



## A Textbook Evaluation of Socio-Cultural Contexts in “Got It Series”

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### **Abstract**

*This study investigated the appropriateness of socio-cultural contexts in Got It Series. To do so, a survey questionnaire was applied to elicit the teachers and supervisors' perceptions towards the Series. The findings revealed that the intercultural content of the Series was understandable and positively evaluated by the participants. However, according to the results of this test, there were significant differences among the means of these categories. The results suggested that among five categories in the questionnaire, the highest mean belonged to cultural presentation. In addition, the lowest mean belonged to aims and achievements. Variance analyzed accompanying with repeated measure ANOVA were used to compare the means. According to the results of this test, there were significant differences among the means of these categories. The results of Bonferroni Post-Hoc suggested that the mean of the aims and achievements was less in comparison to other categories, and there were no significant differences among other categories. The supervisors agreed more with the questions included in category D in comparison to the teachers. Moreover, there were no significant differences between these two groups in other categories.*

**Keyword:** *Evaluation, Got It Series, Socio-Cultural Contexts, Textbooks*

### **1. Introduction**

“International” language is the dominant business language and it has because an essential requirement in an era of world-wide information-sharing and commercial exchange. This role has fallen to English. Today, English language teaching (ELT) is a noticeable profession. In educational contexts, much greater numbers of students are interested in English than other languages. Therefore, language teacher programs all over the world attempt to prepare potential language teachers to be prosperous teachers in all aspects of language teaching (Shakibaei, Shahamat, & Namaziandost, 2019; Asghari, 2011).

In today's world, English functions as the international lingua franca. English is the language for international trade, commerce, communication, and its teaching and learning is a clear and growing need. As a result, it has been suggested that the previous EFL/ESL models be replaced by English as an International Language (EIL) which is the use of English for communication by people of various nations (Smith, 1983; Bahman & Rahimi, 2010). The model claims that it is descriptive, reformative, functional, non-artificial, intervareital, cross-cultural, universal, multicultural, and intercultural (Baxter, 1980; Smith, 1983; Nasri, Namaziandost, & Akbari, 2019; Baleghizadeh & Jamali Motahed, 2010; Namaziandost, & Çakmak, 2020).

It is necessary for Iranian students to be skilled in English to communicate with other people in second and foreign contexts outside Iran. It is most unfortunate that

schools instruction in the Iranian educational system has been successful in providing learners with communication skills they need. A major reason is that locally produced English language textbooks used in Iranian schools cannot meet the expectations of most learners and teachers (Yarmohammadi, 2002; Razmjoo, 2007; Abedi, Namaziandost, & Akbari, 2019; Chao, 2011). On the other hand, according to Razmjoo (2007), while school textbooks are not conducive to CLT implementation, private institute textbooks represent the CLT principles to a great extent.

Textbook is the most important component to many EFL/ESL classrooms and teachers in education. Garinger (2002) suggests that whatever related to textbook selection will affect teachers and students, so it is an essential factor that educators deal with. He also states that "a textbook can serve different purposes for teachers: as a core resource, as a source of supplement material, as an inspiration for classroom activities, even as the curriculum itself." Got It series have become almost the most-frequently-used series for teenagers in most of the institutes in comparison with other EFL course books in Iranian English Institutes. These series are efficient textbooks in a way that they provide teenagers with communication skills and cultural aspects needed to interact with English speakers that they have different cultures and languages (Abedi, Keshmirshekan, & Namaziandost, 2019).

As Richards (2010) asserted, textbooks are key elements in most language programs. In some situations, textbooks serve the basis for much of the language input learners receive and the language practices that occur in the classroom. They may lay the foundations for the content of lessons, the balance of skills taught, and the kinds of language tasks students actively use. In other situations, textbooks may primarily serve to supplement the teachers' instruction. For L2 learners, textbooks provided by teacher. In the case of novice teachers, textbooks may also be utilized as a form of teacher training, that is, they provide ideas on how to plan and teach lessons as well as formats that teachers can use (Hashemifardnia, Namaziandost, & Shafiee, 2018).

Researchers have mentioned that apart from teachers and methods, textbooks are essential to improve English and the abilities of learners to interact in second and foreign contexts (Namaziandost & Nasri, 2019a; Namaziandost & Ahmadi, 2019). Moreover, teachers know that learning is a process they should facilitate learning by appropriate textbooks. Therefore, the purpose of this study is to evaluate the appropriateness of socio-cultural contexts in Got It series, a four-level communicative course for teenagers written by. The reason behind the selection of these book series is that they are widely used in Iranian institutes by teenagers and their evaluation is a great value.

### **1.1. Textbook Evaluation**

Literature on textbook choices and evaluation in an EFL/ESL setting is immense. Azizifar, koosha, Lotfi (2010) examined an evaluation of two series of ELT textbooks used for teaching English in Iranian high school from 1965 to the present. To do so, Tucker's (1975) textbook evaluation model was employed and the findings suggested that one of the main factors for the students' achievement in English is the ELT textbooks. They suggested that in the textbooks, there should be enough opportunity for the learners to practice the language they are learning communicatively.

Material evaluation is defined as "a procedure that involves measuring the value of a set of learning materials. It involves making judgment about the effect of the material on the people using them" (Tomlinson, 2003). It is essential that the evaluation be based on some predetermined principles to achieve greater validity and reliability. Tomlinson (2003), in developing a set of principles, the evaluators' theory of learning and teaching and

second language acquisition research should be considered. As Carter and Nunan (2001) assert, this applied linguistics procedure can be predicative pre-use evaluation, ongoing whilst-use evaluation or retrospective post-use evaluation.

The cultural context has a crucial role since interaction occurs. Cultural knowledge is essential for human interaction and it helps humans to organize their thoughts and behaviors in relation to their setting. Moreover, language and culture are intertwined and they can facilitate learning. Therefore, the learners have to learn the target culture because a language cannot be learned without grasping the cultural context in which the language is applied (Ziafar & Namaziandost, 2019).

Moran (2001) claims, that his Cultural Knowing Framework helps learners develop cultural competence. In this model, four interconnected learning interactions are involved in the cultural experience: (1) knowing about which comprises collecting information and acquiring knowledge about the products, practices, and perspectives of a culture; (2) knowing how refers to gaining the ability to behave in a culturally appropriate manner; (3) knowing why includes developing an understanding of the underlying aspects of a culture which include the perceptions, beliefs, and attitudes about that culture. This process involves analyzing one's cultural experiences and comparing them with the perspectives of the target culture; and (4) knowing oneself is related to understanding how one's own culture influences their beliefs, views, values, and reactions towards their experiences in a new cultural context. Understanding oneself as a cultural being helps learners comprehend, adapt, and integrate into another culture.

In an attempt to evaluate New Interchange which is the mostly used textbooks in ELT institutes of Iran, Iraj (2007) and Zare-Moaayedi (2007), criticize New Interchange because the series do not follow the principles of communicative and task-based approaches as the authors have claimed are the objectives set for them. It has no frequency of metapragmatic information. The distributional pattern of communicative activities were random and without pattern. Unlike communicative activities the distributional pattern of functions not only are random and without purpose, but also they are rule-governed and purposely patterned. It doesn't use learners or even the teachers as a source for its content. Finally suprasentential level as well is ignored for both the expected output and input of the learners.

The results of Aliakbari's study (2006) revealed that the ELT textbooks in Iranian high schools did not prove helpful in developing intercultural competence and cultural understanding. In another study project, Sahragard, Rahimi and Zaremoayyedi (2009) evaluated a series of ELT materials namely, Interchange, using Littlejohn's detailed framework (1998) and concluded that in these textbooks the learners are not the initiators of the tasks. Razmjoo (2007) investigated the extent to which the Iranian high school and private institute textbooks represent the CLT principles. The results of the study revealed that Iranian high school textbooks are not conducive to CLT implementation, whereas private institute textbooks represent the CLT principles to a large extent. The main aim of this study is to evaluate socio-cultural contexts in Got It series. To achieve this aim, the current study aimed to check if the social and cultural contexts in the series are understandable. Moreover, it tried to check if cross-cultural perspectives in communication and developing real intercultural communication emphasized in the series. The third objective is to check if the Series have a positive view of the cultures resented regarding culture presentation. Besides, this study endeavored to see if the cultural content of the textbooks promotes flexibility and tolerance of otherness and cultural diversity. The fifth purpose is to understand if the textbooks set clear aims and objectives in the beginning

and satisfy what is stated. The last objective of this study is to check if the teachers are comfortable teaching the cultural content of the textbooks.

## **2. Method**

This study aimed to evaluate socio-cultural contexts in Got It series and it tried to mention the cross-cultural issues in these series

### **2.1. Design and Context of the Study**

It was a descriptive study. Qualitative method was employed to investigate the research questions in this study. Wallace (1998) explains that qualitative is used to describe data which are not amendable to being counted or measured in an objective way, and are therefore "subjective". All branches of Gooyesh and Sadr Language Institute were included as the context of this study and the teachers and supervisors were asked to participate in their break time during one week.

### **2.2. Participants**

In this study, a number of English teachers and supervisors in Gooyesh and Sadr language institute in Isfahan, Iran, were asked to fill in a survey questionnaire giving their perceptions towards the socio-cultural context in Got It Series. Got It Series are four-level American English books for learners with outstanding print and digital resources and particular emphasis on meaningful communication and skills development. The total number of the participants in the study was 60 (30 teachers and 30 supervisors). These participants had received M.A. degree in TEFL. The researcher was present while they were answering the questions in order to explain the questions in the case of misunderstanding and the participants were assured that their information would be confidential and anonymous.

### **2.3. Instrument**

A survey questionnaire of 16 items was used as the research instrument. To do the evaluation, the researchers used the ideas and suggestions from different sources including Brian Tomlinson (2001), Méndez García (2005), and Moran (2001) and provided an evaluating model for the study. Sixteen closed-ended questions grouped under five main categories namely: (a) intercultural knowledge and understanding, (b) cultural awareness, (c) culture representation, (d) aims and achievements, and (e) teach ability. The questionnaire's validity and reliability had previously been surveyed; however, since the original questionnaire received some changes to meet the purpose of this study, the researcher followed the same steps adopted for validating grammar test to get sure about the validity of the instrument, too. The modified questionnaire received the views of ten experts who were English teachers and familiar with the concept of second language learning. There was a general consensus among them concerning the content validity of the questionnaire although 3 items out of 19 were eliminated, and the wording of some items were modified. Sixteen items were included in the final version. This step was vital to achieve a comprehensible and relevant questionnaire in terms of face and content validity. Moreover, a reliability of .94 was obtained after using Cronbach's Alpha test.

### **2.4. Data Collection Procedure**

The questionnaires were distributed in some branches of Gooyesh and Sadr Language Institute in order to answer the research questions and the researcher informed the managers of the purpose of the study. All the teachers and supervisors were willing to

use their break time to complete the questionnaires. Next, their ideas were gathered and grouped to analyze them.

## 2.5. Data Analysis Procedure

The method of analysis is statistical analysis. Therefore, the research questions were analyzed based on statistical software package SPSS to draw the conclusions. The data gathered from the questionnaire were analyzed descriptively and inferential by applying frequency, percentage, mean, and standard deviation. They were used to compare the perceptions of teachers and supervisors, and to describe the similarities and differences. Moreover, Independent sample T-test was applied to compare the responses of teachers and supervisors.

## 3. Results

To investigate the intercultural knowledge and understanding the contexts in Got It series, teachers and supervisors were asked to answer three questions and the results gained are presented in Table 1 below.

**Table 1.** Results Related to Intercultural Knowledge and Understanding

Statement	strongly disagree		disagree		agree		strongly agree		mean	SD
	F	P	F	P	F	P	F	P		
	1. The social and cultural contexts in the textbooks are understandable.	1	2.5	4	10.0	25	62.5	10		
2. The content of the textbooks is free from stereotypical images and information.	2	5.0	17	42.5	21	52.5	0	0.0	2.48	0.60
3. Cross-cultural perspectives in communication and developing real intercultural communication are emphasized.	3	7.5	6	15.0	19	47.5	12	30.0	3.0	0.88

Source: SPSS 25 (2020)

As can be seen Table 1, in response to question 1, the findings suggest that 62.5% of the teachers agree, 25% of them strongly agree, 10% disagree, and 2.5% strongly disagree. The mean of this group is 3.1 and the standard deviation is 0.67. In response to question 2, 52.5% of them agree while 42.5% of them disagree, and 5% of them strongly disagree. The mean of this group is 2.48 and the standard deviation is 0.60. In response to question 3, 47.5% of them agree, 30% of them strongly agree, 15% of them disagree, and 7.5% strongly disagree. The mean of this group is 3.0 and standard deviation is 0.88.

**Table 2.** Results Related to Cultural Awareness

Statement	strongly disagree		disagree		agree		strongly agree		mean	SD
	F	P	F	P	F	P	F	P		
4. The cultural content of the textbooks increases sensitivity to cultural diversity.	0	0	5	12.5	25	62.5	10	25	3.12	0.61
5. The cultural content of the textbooks promotes flexibility and tolerance of otherness and cultural diversity.	0	0	5	12.5	28	70.0	7	17.5	3.05	0.55
6. The cultural content of the textbooks does not assign values to cultural differences.	7	17.5	10	25.0	21	52.5	2	5.0	2.45	0.85

Source: SPSS 25 (2020)

In response to question 4, 62.5% of them agree while 25% of them strongly agree, and 12.5% of them disagree. The mean of this group is 3.12 and the standard deviation is 0.61. In response to question 5, 70% of them agree, 17.5% of them strongly agree, 12.5% of them disagree. The mean of this group is 3.5 and standard deviation is 0.55. In response to question 6, 70% of them agree, 52.5% of them agree, 5% of them strongly agree while 25% of them disagree and 17.5% of them strongly disagree. The mean of this group is 2.45 and standard deviation is 0.85.

**Table 3.** Results Related to Cultural Representation

Statement	strongly disagree		disagree		agree		strongly agree		mean	SD
	F	P	F	P	F	P	F	P		
7. The textbooks offer cultural content as accurately as possible.	6	15.0	21	52.5	1 3	32. 5	0	0.0	2.18	0.68
8. The textbooks represent cultural content without stereotypes or essentialist perspectives.	0	0.0	6	15.0	2 0	50. 0	1 4	35. 0	3.20	0.69
9. The book expresses positive views of ethnic origins, occupations, age groups, social groups and disability.	0	0.0	6	15.0	2 6	65. 0	8 0	20. 0	3.05	0.60
10. The cultural information is relevant and interesting	0	0.0	0	0.0	1 8	45. 0	2 2	55. 0	3.55	0.50
11. Cultural content is usually presented with a validating context.	0	0.0	5	12.5	2 0	50. 0	1 5	37. 5	3.25	0.67

Source: SPSS 25 (2020)

In response to question 7, 52.5% of them disagree, 15% of them strongly disagree, and 32.5% of them agree. The mean of this group is 2.18 and standard deviation is 0.68. In response to question 8, 50% of the teachers agree, 35% of them strongly agree, 15% disagree. The mean of this group is 3.20 and the standard deviation is 0.69. In response to question 9, 65% of the teachers agree, 20% of them strongly agree, 15% disagree. The mean of this group is 3.05 and the standard deviation is 0.60. In response to question 10, 45% of them agree, 55% strongly agree, and none of them disagree or strongly disagree. The mean of this group is 3.55 and the standard deviation is 0.50. In response to question 11, 50% of them agree, 37.5% strongly agree, and only 12.5% disagree. The mean of this group is 3.25 and the standard deviation is 0.67.

**Table 4.** Results Related to Aims and Achievements

Statement	strongly disagree		disagree		agree		strongly agree		mean	SD
	F	P	F	P	F	P	F	P		
	12. The aims and objectives of including cultural content in the textbooks have been presented.	11	27.5	16	40.0	13	32.5	0		
13. The aims and objectives of including cultural content in the textbooks have been achieved.	0	0.0	22	55.0	18	45.0	0	0	2.45	0.50

Source: SPSS 25 (2020)

In response to question 12, 40% of them disagree and 32.5% of them agree. The mean of this group is 2.05 and the standard deviation is 0.78. In response to question 13, 55% of them disagree and 45% of them agree. The mean of this group is 2.45 and the standard deviation is 0.50.

**Table 5.** Results Related to Teach Ability

Statement	strongly disagree		disagree		agree		strongly agree		mean	SD
	F	P	F	P	F	P	F	P		
	14. The teachers are comfortable teaching the cultural content of the textbooks.	0	0	10	25.0	25	62.5	5		
15. The cultural content of the textbooks requires minimal preparation and explanation by the teacher.	0	0	0	0.0	10	25.0	30	75.0	3.75	0.44
16. The students comfortably learn cultural contexts without any sign of rejection.	0	0	28	70.0	12	30.0	0	0.0	2.30	0.46

Source: SPSS 25 (2020)

In response to question 14, 62.5% of them agree, 12.5% of them strongly agree, and 25% disagree. The mean of this group is 2.88 and the standard deviation is 0.61. In response to question 15, 25% of them agree and 75% strongly agree while none of them disagrees or strongly disagrees. The mean of this group is 3.75 and the standard deviation

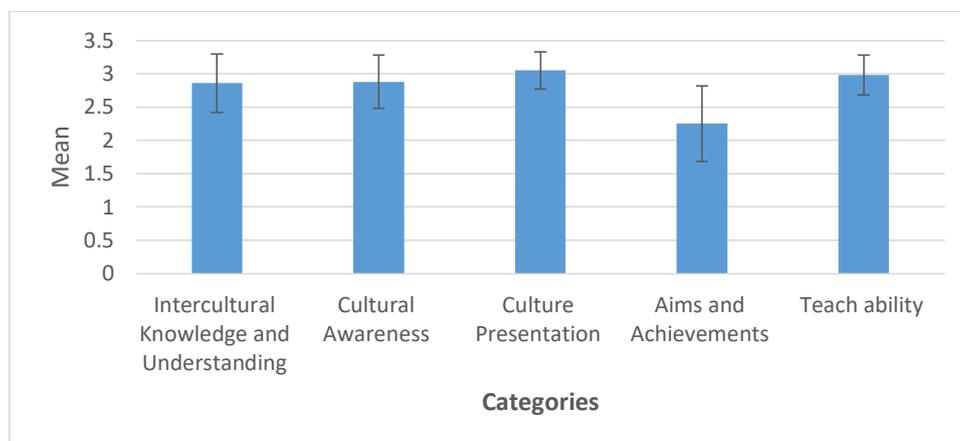
is 0.44. In response to question 16, 70% of them disagree and 30% agree. The mean of this group is 2.30 and the standard deviation is 0.46.

**Table 6.** Arithmetic Means and Standard Deviation of the Five Categories

Main Category	Mean	SD	F	Sig.
A: Intercultural Knowledge and Understanding	2.86	.44	22.094	<.001
B. Cultural Awareness	2.88	.40		
C. Culture Presentation	3.05	.28		
D. Aims and Achievements	2.25	.57		
E. Teach ability	2.98	.30		

Source: SPSS 25 (2020)

The results suggest that among these five categories, the highest mean (3.05) belongs to cultural presentation and the standard deviation is 0.28. In addition, the lowest mean (2.25) belongs to aims and achievements and the standard deviation is 0.57. Variance analyzed accompanying with repeated measure ANOVA were used to compare the means. According to the results of this test, there are significant differences among the means of these categories ( $F=22.09$ ,  $p<.001$ ). The results of Bonferroni Pos-Hoc suggests that the mean of the aims and achievements is less in comparison to other categories ( $p<0.05$ ) and there are no significant differences among other categories ( $p>0.05$ ).



**Figure 1.** Arithmetic means ± standard deviations of the five categories.

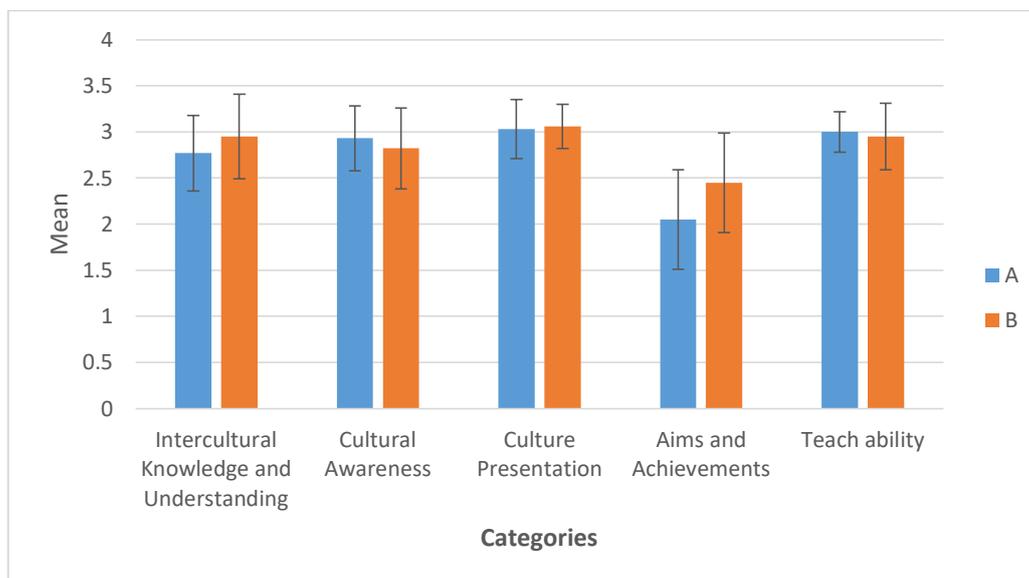
**Table 7.** Independent Samples T-test for equality of means in comparing two groups

categories	group	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	t	Sig
A: Intercultural Knowledge and Understanding	A	20	2.77	.41	-1.332	.191
	B	20	2.95	.46		
B. Cultural Awareness	A	20	2.93	.35	.927	.360
	B	20	2.82	.44		
C. Culture Presentation	A	20	3.03	.32	-.334	.740
	B	20	3.06	.24		
D. Aims and Achievements	A	20	2.05	.54	-2.362	.023*
	B	20	2.45	.54		
E. Teach ability	A	20	3.00	.22	.529	.600
	B	20	2.95	.36		

\* Difference is significant at  $p < .05$

Source: SPSS 25 (2020)

According to this table, there is a significant difference between teachers and supervisors only in category D ( $t=-2.362$ ,  $p<.05$ ), and the mean of the supervisors is high. Therefore, the supervisors agree more with the questions included in category D in comparison to the teachers. Moreover, there is no significant differences between these two groups in other categories.



**Figure 2.** Comparison between the mean of two groups

In general, evaluation is considered as gaining systematic information that is efficient for decision-making. It includes processes for gathering information about a program, textbook, teacher, and curriculum planning that it leads to improvement. Based on the claims of the authors of Got It series, it is a communicative English course for teenagers which prepare students to interact successfully and confidently with both native and non-native speakers of English (Mirshekaran, Namaziandost, & Nazari, 2018). There are also lively, colorful, and authentic photographs and pictures in the Got It series. Moreover, the series were printed in glossy paper and was not culturally biased in anyway. A variety of information from different cultures and nationalities were used in the series.

The series help teachers and supervisors' expectations in terms of its intercultural content and the understandability of the socio-cultural contexts presented. In addition, it is believed that cross-cultural perspectives in communication and developing real intercultural communication are supported.

Finally, the tasks of the series can be considered useful in terms of improvement of communicative competence and are efficient in that they give learners the opportunity to apply the new language through production in real contexts. The series, in addition, focus mainly on pair and group works. They also motivate students to use the language and to be active speakers.

Despite the fact that for the most part expected to be ideologically rich because of the functional and meaning-based nature of language, the subject of whether TEFL course readings could force any philosophies should have been tended to. This investigation gave a thick depiction of types, structures, and elements of the imparted belief systems in the generally applied course readings in Iranian TEFL programs. The examination was sorted out dependent on the significant components of each Hallidyan meta-function and divulged the prevailing ideological personalities in the corpus. The joined outcomes from

finding every one of the meta-functions uncovered that TEFL writings are not totally guiltless. Regardless of whether deliberately or inadvertently, every content may stifle or advance a few belief systems and control its readers' mental practices.

A socio-cultural outlook on learning assumes one takes human thinking from a process perspective. In that way, the idea of the course of experience is important because it allows for the potential of discovering how students orient themselves over time through contexts. Assuming the philosophies form the understanding of the world by individuals, the findings of this study will redound to the advantage of materials creators and textbook consumers. The ever-developing educational world calls for textbooks which ensure the cognitive and ideological development of the learners. Consequently, the college educators who consider the shrouded voices of the course books can be extraordinary resources for their learners in liberating them and expanding their office and force. Materials designers can likewise be guided on what ought to be moved to the learners and what is reliable with the requests of worldwide and neighborhood settings of learning. The outcomes can likewise expand the students' consciousness of the current authorities which are carefully passed on through learning materials.

Writers effectively guided the readers when they could recognize who their readers were. This procedure consolidated numerous distinguishing proof signs, for example, readers' ages, foundations, skill, and encounters. One sign of the recognizable proof procedure was arranging New and Given data. The writer can guide and control the readers' understanding by New data which is in the Rheme position where it is simpler for the readers to process and get it (Hyland, 2015). The Theme, in any case, is involved by components communicating the writers' perspectives and endeavors that set up the readers for New data. As needs be, evaluative articulations, for example, "it is significant that..." are found in the thematic position (Hyland, 2015).

#### **4. Conclusion**

The results of the study have some implications for the teachers of English who teach these series and also for the materials writers who developed the textbooks. This study implies that when teaching these textbooks, the teachers are suggested to consider the shortcomings and to remove them by supplementing, modifying, and adapting. Also the results of the study may help different English language institutes and also students in choosing a right course book.

Like many studies in the field of foreign language teaching and learning, there were some limitations in this study. The first one was related to the study's setting. The study was carried out in only two of the language institutes in Isfahan, Iran. Another one had to do with the sample size. Definitely, a large sample would generate more reliable results. Prospective researchers can replicate this study with a larger sample in different institutes to get a more general picture of the issue. Age, education, and gender of the teachers and supervisors are two important variables that in addition to years of experience can play significant roles in expanding ideas related to this issue. Moreover, this study can be done with other academic books.

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