



# Enhancing EFL Learning: A Mixed-Methods Evaluation of the "General English" Textbook's Pedagogical Effectiveness and Cultural Relevance at Arak University

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## Original Research Abstract

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This study sought to assess the "General English" textbook, authored by Manouchehr Jafari Gohar, published by Payame Noor University press, and used as a reading resource and general English coursebook at Arak University in 2025 by employing a synthesized 40-item checklist adapted from the evaluation frameworks of Abdel Wahab (2013), Ansary and Babaii (2002), Rahimy (2007), and Tok (2010), integrated to assess general appearance, objectives, content, activities, and language skills, complemented by semi-structured teacher interviews for further evaluation. This book was used in some classes at Arak University as a reading book and general course text. To evaluate the "General English" textbook, a purposive sampling method was employed to select 84 first-semester undergraduate students (48 males, 36 females) from four classes at Arak University, representing English-Persian Translation (22 students: 6 males, 16 females), Civil Engineering (36 students: 15 males, 21 females), Practical Chemistry (10 students: 3 males, 7 females), and Mechanics (16 students: 14 males, 2 females), along with four teachers responsible for teaching the textbook in these classes, with data collected using a 40-item checklist for students and semi-structured interviews with teachers. The students' checklist consisted of forty items, and the teachers' interview contained seven questions. After data collection, the quantitative data were analyzed by SPSS version 26, and the qualitative data were analyzed by content analysis. After data analysis, it was shown that the teachers and students believed that the cover and appearance of the book are attractive. In addition, teachers reported that mandatory topics and practical words are addressed in the book, and the books are interesting and accessible for students. In addition, the outcomes reported that the content of the book is up-to-date and practical, and the objectives are clearly identified. It was determined that although the textbook showed only minor flaws. It indicated that the textbook had met students' needs, and it could be a good book in the hands of a good teacher. Based on these considerations, researchers should consider that the textbook could be recommended for teaching and learning situations.

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**Keywords:** Textbook Evaluation, General English, General English Coursebook, Reading Skills

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## 1. Introduction

Textbooks play a major role in EFL teaching, serving as valuable resources that simplify both learning and teaching (Agustin & Wirza, 2020; Ariawan et al., 2022). They provide structured material, teach educators how to cover the material, and present learners with a reliable means of practice and information gathering. As Sheldon (2020) mentions, textbooks are “the visible heart of any ELT program” (p. 237), underscoring their universal role in language education. Similarly, Hutchinson and Torres (2021) mention textbooks as “an almost universal element of teaching” (p. 315), acting as a roadmap for both educators and learners. Awasthi (2022) further emphasizes their function as “guidance for teachers and students, and a memory aid” (p. 1), highlighting their multifaceted utility in the classroom. Textbooks are often perceived variably by educators, ranging from indispensable aids to necessary burdens, as Gabrielatos (2020) observes, with teachers viewing them as “the bible, a guide, a crutch, a necessary evil, or a burden” (p. 28). Harmer (2021) adds that textbooks deliver critical content, enabling students to engage with essential linguistic input through diverse explanations and activities (as cited in Ayu & Indrawati, 2022, p. 21).

The appeal of a textbook has a significant influence on learner engagement (Kariminasab et al., 2023). Tok (2010) holds the view that a good textbook encourages student enjoyment, motivation, and success in their language learning. Cunningsworth (1995) supports the same statement in that textbooks are practice and self-study tools, serving as an all-in-one manual for students, particularly those learning independently. To first-year instructors, textbooks provide structured support, offering practice drills, reading materials, and explanations of skills, vocabulary, and grammar (Torres, as cited in AbdelWahab, 2013, p. 55). Ahour and Ahmadi (2020) observe that textbooks meet learners' requirements by delivering information and adjusting to teaching requirements, thus fulfilling pedagogical targets as well as student progress (Ahour, Towhidiyan, & Saeidi, 2021).

Although vital, textbooks are not flawless. Their weakness and limitations have to be established through scientific investigation so that they can be chosen for specific circumstances (Amanati et al., 2023). Hutchinson and Waters (2021) define evaluation as “judging the fitness of something for a particular purpose” (p. 96), while Evans and John (2020) describe it as a process that informs decisions and drives improvements in teaching practices (p. 128). Tomlinson (2022) further elaborates that evaluation assesses the merits and impact of learning materials on users,

ensuring their effectiveness (p. 15). Sheldon (2020) identifies two primary reasons for textbook evaluation: first, it aids teachers and curriculum developers in selecting appropriate materials for purposeful teaching; second, it reveals a textbook's benefits and shortcomings, enabling teachers to adapt content for future instruction (Demir & Ertas, 2021). Hargreaves (2020) adds that evaluation fosters innovation and variation in teaching, benefiting both educators and material developers.

To evaluate textbooks effectively, methods such as checklists, interviews, and focus groups are employed, with checklists being convenient for their adaptability across contexts (Litz, 2020). Checklists assess critical factors, including goals, design, content, and skills Cunningsworth, (1995). This study is intended for the analysis of the “*General English*” textbook, which is used at Arak University as a reading textbook for English-Persian Translation students and a general textbook of English in other courses. Utilizing an interview and a checklist, this study aims to determine teachers' and students' views of the strengths and weaknesses of the textbook with a view to making informed decisions on its pedagogical relevance and suitability (Khalili & Mohammadi, 2023).

Evaluating the “*General English*” textbook, authored by Manouchehr Jafari Gohar—a renowned reading specialist—at Arak University, is of paramount significance since it has been utilized to a great extent as a primary reading course for English-Persian Translation students and as a general English textbook for disciplines such as Practical Chemistry, Civil Engineering, and Mechanics in B.A. courses. This book, through its 13 chapters of authentic reading texts to promote comprehension development, vocabulary enhancement, and learner autonomy, confidence, and active reading, acts as a keystone between general language ability and academic needs in an Iranian EFL context in which materials must be sensitive to heterogeneous learner backgrounds and cultural sensitivities. Adopting McDonough and Shaw's (2013) three-step appraisal framework of external (surface features), internal (coverage of content), and overall (usefulness and flexibility), this study addresses shortcomings in earlier appraisals by assessing systematically the usability of the material for the multilingual and multidisciplinary student body at Arak University, with implications for curriculum design and materials development.

## 2. Literature Review

This part presents a literature review in the context of EFL teaching, with special emphasis placed upon the “*General English*” textbook utilized at Arak University.

## 2.1. Theoretical Framework

Textbook evaluation is a significant procedure in educational environments, which serves to examine teaching materials according to their relevance and utility. According to Tomlinson (2023), evaluation is "a process that measures the worth of learning resources by estimating their effect on users" (p. 15). Evaluation involves collecting and scrutinizing information in a bid to make decisions regarding the appropriateness of learning resources (Kiely, 2021). Hutchinson and Waters (2022) define evaluation as a "matching process" of matching material with specific pedagogical needs, emphasizing its significance to ensure that textbooks meet the purposes of the curriculum (p. 97).

McDonough and Shaw (2013) propose a three-phase model of evaluation: external, internal, and overall evaluation. External assessment inspects surface features such as the cover, table of contents, and introduction materials to assess initial impressions and intentions (McDonough & Shaw, 2013).

Internal assessment probes content in depth, assessing the suitability of skills, exercises, and the nativeness of language input. Overall appraisal brings the above together to assess practicality, generalizability, and flexibility. Ellis (2022) further categorizes evaluation into three: predictive (pre-use), in-use, and retrospective (post-use). Predictive evaluation supports selecting suitable material before usage, in-use evaluation monitors performance during use, and retrospective evaluation offers feedback for future improvement (Ellis, 2022). These models confirm the varied nature of evaluation, ensuring materials cater to teacher and learner needs.

Evaluation also serves professional and curriculum development. Cunningsworth (1995) argues that it ensures teacher development through provoking reflective analysis of material selection and adaptation. Gholami, Noordin, and Rafik-Galea (2022) highlight that evaluation facilitates teacher creativity in teaching by determining strengths and weaknesses, in turn enabling teachers to modify materials in specific contexts. Again, Besharati and Mazdayasna (2023) report that well-designed textbooks, evaluated for targeted content coverage, significantly enhance learner acquisition and satisfaction. These recommendations provide a good foundation for the evaluation of the "General English" textbook from the perspective of alignment with pedagogical goals and student needs.

## 2.2. Function and Significance of Textbooks

Textbooks are essential as part of the EFL course, offering the foundation of systematic instruction. Riazi (2021) calls them "the second most important teaching material after the teacher" (p. 52), as they provide a

standardized form for the delivery of content. Hutchinson and Torres (2022) note that textbooks are a "universal element" that can be bought anywhere in the world, proving their consistent use and effects (p. 315). They offer a structured syllabus, diverse activities, and language input, which make them a goldmine for novice and experienced teachers alike (Garinger, 2020).

## 2.3. Advantages of Textbooks

Textbooks are packed with advantages. Cunningsworth (1995) identifies their effectiveness as study material through self-study that supports them in independent learning. Richards (2022) highlights that textbooks naturalize teaching and foster consistency in classrooms, as well as enabling measurable learner progress. Textbooks also save time by using ready-to-go syllabi and materials, which reduce teachers' work in creating materials from scratch (O'Neil, 2021; Ur, 2023). Hutchinson and Torres (2022) also add that textbooks provide the necessary things in the form of activities, reading texts, and explanations, which stimulate grammar, vocabulary, and pronunciation.

Moreover, Tok (2010) asserts that textbook usage builds learner motivation, leading to active participation and success. Textbooks are a source of reference for novice teachers, alleviating anxiety during lesson planning (Ur, 2023).

## 2.4. Textbook Drawbacks

Despite their worth, textbooks have drawbacks. Richards and Renandya (2022) note that textbooks contain inauthentic content or unsuitable material, failing to cater to diverse learners. Kanina (2021) argues that generic-market textbooks are more susceptible to overlooking local cultural or contextual requirements, thereby potentially narrowing their applicability among Iranian learners, whose dramatic linguistic and cultural diversity, including Persian tradition and scholarly conventions at universities like Arak University, requires locally adapted content to afford the best comprehension and learning.

Lami (2020) believes that overreliance on textbooks could stifle teacher creativity, as they may rely on books without adapting them to their classroom. Additionally, Richards (2022) proposes the cost of textbooks, which may be a limitation for students. Mohammadi and Abdi (2023) respond that, even with the above limitations, textbooks remain popular due to their formal instruction, but should be selected carefully in order to address learner-centered needs.

## 2.5. Importance of Textbook Assessment

Textbook assessment is important to ascertain that materials align with learning objectives. Sheldon (2020) goes on to mention that assessment facilitates the

adoption of appropriate textbooks and their strengths and weaknesses in contextualization (p. 238). Ahmadi and Derakhshan (2022) further state that assessment became vital over the past decade, helping teachers choose quality material to improve outcomes in the classroom. Khodadady and Attaran (2023) emphasize linguistic characteristics (e.g., syntax, semantics) and socio-cultural aspects to be quantified to assess cultural appropriateness and teaching value. Checklists, for instance, and interviews provide valuable tools for teachers and researchers alike to assess materials in a structured manner (Litz, 2020; Soori, Kafipour, & Soury, 2021). These results justify the necessity of examination of textbooks like "General English" to establish their suitability for Arak University's multicultural students.

## 2.6. Empirical Studies on Textbook Evaluation

A few studies have been examined more recently in various contexts of EFL, providing a certain level of insight concerning methodologies and findings transferable to this study. Azizifar and Baghelani (2021) experimented with the "Top Notch" series and concluded that the teachers appreciated its layout and organization but identified deficits in cultural relevance and activity variety. Their study used a checklist to quantify teachers' perspectives, and they encountered high satisfaction with visual appeal but concerns with contextual appropriateness. Similarly, Rezaee and Hashemi (2022) critiqued an ESP textbook for Iranian Civil Engineering students and concluded that the students were satisfied with its content and organization but desired more interactive exercises. Their findings confirm the need to evaluate textbooks for both aesthetic and functional characteristics.

Ghorbani (2011) examined the "English Book 1" utilized by Iranian secondary schools, concluding that it lacked sufficient listening and speaking activities with a heavy focus on reading and writing. Such inequality mirrors potential deficiencies with "Active Skills for Reading" through overreliance on reading skills. Khodabakhshi (2023) pilot-tested the "Skyline" series, reporting teacher satisfaction with activities and vocabulary lists but inadequate assessment devices for grading. Yousefi Azarfam and Noordin (2021) also piloted "Active Skills for Reading" in another setting with a checklist to evaluate content and purpose, but without design and layout features. The outcome showed that the textbook was adequate for reading skills but lacked supporting materials like workbooks.

Internationally, Klanawong (2022) investigated reading questions in Thai secondary school textbooks and concluded that them to be adequate in helping students

understand but lack any critical thinking activities. SunHao (2023) evaluated the "New Standard English" textbook and concluded it to be up to date in content, with limited cultural diversity. Both these research works indicate the need to evaluate textbooks on different fronts, including content, activities, and cultural suitability, which informs the current study in ways to evaluate "General English" through checklists and interviews.

In Iran, research on general English coursebooks lags behind ESP textbooks. Ebadi and Naderifarjad (2021) and Atai and Asadi (2022) both focused on ESP materials for medical and engineering students, respectively, and revealed gaps in meeting diverse learner needs. Akbar (2020) and Yousefi Azarfam and Noordin (2021) also investigated general English textbooks like "Active Skills for Reading" but within a limited scope based on checklists alone without interviewing teachers.

## 2.7. Synthesis and Critical Appraisal of Extant Literature and Important Definitions

To set the assessment of the "General English" textbook, written by Manouchehr Jafari Gohar and utilized at Arak University, within the broader context, it is important to describe important terms and critically synthesize existing literature, contrast their results, determine where they fall short, and explain how the choice of theoretical frameworks guided this study. Textbook evaluation is a formal process of establishing the suitability, efficacy, and consistency of learning materials in conjunction with pedagogical targets and learning requirements, typically by means such as checklists and interviews (Tomlinson, 2023; Hutchinson & Waters, 2022). General English is language instruction to acquire extensive communicative competence in reading, writing, listening, and speaking by learners without specific professional or academic purposes, as opposed to ESP, which specializes' language training in specific areas like engineering or medicine (Hutchinson & Waters, 2022). For this study, "General English" is the formal title of Manouchehr Jafari Gohar's book as a reading-based text for English-Persian Translation majors and a fundamental coursebook for Practical Chemistry, Civil Engineering, and Mechanics majors at Arak University, differentiating from typical English courses. A critical synthesis of previous research shows consistency and applicability to this evaluation. Azizifar and Baghelani (2021) evaluation of the "Top Notch" series found high approval from teachers of its visual appeal but specified cultural irrelevance as an area of weakness that was evident in SunHao's (2023) criticism of "New Standard English," lauding contemporary

content but criticizing limited cultural diversity. Similarly, Yousefi Azarfam and Noordin's (2014) study on "Active Skills for Reading" highlighted its efficacy for reading skills but identified gaps in supplementary materials, paralleling Ghorbani's (2011) findings on "*English Book 1*," which emphasized reading and writing over listening and speaking. In contrast, Rezaee and Hashemi's (2022) ESP textbook evaluation for Civil Engineering students in Iran reported satisfaction with content but a need for interactive activities, while Khodabakhshi's (2023) assessment of the "*Skyline*" series noted inadequate evaluation tools despite robust activities. These highlight the importance of evaluating textbooks on a number of areas—design, content, activities, and cultural appropriateness—but have a tendency to ground themselves on either ESP or general English backgrounds without blending both perspectives. This research addresses this gap by evaluating a general English textbook used across a range of disciplines at Arak University using both student and teacher feedback through a mixed-methods approach. The reliance on checklists employed in previous studies, e.g., Yousefi Azarfam and Noordin (2014) and Azizifar and Baghelani (2021), highlights their relevance but also a drawback: the absence of qualitative methods like interviews to acquire detailed teacher insights. Ebadi and Naderifarjad (2021) and Atai and Asadi (2022) emphasize ESP medical and engineering courses for Iranian students, demonstrating a research deficit in general English textbook assessments, especially in multilingual contexts such as Arak University. Klanawong's (2022) investigation of Thai high school texts identified appropriate comprehension support but lacking critical thinking exercises, a finding of interest with this study's emphasis on reading skill acquisition. By consolidating these findings, this study concludes that there is a need for comprehensive evaluations that balance quantitative and qualitative data in determining both aesthetic and functional qualities, referencing cultural and disciplinary diversity. The theoretical models of McDonough and Shaw (2013) and Ellis (2022) guided this study's design, data gathering, and analysis directly. McDonough and Shaw's (2013) external, internal, and overall, three-phase model informed the development of the 40-item checklist, which explored superficial characteristics (e.g., cover, font), depth of material (e.g., language ability, activities), and overall practicability (e.g., learner need alignment). It ensured an integrated assessment, addressing the limitations of works like Yousefi Azarfam and Noordin (2014), where design aspects were overlooked. Ellis' (2022) predictive, in-use, and retrospective evaluation categories informed the study of in-use testing (via student checklists) and retrospective

knowledge (via teacher interviews) to capture a dynamic form of assessing the effectiveness of the textbook in real classroom environments. The checklist was based on Abdel Wahab (2013), Ansary and Babaii (2002), Rahimy (2007), and Tok (2010), merging their design, content, and skills standards to create a well-constructed instrument (Cronbach's Alpha = 0.921). Semi-structured interviews, considering Litz's (2020) support for qualitative approaches, complemented the checklist by uncovering teachers' contextual adaptations, providing a robust mixed-methods design congruent with Arak University's diverse EFL context. This study evaluates the "*General English*" textbook used at Arak University, addressing the following research questions:

**RQ1.** To what extent is "*General English*" effective regarding its general appearance and design?

**RQ2.** To what extent is "*General English*" effective regarding its objectives and supplementary materials?

**RQ3.** To what extent is "*General English*" effective regarding its language content?

**RQ4.** To what extent is "*General English*" effective regarding its activities?

**RQ5.** To what extent is "*General English*" effective regarding its presentation of language skills?

### 3. Method

#### 3.1. Design

To achieve this purpose, the researcher employed a survey descriptive method using a checklist and semi-structured interviews. The checklist was completed by teachers and students, and the teachers were interviewed for more information on the efficacy of the "*General English*" textbook. The researcher collected original data directly, so the type of data is primary. The research approach was a mixed-methods approach.

#### 3.2. Materials

In this research, the "*General English*" is the teaching material that was evaluated. published by Payame Noor University Press, and used as a reading resource and general English coursebook at Arak University, 2025. This textbook is being taught in B. A class at Arak University is a reading textbook for English Translation students and offered as a General English textbook for Practical Chemistry, Civil Engineering, and Mechanics students. Manouchehr Jafari Gohar, one of the reading specialists, is the writer of this book. Furthermore, this textbook aims to help learners become more independent, confident, and active readers. It uses real reading passages to teach reading comprehension skills and the necessary vocabulary. The book consists of 13 chapters.

### 3.3. Participants

In this study, the researcher purposively selected four classes at Arak University—English-Persian Translation, Civil Engineering, Mechanics, and Practical Chemistry—because the "*General English*" textbook, authored by Manouchehr Jafari Gohar, is used as a core reading resource for English-Persian Translation

students and as a general English coursebook for the other disciplines, ensuring a diverse sample to evaluate its suitability across varied academic contexts. A total of 84 first-semester undergraduate students and their four instructors participated in the study. The demographic distribution of the student participants across the four disciplines is presented in [Table 1](#).

**Table 1.** The Demographic Information of the Participants

Participant Group	Number	Description	Institution	Gender	Fields of Study
Students	84	Undergraduate students enrolled in four classes, approximately 20 per class	Arak University, Iran	Male and Female	English-Persian Translation, Mechanics, Practical Chemistry, Civil Engineering
Teachers	4	Teachers are responsible for teaching the " <i>General English</i> " textbook	Arak University, Iran	Not specified	

### 3.4. Instruments

The instruments included a 40-item researcher-made checklist, developed by synthesizing and adapting evaluation criteria from Abdel Wahab (2013), Ansary and Babaii (2002), Rahimy (2007), and Tok (2010), with approximately 120 initial questions reduced to 40 by eliminating duplicates and irrelevant items, pre-tested for reliability (Cronbach's Alpha = 0.921) using SPSS 26 and validated by three TEFL experts, alongside one semi-structured interview designed to gather in-depth teacher perspectives on the "*General English*" textbook's efficacy. The researcher used an interview with the teachers and a checklist, which consisted of forty questions distributed among students. For developing a good checklist, the researcher used the mentioned checklist. These checklists were used as an evaluation criterion in several projects (Ghorbani, 2011; Yousefi Azarfam & Noordin, 2014) in this area. Therefore, they proved to be valid and reliable checklists for this purpose. The number of questions from these articles was about 120. Almost 40 questions were repeated, so they were deleted. Moreover, 18 questions were not related. They were related to teaching methods, being student-centered, whether the textbook encourages an inductive approach to learning, and whether activities can work well with methodologies in ELT. Therefore, the irrelevant items were deleted. The researcher changed them and selected the best wording for questions in the new checklist. The number of questions in the checklist was reduced to forty items, and the researcher did his best to arrange the questions to be clear for students. One of the questions was related to writing skills, but the textbook doesn't include writing

skills, so that question was deleted. At last, the final version of the checklist was set up with forty questions. The items of the checklist are included in five sections: 1. General Appearance and Design (7 items); 2. Objectives and Supplementary Materials (6 items); 3. Subject and Content (8 items); 4. Activities (5 items), and 5. Language Skills (14 items).

After that, it was translated into Persian by the researcher. It was done to make it easy for students to respond without any problem. In the end, the reliability of the checklist was checked. In other words, the reliability of the checklist was obtained with Cronbach's Alpha by SPSS 26 Software. The rate of Cronbach's Alpha was 0.921, which indicated that the items of the checklist are acceptable. For the validity of the questionnaire, the researcher asked three experts in TEFL to check the validity of the questionnaire.

### 3.5. Data Collection Procedure

Data collection was done in four stages. The first stage was the selection of materials for evaluation, the "*General English*" textbook. The second stage was finding an institution or university in which the textbook is being used. In this study, the researcher selected Arak University because this textbook is being taught in four classes of Arak University as a reading textbook for English Translation students and offered as a general English textbook for Practical Chemistry, Civil Engineering, and Mechanics students. In the third stage, the researcher prepared and administered the checklist for students and some open-ended questions for an interview with the teachers. In the next stage, the researcher talked to the four teachers who were teaching

the textbook for the specified day and time of distributing the checklists among the students. After that, the researcher distributed the sheets among the students in each of the four classes separately at a special time.

For performing the data collection of the research, first of all, the researcher provided and validated the checklist for the evaluation of the textbook. Then, question sheets were prepared for 84 students. In this process, the researcher aimed to distribute the 84 checklists in all four classes with the help of their teacher among the students. Before students answered the questions, the researcher explained briefly about the checklist and how they should answer, and told them that if there was an ambiguity in the questions, they could ask. At least 20 minutes were given to them to answer 40 questions. At the top of each sheet, the students were asked to write their gender, field of study, and their ID numbers because it was needed for data analysis.

Another section of data collection, which is qualitative, was an interview conducted with the teachers who were teaching this book to students. The interview was done by mobile with WhatsApp. The researcher sent the developed questions to the teachers. The researcher sent his questions, and the teachers replied to the questions with a voice message. For the comfort of data gathering without confusion and misinterpretation, the researcher interviewed the teachers in Persian since Persian was their native language, because the teachers could easily communicate their ideas and recommendations in Persian. The semi-structured interviews with the four teachers were conducted asynchronously using WhatsApp voice messages. This method was selected for its practicality and accessibility, as it allowed the participating teachers, who had busy schedules, to respond at their convenience, thereby facilitating their participation in the study. Furthermore, using their native language (Persian) in a familiar digital medium aimed to create a comfortable environment for expressing their views openly.

However, it is important to acknowledge the methodological limitations of this approach. The asynchronous nature of voice messages prevented immediate interactive probing and follow-up questions, which are hallmarks of face-to-face or synchronous interviews. This potentially limited the depth and nuance of the responses, as teachers could not be prompted to elaborate on initial points in real-time. To mitigate this, the interview questions were designed to be open-ended and probing, encouraging detailed responses. Additionally, the member-checking technique (described in Section 3.6) was employed to enhance the credibility of the interpreted data.

At the beginning of the interview, the researcher invited the teachers to introduce themselves and briefly tell their

teaching experiences in order to create an informal atmosphere between the interviewer and interviewee. The teachers were asked a series of English questions related to the quality of the textbook, activities, and the weak and strong points of the textbook. Besides, they were asked to suggest any recommendations for the improvement of this book. It took about ten days for the questions to be answered and then sent by vice message via WhatsApp. After that, their interview responses were transcribed and rendered into English for the final report.

### 3.6. Data Analysis

In analyzing the data and for the statements in the “*General English*”, a Likert-type equal-range and five sections were used. The statements were labeled as: 1- strongly disagree, 2- disagree, 3- neutral, 4- agree, 5- strongly agree. The data was analyzed by using SPSS. V. 26. The analysis of data was calculated with SPSS software. Content analysis was used to find further answers and information about the main research questions. After teachers responded to seven questions, they were transcribed. In this way, the researcher gathered teachers’ answers and organized them. After transcribing the answers, the member checking technique was applied to explore the credibility of the results. In this way, the responses were returned to the four teachers, and they were checked by the teachers who were interviewed to confirm their authenticity. In this phase, the researcher used a deductive approach because the researcher aimed to find the benefits and shortcomings of the book. After transcribing the responses, the researcher categorized answers of each question into weaknesses and strengths of the content, activities, language skills, and layout and design. After that, the strengths and weaknesses from the teachers’ perspectives were identified.

## 4. Results

The purpose of the evaluation was the “*General English*” textbook that is being taught at Arak University. In the following section, the results and their comparison and contrast with previous studies are presented and explained in detail.

### 4.1. Research Question One (General Appearance and Design)

The first research question was about the general appearance and design of the “*General English*” textbook. The findings of this part are illustrated in [Table 2](#). The last question in this category was “visuals are attractive for the students”. Among the 84 students, only 16 participants (19.1%) disagreed with this statement. In addition, around 35.7% of participants agreed, and

45.2% of them chose the average alternative. The mean of this question was 3.23, and the standard deviation was 0.986. The mean score of this question (3.23) showed that almost half of the students were satisfied with the visual parts of the textbook. In this regard, in the

interview with teachers, it was found that the textbook indeed had a good and effective use of pictures and titles that could lead the learner to a better performance while skimming different parts of the text. Moreover, two teachers believed that the pictures used in the textbook.

**Table 2.** Descriptive Statistics for General Appearance and Design

No.	Statements		Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree	Mean	SD
1	The outside cover is informative and attractive.	F	1	5	38	30	10	3.51	0.829
		%	1.2	6	45.2	35.7	11.9	-----	-----
2	The font size and type are appropriate.	F	1	6	8	46	23	4	0.878
		%	1.2	7.1	9.5	54.8	27.4	-----	-----
3	The textbook has enough pictures to make it real.	F	3	4	24	39	14	3.68	0.933
		%	3.6	4.8	28.6	46.4	16.7	-----	-----
4	The textbook has a complete table of contents.	F	3	11	30	30	10	3.39	0.982
		%	3.6	13.1	35.7	35.7	11.9	-----	-----
5	Every unit and lesson has an appropriate title.	F	1	4	20	41	18	3.85	0.857
		%	1.2	4.8	23.8	48.8	21.4	-----	-----
6	There are adequate review sections and exercises.	F	2	10	19	35	18	3.68	1.02
		%	2.4	11.9	22.6	41.7	22.4	-----	-----
7	The visuals are attractive to the students.	F	4	12	38	21	9	3.23	0.986
		%	4.8	14.3	45.2	25	10.7	-----	-----

In other words, students could guess the topic of the lesson through the pictures that were in the lesson. The quantitative data on the attractiveness of visuals (mean=3.23) received a moderately positive score. The teacher interviews help to clarify this moderate rating; while they confirmed the pictures were relevant, one teacher noted, *'The pictures are black and white and somewhat dated, which might lessen their appeal for younger students, but they are still effective for predicting the topic.'* This suggests that the functionality of the visuals is recognized, but their aesthetic appeal could be modernized to increase student engagement. Regarding the seven questions of the general appearance of the textbook, the overall attitudes of students were greatly positive about their textbook. Thus, the textbook was considered appropriate in this case.

#### 4.2 Research Question Two (Objectives and Supplementary Materials)

To evaluate the appropriateness of the textbooks about the question based on the specified objectives mentioned in this book, six items were considered in the checklist

of the current study. The results are presented in [Table 3](#). This Table indicates that the majority of the participants (53.6%) believed that the book fulfils the objectives of a general English course at Arak University, while others (17.8%) disagreed with the statement. It also revealed that 12 participants (14.3%) strongly agreed that the objectives of a general English course fulfil the students' needs as outlined in the textbook. With regard to the second issue (The objectives are related to the learners' needs and interests), in this category, the participants reported that around 34.5% of the students agreed with the statement. Moreover, 47.6% of them chose the average alternative. Besides, 15 participants (17.9 %) believed that the objectives were irrelevant to the learners' needs and interests. As [Table 3](#) illustrates, 36.9% of the students supported the statement that the objectives were specified explicitly in the textbook. Only 10 participants (11.9%) disagreed with the statement. Besides, it showed that the majority of students (47.6%) either agreed or strongly agreed with the issue that objectives were specified explicitly in the textbook.

**Table 3.** Descriptive Statistics for Objectives and Supplementary Materials

No.	Statements		Strongly disagree	Disagree	Average	Agree	Strongly agree	Mean	SD
8.	The textbook fulfils the objectives of a general English course.	F	6	9	24	33	12	3.43	1.09
		%	7.1	10.7	28.6	39.3	14.3	-----	-----
9.	The objectives are related to the learners' needs and interests.	F	3	12	40	22	7	3.21	0.919
		%	3.6	14.3	47.6	26.2	8.3	-----	-----
10.	The objectives are specified explicitly in the textbook.	F	2	10	32	31	9	3.42	0.921
		%	2.4	11.9	38.1	36.9	10.7	-----	-----
11.	The textbook is supported efficiently by audio materials.	F	15	28	25	9	7	2.58	1.153
		%	17.9	33.3	29.8	10.7	8.3	-----	-----
12.	The workbook is available to give extra exercise.	F	22	26	19	13	4	2.42	1.174
		%	26.2	31	22.6	15.5	4.8	-----	-----
13.	The activities used allow for various class activities.	F	1	8	34	27	14	3.54	0.924
		%	1.2	9.5	40.5	32.1	16.7	-----	-----

Moreover, this Table illustrates that 51.2% of the participants disagreed with the statement that the textbook was supported by audio materials, while 15.5% agreed with the availability of a workbook to give extra exercise. Furthermore, around 22% of students chose average, and the mean score of this question was 2.42. According to the information in the Table, 48.8% of learners agreed or strongly agreed with the statement that the activities allowed various class activities. However, among the 84 participants, only one of them strongly disagreed, while 34 (40.5%) of the students selected the average point of this question. This indicated that the majority of participants supposed that the activities used allowed various class activities. Furthermore, the teachers' opinions about this question were that the book offered a total coverage of the language, such as vocabulary skills, reading skills, vocabulary comprehension, etc. The complementary audio CD that was provided with the book would help the learners with the pronunciation of difficult words and provide a better listening experience. Three teachers had no idea about this statement, because they had not used the supplementary materials in their classrooms. As maintained by the results of this factor (objectives & supplementary materials), it was revealed that there was a general agreement that the textbook clearly outlined and reached its objectives. The low score for audio materials (mean=2.58) starkly contrasts with the high score for clearly specified objectives (mean=3.42). The teacher interviews provide critical context: three

teachers admitted '*they had not used the supplementary materials.*' This indicates that the weakness may not only lie in the materials themselves but also in a lack of integration guidance or awareness, suggesting that teacher training or clearer instructions within the textbook could enhance the utilization of these resources.

### 4.3. Research Question Three (Language Content)

The third research question was about the language content of the "*General English*" textbook. Another central point that needs to be considered in evaluating a textbook is language content. This category contained eight items, and the results of this part are indicated in [Table 4](#). This Table revealed an almost complete agreement with the statement that the book is up to date. About 73.8% of the participants agreed. The mean score of this item turned out to be 4.01. According to the above table, participants reported a different view on the issue that the textbook covered a variety of topics from different fields. Over 60% of students believed that there were different topics in the book, and only 10.7% didn't agree. Regarding the presence of fun elements in the textbook, the mean score of 3.29 suggests a neutral to moderately positive perception of the fun elements in the textbook, indicating that this aspect was not a standout feature for students. About one fourth of the participants didn't support the statement (23.8% disagreed and 1.2% strongly disagreed). In contrast, 23.8% of them agreed,

and 15.5% strongly agreed that there were fun elements in the book. Besides, the opinion of 30 students (35.7%) was balanced (neither agree nor disagree), and the mean of this question was about 3.29. The results of the fourth item regarding interesting content implied that the majority of the participants had positive attitudes, and 14 participants disagreed (16.7%) with this item. The perception of 38.1% of students about this statement was average. According to the findings of the fifth statement, only 11 participants (13.1%) disagreed with this question, and the majority of them (69.1%) agreed. Moreover, 17.9% of students were not sure whether there were new words in reading passages. The mean score of this statement was 3.82. Another statement was about the presentation of different cultures. Around

19.1% of participants disagreed, 30 of them (35.7%) averaged, and 38 (45.2%) agreed with this statement. The mean score of this question was 3.39, and it proved that the content of the textbook presented different cultures. With regard to question 20, 44% of the participants agreed and 21.5% disagreed with this statement that the content discusses famous characters from different countries. Besides, the opinion of 29 students (34.5%) was average about this question. The mean score of this statement was 3.38 with a standard deviation of 1.129. It is implied that the content of the textbook discusses famous characters from different countries. The last item of this category was about the presentation of different traditions and customs in the content of the textbook.

**Table 4.** Descriptive Statistics for Language Content

No.	Statements		Strongly disagree	Disagree	Average	Agree	Strongly agree	Mean	SD
14.	The book is up-to-date.	F	1	2	19	35	27	4.01	0.871
		%	1.2	2.4	22.6	41.7	32.1	-----	-----
15.	It covers a variety of topics from different fields.	F	2	7	24	29	22	3.74	1.019
		%	2.4	8.3	28.6	34.5	26.2	-----	-----
16.	The textbook contains fun elements.	F	1	20	30	20	13	3.29	1.036
		%	1.2	23.8	35.7	23.8	15.5	-----	----
17.	The content of the textbook is interesting.	F	1	13	32	20	18	3.49	1.035
		%	1.2	15.5	38.1	23.8	21.4	-----	-----
18.	The reading passages contain several new or difficult words.	F	4	7	15	32	26	3.82	1.11
		%	4.8	8.3	17.9	38.1	31	-----	-----
19.	The content presents different cultures.	F	5	11	30	22	16	3.39	1.12
		%	6	13.1	35.7	26.2	19	-----	-----
20.	The content discusses famous characters from different countries.	F	4	14	29	20	17	3.38	1.129
		%	4.8	16.7	34.5	23.8	20.2	-----	-----
21.	The content displays different traditions and customs.	F	6	15	27	22	14	3.27	1.155
		%	7.1	17.9	32.1	26.2	16.7	-----	-----

With a mean score of 3.27, the presentation of different traditions and customs was viewed neutrally, with a slight lean towards agreement. The mixed responses (42.9% agreed, 25% disagreed) suggest this feature was not consistently impactful. Confirming these quantitative results, in the interview, teachers believed that in the textbook, there were subjects that students were familiar with, such as traditions, cultures, and foods. In addition, teachers were convinced this issue made the lessons more comprehensible, and students learned English with interest. The content of the textbook was interesting. Besides, the teachers stated that texts were smartly chosen from a wide variety of subjects, which encompassed different types of vocabulary. This will

help the learners to maintain a rich vocabulary that will come in handy in different everyday situations. In general, the results of this section indicated the relative satisfaction of students and teachers with the content of the textbook.

#### 4.4 Research Question Four (Activities)

The fourth research question of the thesis was about the activities covered in the textbook. In other words, the results of this section indicated the extent to which the “*General English*” textbook was effective regarding its activities. This category included five items, and the results of this part are presented in [Table 5](#). This Table indicates that more than half of the participants (57.02%)

believed that the exercises had clear instructions, while others (14.3%) disagreed, and almost a third (28.6%) of the students chose the option average. It also revealed

that 48 participants strongly agreed and agreed with the point that exercises had clear instructions.

**Table 5.** Descriptive Statistics for Activities

No.	Statements		Strongly disagree	Disagree	Average	Agree	Strongly agree	Mean	SD
22.	The exercises have clear instructions.	F	4	8	24	31	17	3.58	1.066
		%	4.8	9.5	28.6	36.9	20.12	-----	-----
23.	The exercises are adequate.	F	4	12	21	37	10	3.44	1.033
		%	4.8	14.3	25	44	11.9	-----	-----
24.	The exercises move from simple to complex.	F	6	16	19	31	12	3.32	1.153
		%	7.1	19	22.6	36.9	14.3	-----	-----
25.	The exercises incorporate individual, pair, and group work.	F	8	7	13	35	21	3.64	1.218
		%	9.5	8.3	15.5	41.7	25	-----	-----
26.	The textbook provides models for final exams.	F	17	11	33	19	4	2.79	1.152
		%	20.2	13.1	39.3	26.6	4.8	-----	-----

With regard to the second issue in this category, it was reported that around 56% of the participants agreed with this item, and a quarter of them chose the average alternative. Besides, 12 participants (14.3%) disagreed, and only 4 of them strongly disagreed with this question. Moreover, the mean of this item was 3.44, and its standard deviation was 1.033. Based on the results, it was inferred that the textbook exercises, to a large extent, were adequate and interesting.

As Table 5 illustrates, just over half (51.2%) of the students supported the statement that the exercises moved from simple to complex in the textbook. Only 22 participants (26.1%) disagreed with the statement. It was shown that the majority of students agreed with this statement. Moreover, this Table illustrates that 17.8% of the participants disagreed with the statement that the exercises incorporated individual, pair, and group work, while 66.7% agreed with the statement.

As observed, 13 students (15.5%) made an average, and only 8 students (9.5%) strongly disagreed with this item. The mean score and standard deviation of this question were 3.64 and 1.218, respectively. *The high score for activities incorporating individual, pair, and group work (mean=3.64) was elaborated on by teachers, who highlighted the pedagogical value of this variety. One teacher explained, 'The flexibility allows me to adjust the interaction based on the class dynamic. For quieter classes, we start individually, but the pair work questions are designed to genuinely force communication, which builds confidence.' This shows that the textbook's activity design supports differentiated instruction and communicative language teaching principles.*

The opinions of students about the last statement were mentioned. As observed, almost 31.4% of the

participants were pleased with the statement that the textbook provides models for the final exam. In addition, among the 84 participants, around 33.3% of the students disagreed with this question. On the other side, 33 students (39.3%) selected the average point of this question, and the mean score of this item was 2.79. Generally, this item indicated that the textbook couldn't provide good models for the final exam based on students' perceptions.

In the interview with teachers, it was found that the textbook included varied activities such as multiple-choice and open-ended questions. These activities were designed in a way that teachers could ask students to do them in pair work, group work, or individually. The activities that were selected for this book tend to improve learners' communicative skills. As the results showed, there was a general agreement that the textbook provided effective and varied activities.

#### 4.5 Research Question Five (Language Skills)

This section discusses the extent to which "General English" was successful in developing all four skills of students to communicate in the target language. This category included fourteen items, the results of which are presented in Table 6. As displayed in this Table, out of 84 participants, 44 participants agreed, and only 8 respondents disagreed with question 27. On the inclusion of varied and interesting reading texts, the results indicated that about 52.4% of the students supported the sentence, while some 9.6% did not. Another item was whether the content helps students develop all the reading skills or not. The results showed that the majority of the participants (over 67.9%) believed that the content helped students in the development of

reading skills. Almost 25% of students chose average, and only 7.2% of them disagreed with this statement. Concerning the issue of whether many of the reading passages were up-to-date or not, results showed that a high percentage (66.7%) of the respondents supported the statement. Meanwhile, only 9.5% were not satisfied with this item.

The results of the 30<sup>th</sup> item indicated that over 42.9% of the participants believed that the length of the reading texts in the book was appropriate. But still 17 participants (20.2%) disagreed with the statement. It was also revealed that less than half of the respondents supported that the difficulty level of the reading passage was appropriate. In other words, 30.9% of the answers were disagree, and 25% of them saw this aspect as average. As regards the textbook using real-world reading materials or not, 6% of them disagreed, and 4.8% strongly disagreed. On the other hand, about 66.7% of students agreed (agree & strongly agree) with the statement. The mean was 3.8, and the standard deviation was 1.073.

As the Table reports, over 46% of the participants were happy with the statement that the number of new words in each text is appropriate to the students' level, and 29.7% of them disagreed. About the statement that new words are used in sentences and texts with a mean of 4.17, almost 84.5% of the students agreed with the statement. On the other hand, 5 participants (6%) didn't agree with the said statement. About another statement, although participants expressed a partial agreement with the repetition of words several times in the unit, 15.5% of them believed that the words weren't repeated several times in the unit. Besides, the mean score of this item was 3.39.

Considering the item that words were accompanied by their phonetic transcription in English, about 44% of the students agreed, 8.3% strongly agreed, 19% average, and 28% of participants disagreed with the statement. The mean score was 3.26 at a standard deviation of 1.088, which indicated that words were accompanied by their phonetic transcription in English. Next, 34.5% of the students responded that they agreed, and about 45% of them agreed with the statement that grammar is presented in the text. In contrast, 15.5% disagreed, and only 7.1% of them strongly disagreed with this statement. Moreover, the mean score of this question was 3.24. Regarding the interest of grammar for students, only 15% of participants disagreed with this statement. Furthermore, 40% of the participants agreed, and approximately 36% of the participants selected the average alternative. The mean score of 3.20 indicates a largely neutral student perception regarding how interesting the grammar is presented. This finding

suggests that the grammar components neither significantly engaged nor disengaged the average student.

Another question was whether the difficulty of grammar is appropriate for the students' level or not. Among the 84 students, only 6 (7.1%) strongly disagreed, and 14 (16.7%) disagreed with this statement. Besides, 50% of participants were pleased with this item, and 26.2% of them were in a neutral position. The mean of this question was 3.3, and the standard deviation was 1.095. It could be revealed that half of the students believed that the difficulty of the grammar was based on the students' level. The last statement of this category was that grammar lessons are often taken from the reading passages or not. 47.6% of participants agreed (agree & strongly agree), 35.7% made on average, and only 16.7% of them disagreed (disagree & strongly disagree) with this statement. Furthermore, in this question, the mean score was 3.37. According to the results of the interview, teachers believed that although the textbook focused on the reading skills and vocabulary more than other skills, the book covered different parts of language skills. For instance, the reading comprehension part challenges learners' reading skills by providing questions related to the text.

The critical thinking part targets learners' writing skills. Besides, with the help of vocabulary skills, learners would get familiar with different parts of words. Besides, teachers believed that grammar lessons were taken from the reading passages, and the difficulty of the grammar was appropriate to the students' level. Furthermore, they believed that all skills could be considered by this book if teachers knew how they use creativity in the process of teaching. Generally, the results of this statement indicated that teachers and students were satisfied with the coverage of language skills, especially with the reading skills and vocabulary in the textbook. In this part, the total means and standard deviations of categories were calculated. Table 7 shows the mean and standard deviation for each of the main parts of the checklist. The results indicated that the majority of mean scores fell above the neutral point (3.0) on the Likert scale.

Categorizing responses conservatively, scores above 3.5 can be considered positively viewed, while scores between 3.0 and 3.5 reflect neutral or moderately positive perceptions. This means that positive responses were given for over 82% of the items in the study. The Table also showed that the group of statements, general and appearance design, had the greatest mean, while the objectives and supplementary materials category had the lowest mean.

**Table 6.** Descriptive Statistics for Language Skills

No.	Statements		Strongly disagree	Disagree	Average	Agree	Strongly agree	Mean	SD
27	There is a range of varied and interesting reading texts.	F	3	5	32	26	18	3.61	1.006
		%	3.6	6	38.1	31	21.4	-----	-----
28	The content helps students develop all the reading skills.	F	2	4	21	32	25	3.88	0.974
		%	2.4	4.8	25	38.1	29.8	-----	-----
29	Many of the reading passages are up-to-date.	F	2	6	20	33	23	3.82	0.996
		%	2.4	7.1	28.3	39.3	27.4	-----	-----
30	The length of the reading texts is appropriate.	F	9	8	31	22	14	3.29	1.178
		%	10.7	9.5	36.9	26.2	16.7	-----	-----
31	The difficulty level of the reading passage is appropriate.	F	8	18	21	26	11	3.17	1.191
		%	9.5	21.4	25	31	13.1	-----	-----
32	The textbook uses real world reading materials.	F	4	5	19	32	24	3.8	1.073
		%	4.8	6	22.6	38.1	28.6	-----	-----
33	The number of new words in each text is appropriate to the students' level.	F	9	16	20	21	18	3.27	1.293
		%	10.7	19	23.8	25	21.4	-----	-----
34	New words are used in sentences and texts.	F	1	4	8	38	33	4.17	8.76
		%	1.2	4.8	9.5	45.2	39.3	-----	-----
35	Words are repeated several times in the unit.	F	4	9	32	23	16	3.45	1.069
		%	4.8	10.7	38.1	27.4	19	-----	-----
36	Words are accompanied with their phonetic transcription in English.	F	5	19	16	37	7	3.26	1.088
		%	6	22.6	19	44	8.3	-----	-----
37	The grammar is presented in the text.	F	6	13	29	27	9	3.24	1.071
		%	7.1	15.5	34.5	32	10.7	-----	-----
38	The grammar is interesting for the students.	F	6	15	30	22	11	3.2	1.106
		%	7.1	17.9	35.7	26.2	13.1	-----	-----
39	The grammar difficulty is appropriate to the students' level.	F	6	14	22	33	9	3.3	1.095
		%	7.1	16.7	26.2	39.3	10.7	-----	-----
40	Grammar lessons are often taken from the reading passages.	F	4	10	30	31	9	3.37	0.991
		%	4.8	11.9	35.7	36.9	10.7	-----	-----

**Table 7.** Means and Standard Deviations of the Five Categories of Evaluative Criteria

No.	Main Categories	Numbers	Means	Maximum mean	Minimum mean	Standard Deviation
1	General Appearance and Design	84	3.62	4	3.23	0.538
2	Objectives and Supplementary Materials	84	3.10	3.54	2.42	0.587
3	Language Content	84	3.55	4.01	3.27	0.68
4	Activities	84	3.35	3.64	2.79	0.728
5	Language Skills	84	3.49	4.17	3.17	0.607

## 5. Discussion

The evaluation of the "General English" textbook at Arak University provides insightful information about its pedagogical value and suitability for EFL students, particularly regarding the development of reading competencies and as a general English coursebook.

### 5.1 General Appearance and Design

The results reveal that the "General English" textbook also takes the lead in terms of general appearance and design, with a mean value of 3.62 on seven checklist items, which is the highest across all categories (Table 7). The students found the cover informative and

interesting (mean = 3.51), font size appropriate (mean = 4.00), and graphics engaging (mean = 3.23). The instructors verified the results, stating that the pictures were relevant to lesson content and helped students skim and predict topics. These findings are corroborated by Azizifar and Baghelani (2021), who found that visual designs in the "Top Notch" series enhanced the teacher's satisfaction. Similarly, Cunningsworth (1995) observes that attractive design and clear layout help to engage students' interest, sentiments echoed by 70.2% of students who agreed that unit titles were okay (Table 2). However, the lower score for the table of contents (mean = 3.39) reveals areas for improvement in navigation ease, considering that a comprehensive table of contents is critical to usability (Richards, 2022). This minor imperfection does not reduce the overall positive view of the design of the textbook that can serve to support its possible effectiveness as an inspiring source for EFL learners.

## 5.2 Objectives and Supplementary Materials

Alignment with the objectives of a general English course of the textbook was relatively positively received, with a mean rating of 3.10 (Table 7). Students agreed that the goals were well specified (mean = 3.42) and relevant to their needs (mean = 3.21), and 53.6% admitted that the textbook covered typical English course objectives (Table 3). Teachers noted that the textbook addressed language skills comprehensively, particularly vocabulary and reading, supporting Hutchinson and Waters (2022) argument that clear objectives allow for pedagogical alignment. However, the lack of sufficient supplementary materials, particularly audio materials (mean = 2.58) and workbooks (mean = 2.42), was a significant drawback. This is in accordance with Rezaee and Hashemi (2022), who identified learner dissatisfaction with insufficient interactive supplementary materials in an ESP textbook. Poor audio support, reinforced by 51.2% of the students disagreeing that it is sufficient, may discourage the acquisition of pronunciation and listening skills, vital facets of EFL studies (Richards & Renandya, 2022). Teachers' lack of interest in ancillary materials also accentuates the need for greater integration, as suggested by Gholami, Noordin, and Rafik-Galea (2022), to ensure greater learner autonomy and engagement.

## 5.3 Language Content

The "General English" textbook's language content was very recommended, with a mean rating of 3.55 (Table 7). The students did not find the content to be out of date (mean = 4.01), to cover many topics (mean = 3.74) or to have new vocabulary (mean = 3.82).

The teachers liked the application of common topics like traditions and cultures, making the content engaging and easy to comprehend, in line with Tok's (2010) statement that topic relevance increases learner motivation. Presentation of different cultures (mean = 3.39) and famous figures (mean = 3.38) by the textbook was reasonably good, while 19.1% of the students felt that cultural representation should be improved (Table 4). This is in line with SunHao's (2023) complaint for the absence of cultural diversity in the "New Standard English" textbook, where cultural inclusivity would benefit more applicability to diverse learners at Arak University.

The extremely high mean score on contextual vocabulary application (mean = 4.17) is an indicator of successful vocabulary instruction, in concurrence with Besharati and Mazdayasna (2023), who emphasize the usability of contextualized vocabulary in learner learning. The neutral rating for fun elements (mean = 3.29) clearly indicates that this is an area for improvement, as the content failed to consistently engage students on this dimension, as proposed by Kanina (2021).

## 5.4 Activities

In general, textbook activities were found to be effective with a mean of 3.35 (Table 7). Students appreciated having well-defined directions (mean = 3.58) and step-by-step progression from easy to difficult activities (mean = 3.32), as 66.7% agreed that activities made individual, pair, and group work easier (Table 5). Teachers confirmed that the varied activities, including multiple-choice and open-ended questions, fostered communicative skills, aligning with Ur's (2023) emphasis on diverse tasks to enhance interaction. However, the textbook's failure to provide models for final exams (mean = 2.79) was a notable weakness, with 33.3% of students expressing dissatisfaction. This finding resonates with Khodabakhshi's (2023) evaluation of the "Skyline" series, which noted inadequate assessment tools. Lack of test-oriented activities might limit the applicability of the textbook to students' test preparation for formal exams, a salient characteristic of EFL curricula (Richards, 2022). Enhancing diversity in activities and test consistency would fill this gap, as theorized by Soori, Kafipour, and Soury (2021).

## 5.5 Language Skills

The focus of the textbook on language skills, particularly reading, was a positive aspect with a mean score of 3.49 (Table 7). Students strongly agreed that the development of reading skills was enhanced (mean = 3.88), followed

by current (mean = 3.82) and real reading materials (mean = 3.80).

Teachers revealed that reading comprehension and critical thinking exercises served well reading and writing skills, supporting Tomlinson's (2023) view that skill-focused materials enhance learner proficiency. Nevertheless, the absence of grammar modules in every unit, as teachers pointed out, and mediocre marks for grammar presentation (mean = 3.24) and interest (mean = 3.20) reflect a deficit in the comprehensive treatment of all four language skills (Table 6). This is in line with the assessment of "English Book 1" by Ghorbani (2011), which reported excessive focus on reading with less attention to the other skills. The neutral scores for reading text difficulty and length (means = 3.17-3.29) highlight student uncertainty about their appropriateness.

This ambiguity signals a need for teachers to carefully assess and potentially adapt these elements to better suit their specific class level, as suggested by Mohammadi and Abdi (2023). Teachers again emphasized that new pedagogies would compensate for these gaps, attesting to Cunningsworth's (1995) belief that quality pedagogy would turn over.

### 5.6 Critical Reflection and Implications

The "*General English*" textbook reveals clear strengths in its organization, content, and reading-focused activities, and is a good textbook for EFL students at Arak University. Its up-to-date content and context-schematized vocabulary suit learner needs, particularly for students of English-Persian Translation and technical subjects like Mechanics and Civil Engineering. But its weaknesses, with poor supplementary material, limited treatment of grammar, and the absence of exam samples, reveal areas in which it might be improved. These findings are consistent with Litz (2020), who is committed to the conduction of comprehensive assessments to identify such deficiencies. The mixed-method approach, employing a reliable checklist (Cronbach's Alpha = 0.921) in combination with interviews from teachers, provides a robust assessment, as opposed to previous studies like Yousefi Azarfam and Noordin (2014), which relied solely on checklists. The cultural relevance of the content, while modest, could be enhanced to better reflect the varied backgrounds of Arak University students, as suggested by Khodadady and Attaran (2023).

The study's findings presume that the textbook works effectively in conjunction with effective pedagogy, since teachers' ability to adapt content offsets its shortcomings. This aligns with Hargreaves' (2020) argument that assessment creates teaching innovation. Future editions of "*General English*" might contain

additional audio content, detailed grammar chapters, and test-based activities to cover these loopholes. Furthermore, the use of the textbook on a diversified range of subjects is self-explanatory regarding its flexibility, yet field-specific adaptations proposed by Atai and Asadi (2022) might render it even more efficient. The contribution of this study delves into the lack of academic research on coursebooks of general English in Iran and offers implications for practice for teachers and curriculum designers in Arak University and other comparable settings.

Furthermore, while the purposive sampling of 84 first-semester students from four distinct majors (English-Persian Translation, Civil Engineering, Practical Chemistry, and Mechanics) provided a focused and relevant sample for evaluating the textbook within its specific context at Arak University, it inherently limits the generalizability of the findings. The sample size, though adequate for a case study, is not representative of all EFL learners in Iran or even across different academic levels within the same institution. The concentration on first-semester students further restricts the applicability of the results to more advanced learners or those in different semesters, who might interact with the material differently. Consequently, the findings of this study should be interpreted as context-specific insights rather than broadly generalizable conclusions. Future research involving larger, more diverse samples across multiple universities and academic years would enhance the external validity of such evaluations.

Overall, the "*General English*" textbook is a good pedagogic textbook with strong design, content, and reading skill merits, but requires more support in supplementary materials and grammar topics to best serve EFL learners' needs. It works best with capable teachers who can adapt its content to diverse classroom contexts. These findings have implications for textbook selection and adaptation plans, which provide a fit in pedagogic purposes and learner expectations in EFL situations.

## 6. Conclusions and Implications

Evaluation of the "*General English*" textbook at Arak University provides an overall image of its teaching value and practicability to EFL learners in different disciplines, including English-Persian Translation, Mechanics, Practical Chemistry, and Civil Engineering. Results, derived from a mixed-methods study with a 40-item checklist (Cronbach's Alpha = 0.921) and semi-structured interviews with teachers, indicate that the textbook is effective in terms of its overall look and layout (mean = 3.62), language content (mean = 3.55), and reading skill development (mean = 3.49). Students and educators appreciated the textbook's visual

attractiveness, up-to-date details, and context-based vocabulary, which are in line with learner demands and encourage motivation, as confirmed by Tomlinson (2023) and Tok (2010). The limitations of ancillary elements (mean = 3.10) by the absence of audio elements and workbooks, and limited grammar input were identified as areas of improvement. The textbook activities were generally satisfactory (mean = 3.35), while the absence of exam models (mean = 2.79) was a notable deficiency. Teachers emphasized that creative pedagogic resources could make up for these deficiencies, supporting Cunningsworth's (1995) argument that good teachers supplement the quality of textbooks by modifying them. Overall, the "*General English*" textbook is an effective resource if supplemented with effective instruction, making it suitable for the environment of Arak University's EFL, although certain changes would make it more useful.

This study has several limitations.

A significant limitation of this study is its restricted external validity, primarily due to the purposive sampling of 84 first-semester students from only four majors at Arak University. While this sampling strategy ensured relevance to the specific context under investigation, it markedly limits the generalizability of the findings to other student populations, institutions, or academic levels. The results are thus most applicable to settings closely resembling the research context and should not be broadly generalized without further validation. The study's focus on first-semester students further limits understanding of how the textbook operates across levels of proficiency or of study years. Second, while the application of a checklist and teacher interviews was robust, it did not include student interviews or classroom observations that could have provided more detailed qualitative information about learning experiences. The use of WhatsApp for the administration of teacher interviews potentially constrained the depth of response because of the asynchronous channel of voice messages. Secondly, the data collection method for the teacher interviews, conducted asynchronously via WhatsApp voice messages, presents a significant limitation. While this approach improved accessibility and participant convenience, it inherently limited the depth of the qualitative data. The absence of a synchronous, interactive environment meant that the researcher could not engage in immediate probing or seek clarifications based on the teachers' initial responses. This lack of real-time interaction potentially resulted in less elaborate answers and may have prevented the exploration of emerging themes that often arise from the dynamic exchange of a conversation. Consequently, the richness and depth of the teachers' insights, particularly on

complex issues of pedagogical adaptation, might not have been fully captured. Future studies would benefit from using synchronous interview methods (e.g., video calls) to facilitate a more in-depth dialogue. Additionally, the checklist, although reliable, was adapted from existing guidelines and may not have captured context-specific needs to the extent at Arak University, for instance, cultural suitability for diverse disciplines. Finally, the study did not record long-term learning outcomes; therefore, it limited conclusions on the textbook's usefulness towards extended language acquisition.

Subsequent research could overcome these constraints to more effectively inform textbook evaluation in the EFL context. Firstly, expanding the sample to more institutions in Iran or other EFL contexts would make findings more transferable. Sampling learners from various study years and levels of proficiency could provide insight into the flexibility of the textbook to the learners' level. Secondly, the use of other data collection methods, i.e., student focus groups or classroom observation, could provide a more complete image of the textbook's effectiveness and how it is incorporated into teaching practices. Third, longitudinal research on the impact of the "*General English*" textbook on the language ability of students in the long term would be evidence of its long-term effectiveness. In addition, future studies can construct a context-specific checklist tailored for Arak University's interdisciplinary setting to ensure that measuring assessments must satisfy unique cultural and academic requirements, as suggested by Khodadady and Attaran (2023). Finally, researching the inclusion of digital complementary materials, such as interactive sound or web-based workbooks, could fill the above-mentioned gaps in complementary materials, in line with current trends in EFL material design (Richards & Renandya, 2022).

#### Authors Contribution

All authors have contributed equally to the development, writing, and final preparation of this manuscript. Each author approved the final version of the paper for submission.

#### Availability of data and materials

The datasets generated and analyzed during this study are not publicly available but can be obtained from the corresponding author upon reasonable request. Access will be granted following a review of the inquiry.

#### Conflict of interests

The authors declare that they have no financial or personal relationships that could be perceived as influencing the research presented in this paper. All authors confirm the absence of any competing interests.

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