidence of the contradiction between the learning goals and the books that the Board of Education published. Also, the 22nd item regarding the books' utility to facilitate various kinds of collaboration in classrooms received a mean score of 2.67.

Table 11. Descriptives about reading

I. Reading	n	Range	Min.	Max.	Mean	SD
23. Length is appropriate.	100	4.00	1	5	2.91	1.12
24. Difficulty level is appropriate.	100	4.00	1	5	2.79	1.12

25. Texts are interesting.	100	4.00	1	5	2.51	1.06
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Items 23, 24, and 25 investigated the books in terms of reading skills. The item that received the lowest score is the 25th item which focused on the interestingness of the book. Also, the items regarding the length and level of reading activities provided mean scores of 2.91 and 2.79 respectively. When interviewed, teachers reported that the texts were either too long or too difficult for the students.

Table 12. Descriptives about writing

J. Writing	n	Range	Min.	Max.	Mean	SD
26. Tasks have achievable goals and take into consideration learner capabilities.	100	4.00	1	5	2.47	.97
27. Tasks are interesting.	100	4.00	1	5	2.29	.99

The items regarding writing skills are some of the lowest ranking items on the checklist. Item 26 concerning the writing activities' utility to foster individual differences received a mean score of 2.47. The 27th item regarding the interestingness of the writing tasks provided a mean score of 2.29, making the writing one of the bottom five ranking items on the checklist.

Table 13. Descriptives about vocabulary

K. Vocabulary	n	Range	Min.	Max.	Mean	SD
28. The load (number of new words in each lesson) is appropriate to the level of students.	100	4.00	1	5	2.85	1.01
29. There is a good distribution (simple to complex) of vocabulary load across chapters and the whole book	100	4.00	1	5	2.72	1.07
30. New words are sufficiently repeated and recycled across the book.	100	4.00	1	5	2.66	.97
31. Words are contextualized.	100	4.00	1	5	2.95	1.09

The items in Table 13 focused on the books in terms of vocabulary. As shown in the table, item 28 regarding the vocabulary load, item 29 regarding the complexity of the vocabulary, item 30 regarding the recycling of the new words across the book, and item 31 regarding the contextualization of the vocabulary received mean scores of 2.85, 2.72, 2.66, and 2.95 respectively.

Table 14. Descriptives about grammar

L. Grammar	n	Range	Min.	Max.	Mean	SD
32. Grammar is contextualized.	100	4.00	1	5	3.18	1.04

33. Grammar items are repeated throughout the book.	100	4.00	1	5	3.04	.98
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Items 32 and 33 investigated the book in terms of grammar. As mentioned above theoretical aspects are some of the main strengths of the book. Contextualization and recycling of the grammar received 3.18 and 3.04 mean scores respectively.

Table 15. Descriptives about pronunciation

M. Pronunciation	n	Range	Min.	Max.	Mean	SD
34. Tasks are useful.	100	4.00	1	5	2.30	1.00
35. Tasks are interesting.	100	4.00	1	5	2.23	.98

Along with speaking, pronunciation provided very poor mean scores in the questionnaire. Both the items on the checklist regarding pronunciation took place in the bottom-five list. Mean scores for usefulness and interestingness of pronunciation tasks are 2.30 and 2.23 respectively.

Table 16. Descriptives about exercises

N. Exercises	n	Range	Min.	Max.	Mean	SD
36. They have clear instructions.	100	4.00	1	5	3.14	1.12
37. They are adequate.	100	4.00	1	5	2.35	.99
38. They are interesting.	100	4.00	1	5	2.48	.91
39. They help students with mixed abilities.	100	4.00	1	5	2.52	.99

As shown in Table 16, exercises in the book received mean scores lower than the average scores. Only the 36th item regarding the instructions of the exercises provided a mean score of 3.14, which is above the average. Item 37 concerning the sufficiency of the exercises received 2.35 as a mean score. The next two items concerning the utility of the exercises in terms of meeting students' needs and interests received mean scores of 2.48 and 2.52 respectively.

3.2. Interviews

Since this study was carried out from a descriptive point of view, the percentages and the frequencies of the codes are presented in Figure 4 to provide a picture of the current situation. The numbers on the rows represent the frequency of the code referred to by the corresponding teacher. For example, the 1st code, *enhancing the layout needed*, was mentioned once by teacher 1 and teacher 6, and three times by teacher 7. The resulting percentage of the code is 5.75 among 20 codes and 87 references.

Codes	Ayşen	Gökhan	Serdar	Erol	Necla	Ayhan	Perihan	Suzan	Pervin	Total	%
1: Enhancing the layout is needed	0	1	0	0	0	1	3	0	0	5	5.75
2: 4 Skills are not efficient	1	0	0	0	0	1	1	1	0	4	4.60
3: Activities are not efficient	0	1	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	3	3.45
4: Authenticity is needed	0	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	2	2.30
5: Complementary materials are needed	3	4	2	1	0	3	0	1	0	14	16.09
6: Vocabulary is efficient	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	2	2.30
7: Interactive content is needed	1	0	0	0	1	3	1	1	2	9	10.34
8: Lack of active student participation	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1.15
9: Lack of spiral approach	0	0	1	1	1	0	0	0	0	3	3.45
10: Lack of successiveness	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	2	2.30
11: Poor teacher aids	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	2	2.30
12: Listening activities are not efficient	1	3	2	1	1	0	1	0	0	9	10.34
13: Not suitable to students' interests	2	1	3	2	0	1	1	1	0	11	12.64
14: Poor dialogues	0	0	0	1	1	1	0	0	0	3	3.45
15: Poor reading activities	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	1.15
16: Poor vocabulary teaching	0	0	0	2	1	0	0	0	1	4	4.60
17: Practical aspects are disregarded	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	2	2.30
18: Speaking activities are not efficient	2	0	2	0	1	0	0	0	0	5	5.75
19: Too extensive content	0	0	0	1	2	0	0	0	0	3	3.45
20: Writing activities are not efficient	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	2	2.30
Total	12	10	12	12	9	12	12	4	4	87	100.00

Figure 4. Descriptives of the codes

The codes that received the highest percentages were *complementary materials needed* with a percentage of 16.09, *not suitable to the students' interests* with a percentage of 12.64, and *interactive content needed* with a percentage of 10.34. Coherent with the results of the checklist, the results of the interviews also suggested that the books failed to meet students' needs and interests. On this issue, primary school English teacher Serdar commented:

There are some listening texts and activities in the book, but they don't appeal to students. There are little or no activities like painting and cutting and pasting, which students enjoy very much.

They also performed poorly in fostering four skills according to the teachers' views. One of the interesting results of the interviews is that the books hardly support the spiral approach and the principle of successiveness. The spiral approach is defined by Bruner (1960) as "at some simple level a set of ideas or operations were introduced in a rather intuitive way and, once mastered in that spirit, were then revisited and reconstructed more formally or operationally" (p. 141).

Most of the teachers reported discontent about the books in terms of their supportiveness of the spiral curriculum. In vocabulary learning, for example, recycling of the new words is a useful technique that is suggested by the spiral approach to master the newly learned word. However, it was also considered insufficient by the teachers. They stated that the dialogues in the book contain too many unknown words for students, making them unable to proceed and acquire the target form. Ayşen (level: secondary school) reported, for example:

Sometimes we see a new word in 7th grade, but until the 8th grade, we never see that word again. When the

students start the 8th grade, they suddenly encounter the word they saw a year ago. Naturally, they don't remember.

The books also performed poorly in terms of practical aspects. According to the teachers' opinions, although the books were rich in content in terms of theoretical aspects of language, the practical aspects were neglected. Suzan (Level: High School) commented:

The books are full of grammar and vocabulary content. However, it fails to fulfill the practical aspects of language. Speaking and listening resources, for example, are very limited. There are not enough activities to foster the development of these skills.

4. Discussion and conclusion

In this section, the results of the study are discussed in relation to the hitherto research in the field and the research questions. After that, the limitations of the current study are presented. Finally, the paper is concluded with suggestions for future research.

4.1. Research questions

4.1.1. The perceived strengths and weaknesses of the coursebooks

Results from the current study reveal that the English language teaching curriculum published by MoNE is not congruent with the actual practices, at least in terms of the coursebooks published by the Ministry. Although the coursebooks match the specifications of the syllabus according to the teachers, they failed to fulfill the needs and interests of the students. In addition, the coursebooks failed to foster the practical aspects of the language such as four skills.

These results contradict the results from Kırkgöz's (2009) study where it was found that the books were carefully designed to meet the MoNE curriculum goals and objectives and to meet young learners' needs and interests. However, the current study provided similar results to Dülger's (2016) study. The findings of the two studies are coherent with each other, especially in terms of four skills, pronunciation, and exercises. Both the teachers in Dülger's (2016) study and the current study reported a need for a revision in the coursebooks in terms of these aspects.

4.1.2. The teachers' opinions to enhance the quality of the coursebooks

Most of the teachers in the current study commented that in order to enhance the quality of the coursebooks, the MoNE should conduct a wide-scale investigation in which students and teachers are included. The coursebooks should be designed according to data from actual classrooms, teachers, and students. These results are in line with the results of Tekir and Arikan's (2007) study. It was suggested in their study that a thorough needs analysis should be carried out before designing a coursebook, and both the teachers and students should be included in this process.

Another suggestion of the teachers in the current study about the coursebooks is that there should be more authentic and interactive content that appeals to the students' needs and interests. There are a lot of activities and resources in the coursebooks. However, these resources fail to foster students' active participation, motivation, and development, especially in terms of practical aspects. These results are congruent with the results of Akkaya's (2018) research. It was suggested in her study that in order to foster students' participation and motivation, there should be more authentic materials in the coursebooks tailored to the students' level. In addition, the books should have an interactive version that can be adapted to smartboards.

5. Limitations of the study

Since this was not intended as a comparative investigation, the differences between the opinions of the teachers that work at various schooling levels remain unresearched. Other demographics such as gender, or school type (i.e. science high school, social studies high school) were also disregarded. In addition, because of the temporal and bureaucratic limitations, students' views could not be included in this study.

Another weakness of the study is that the teachers of the MoNE may not be competent enough in textbook evaluation. Therefore, some critical and subtle aspects of evaluation (e.g., the equal representation of men and women in the coursebooks) might have been missed. It is known that the teachers who make an application for a panelist position in the coursebook evaluation process of the Board of Education get training on coursebook evaluation. However, this training is only limited to the applicants for this process. Most of the teachers working at different schooling levels of MoNE do not get regular training for such a skill. When the MoNE's in-service training plans for the last three years (i.e., 2021, 2020, and 2019) were examined, it was found that the MoNE did not provide any coursebook evaluation training during those years.

6. Suggestions for future research

In light of the information above, firstly, future research comparing the books that are used at different school levels of the MoNE would provide more insight into the issue. In addition, bringing other demographics such as gender, or experience into the equation might be beneficial for the literature on textbook evaluation. Furthermore, teachers that work at different school types should be included in future research. It should be remembered that the teachers' opinions regarding the textbooks might change according to their school types.

Secondly, since the students' opinions were not included in this study, further research that investigates the coursebooks from students' points of view might contribute to the field greatly. Teachers in this study reported their views from their own perspectives. However, the students might provide a completely different point of view on the issue.

7. Disclosure of conflict

The author declares that he has no conflicts of interest.

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