An Evaluative and Comparative Study of an ESP Book: 
The Case of Medical Studies

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Abstract
Textbooks as one of the most important components of curriculum provide teachers and students with required support and guidance on the focus and purpose of a course. In this regard, involves are usually uncertain whether a selected textbook fits a particular setting or not; therefore, textbook evaluation can provide fruitful information to smooth uncertainties out. This study is aimed at evaluating an ESP textbook entitled English for the Students of Medicine (SAMT Publications). For doing so, a total of 50 students and 5 instructors respectively studying and teaching at Ardebil University of Medical Sciences took part in the study. This is a checklist-based evaluative and comparative study and Textbook Evaluation Questionnaire (Miekley, 2005) was employed as a tool for data collection which addresses six criteria for evaluation. Based on the findings, significant differences were found between the students and instructors’ perception concerning some criteria. To put it in other words, the participants displayed both distinctive and common perceptions on various aspects of the issue under investigation. It is important to underscore that the book was found out to be fairly useful in line with pursuing the objectives of the course in spite of having some demerits. The results of this study might lend insight into the challenges faced by instructors, learners, and syllabus designers.

Keywords: ESP, Textbook Evaluation, Medicine
Introduction

In this globalization era, English learning should not be merely aimed at completing an attended course, but it should be considered seriously. To name only a few, engaging in an international interaction, applying to a university for higher studies, joining an organization as staff, etc. demand having a good English knowledge on the majored field. Practically speaking, students and applicants do not achieve a desired outcome when carrying out specific tasks which demand language accuracy, and taking General English (GE) courses does not seem to make much difference. They need to be trained to use exactly the kind of language necessary for their tasks at work. That is what English for Specific Purposes (ESP) is about (Barrantes Montero, 2009). ESP refers to an instinctive but strong movement which has spread over the world, continuing with more power and effects. In fact, the demands of the Brave New World led to the introduction of ESP, which has been issued from the traditional current of TEFL/TESL, and has progressively established itself as a separate new trend influencing the whole English teaching/learning process. Consistent with the present discussion, ESP is an approach in language teaching in which all decisions as to content and method is made on the learners’ reasons to learning language (Hutchinson and Waters, 1987).

One of the most important issues in ESP courses is materials selection. ESP materials should not be chosen randomly but based on particular criteria in order to foster learners’ capacities. It is thus crucial to mention that besides being enjoyable, initiative and creative, they have to be well-developed in terms of the needs so that the ultimate aims of both teaching and learning processes can be reached. By the emergence of ESP since 1960, a large number of ESP books has been published, but practically most of these books are not useful and no particular difference is found between them and General English books. The main reason is the ignorance of learners’ needs before designing these books. ESP books must be well implemented in order to satisfy students’ needs. When needs are clear, learning aims can be defined in terms of these specific purposes to which the language will be put. As Ellis and Johnson (1994) pointed out selecting materials for ESP students does not resemble the same as selecting for general English students which need only print, audio, and video materials.

In case of having authority to choose the textbook for a particular ESP course, some teachers may not consider spending time or due to having a pressed time, choose an already available or prescribed textbook as the source. While, some others may demonstrate meticulousness at choosing a textbook and consider all options and various criteria to make up their minds on the issue. In this regard, evaluative checklist might be of help through smoothing the tension between two sides and taking both sides’ perception into account. Due to considering both teachers and learners as the core players in this regard, this study seeks to find out the perceptions of both groups with regard to the textbooks under evaluation, the results of which might be of help for language practitioners and syllabus designers.
Literature Review
Since the introduction of communicative approach, and the works of Widdowson, Hymes, Austin, and other scholars in the field, language learning and teaching has moved towards learner-centeredness for realization of whose goals, textbooks play an important role. According to Richards (2001), without a textbook, a language program may lose its central core and students may lack a systematically developed syllabus. Accordingly, they have to be selected taking into account a particular group of students who are in a particular educational setting, have particular needs, and pursue particular goals. As put by Cunnigworth (1984), there is a need to ensure careful selection of textbook so that it reflects the needs of the learners and the aims, methods, and values of the teaching program.

For ensuring a careful selection, textbook evaluation is demanded. For a particular context, particular criteria have to be considered for evaluation and there is no all-encompassing criteria to fit all contexts. The defects of textbooks can only be identified and overcome if an in-depth, reflective approach to textbook evaluation is adopted instead of the frequently used rapid, passive, and impressionistic evaluation frameworks (McDonough & Shaw, 2003). As out by Hutchinson (1987), materials evaluation do not only serves the immediate practical aim of selecting teaching materials, but also plays a critical role in developing teacher's awareness in various aspects, which include providing teachers with an opportunity to analyze their own presuppositions about the nature of language and learning, forcing them to set their prerequisites, and helping them to see materials as an essential part of the whole teaching and learning situation.

Through literature review, various textbook evaluation models can be found. The cases in point regard the following: A model was introduced by Ellis (1997) which distinguishes two types of materials evaluation titled predictive and retrospective evaluation as the titles already suggest the underlying assumptions. A reflective textbook evaluation model linking theory to action was developed Ait Bouzid et al. (2016) relying heavily on the principles of reflective teaching advocated by Schön (1983) which is aimed at teachers’ professional development, and future textbooks’ quality improvement. And as the last example in this regard, McDonough and Shaw (2003) suggested a three-tiered model of textbook evaluation which include external, internal, and overall evaluation. The first aspect concerns the materials’ organization, the second addresses issues such as gradation, sequencing, appropriateness, etc., and the last aspect investigates generalizability, flexibility, adaptability, and usability of the selected materials.

With regard to ESP textbooks, since specialism speaks as the most significant feature, practitioners need to adopt or choose a model to evaluate and also a methodology to teach textbooks which best take sensitivity to a particular context into account, that may stem from their own accumulated classroom experiences giving way to a “teacher-generated theory of classroom practice” (Littlewood, 2014). In other words, “practice of particularity” (Kumaravadivelu, 2001) should be considered to make it practical for a particular target audience. Based on the foregoing,
practitioners (ESP teachers in cooperation with General English teachers) should be given authority to encouraging teachers to theorize from their practice and practice what they theorize (ibid., 2001).

A wide range of studies have been conducted addressing ESP textbooks evaluation. By way of an example, a study was conducted by Syaifulloh (2014) considering lecturers’ viewpoints, the results of which indicated that the lecturers were highly satisfied with the book only in three categories, and the rest categories suffered from a number of weak points requiring awareness and consideration. In the same vein, Hessamy & Mohebi (2014) in a study examined the perceptions of EFL instructors and medical students of their EAP textbook. They examined this textbook based on six categories of practical concern, materials in relation to course objectives, subject matter, linguistic issues, skill, and variety and layout. It is concluded that although there were positive perceptions of the textbook they use, most of the instructors did not think that it was enough for an EAP course. In a recent study investigating an ESP textbook for students of Mechanical Engineering, Shahmohammadi (2018) concluded that pronunciation, task, and activities were the aspects of the textbooks that were in need of more improvement and revision. However, vocabulary was the most satisfactory dimension of the textbook evaluated.

Based on the foregoing and the importance of textbook evaluation in general and ESP textbooks evaluation in particular, this study is aimed at addressing other aspects (content, vocabulary and grammar, exercises and activities, physical make-up, context, and general features) of the book titled Medical Terminology which have not considered in other studies to the best of our knowledge. In this regard, the researchers are after finding the answer to the following research questions:

1: Is the book considered appropriate according to the mentioned criteria?
2: Is there any significant difference between instructors’ and students’ attitudes towards the book?

Methods and Materials
To conduct the study, two groups including ESP instructors and students of the Ardebil University of Medical Studies were invited to take part in the study, and employing available sampling method, 50 students and 5 instructors were selected as the participants. Both male and female students and instructors were included in the study. The students were sophomore, and at the age range of 20-25, and the instructors held a PhD. It is worthy of note that it was assumed that these groups were aware of ESP courses and their underlying assumptions.

The book selected was evaluation was Medical Terminology authored by Barbara Jonson Cohen (2008). This book uses a stepwise approach for teaching medical terminology encompassing various parts each focusing on particular aspects.

The students were supplied with Textbook Evaluation Checklist (Miekley, 2005) which included a set of Likert Scale questions. In this scale indicative items were coded as 5 for ‘Strongly Agree’,
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4 for ‘Agree’, 3 for ‘Undecided’, 2 for ‘Disagree’, and 1 for ‘Strongly Disagree’. This questions were aims at checking the students’ satisfaction with the instructors’ choice of materials then evaluating the teachers’ attitudes towards the available and utilized materials within their classrooms.

The collected data was analyzed SPSS, and in order to answer the research questions, descriptive statistics, and Chi-square test were employed.

Results

The findings of the study as follows:

Table 1. The students’ perception on the content of the textbook

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Content</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>Chi-square</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>students</td>
<td>instructors</td>
<td>students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Is the subject matter presented either topically or functionally in a logical, organized manner?</td>
<td>3.54</td>
<td>5.00</td>
<td>1.38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Are the reading selections authentic pieces of language?</td>
<td>3.72</td>
<td>4.50</td>
<td>0.89</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Significant P<.05

As displayed in Table 1, based on the obtained mean and standard deviation values, both groups of participants believe that the subject matter is presented in a logical manner topically and functionally. Students and instructors also agreed that the reading selections in this book are authentic pieces of language. The results of Chi-square test indicate that there is a statistically significant difference between the students and instructors perceptions in terms of the presentation of subject matter (p<0.05).

2. The students’ perception on the vocabulary and grammar of the textbook

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Vocabulary and Grammar</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>Chi-square</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>students</td>
<td>instructors</td>
<td>students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Are the grammar rules presented in a logical manner and in increasing order of difficulty?</td>
<td>3.53</td>
<td>4.60</td>
<td>1.40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Are the new vocabulary words presented in a variety of ways (e.g. glosses, multi glosses, and appositives)?</td>
<td>4.54</td>
<td>5.00</td>
<td>1.16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Are the new vocabulary words repeated in subsequent lessons to reinforce their meaning and use?</td>
<td>4.48</td>
<td>5.00</td>
<td>0.83</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Significant P<.05
Based on the results of Table 2, the students and instructors acknowledge that the grammar rules of the textbook are presented in a logical manner and new vocabularies are presented in a variety of ways in each chapter. Also, they believe that these words are repeated in subsequent lessons and this helps reinforce their meaning and use in students' minds. Moreover, a significant difference was found between the students and instructors perceptions towards the presentation of grammar rules (p<0.05).

Table 3. The students’ perception on the Exercises and Activities of the book

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>3.Exercises and Activities</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>Chi-square results</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Are there interactive and task-based activities that require students to use new vocabulary to communicate?</td>
<td>2.44</td>
<td>1.07</td>
<td>0.333</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do instructions in the textbook tell students to read for comprehension?</td>
<td>3.74</td>
<td>1.13</td>
<td>0.040</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do the activities facilitate students’ use of grammar rules by creating situations in which these rules are needed?</td>
<td>2.50</td>
<td>1.36</td>
<td>0.100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do the exercises promote critical thinking of the text?</td>
<td>2.90</td>
<td>0.95</td>
<td>0.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Does the text make comprehension easier by addressing one new concept at a time instead of multiple new concepts?</td>
<td>4.51</td>
<td>0.59</td>
<td>0.066</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Significant P<.05

As shown in Table 3, the students believe that there are not enough interactive and task-based activities in the classroom to help students learn new vocabularies interactively, on which the instructors have no definite idea. Concerning the instructions of the book, both groups have positive attitudes and they think that instructions tell students to read for comprehension. In the case of the activities of the textbook, the students did not find them helpful in learning grammar rules; however, the instructors have a positive view towards the issue. The instructors believe that the used exercises help students to think critically of the text (mean= 4 and SD=0.52) but the students are not sure about it (mean=2.90 and SD=0.95). In the last item of this part both groups of participants feel that the text makes comprehension easier by addressing one new concept at a time instead of multiple new concepts (mean=4.51, SD=0.59 for students; and mean=5, SD=0.00 for instructors). The results of the Chi-square test indicate that there are statistically significant differences between the students and instructors in terms of their perceptions towards the instructions of the textbook and effectiveness of the exercises to promote critical thinking (p<0.05).
Table 4. The students’ perception towards the attractiveness of the text and physical make-up of the book

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Attractiveness of the Text and Physical Make-up</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>Chi-square results</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Is the cover of the book appealing?</td>
<td>4.02</td>
<td>1.21</td>
<td>0.080</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Is the visual imagery of high aesthetic quality?</td>
<td>3.62</td>
<td>1.12</td>
<td>0.000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Significant P<.05

As observed in Table 4, both students and instructors have positive attitudes towards the cover of the book (mean=4.02, 4.80 and SD=1.2, 0.41, respectively) and its visual imagery (mean=3.62, and 5; and SD=1.12, and 0.00, respectively). The Chi-square results regarding the visual imagery of the textbook revealed significant differences between the students and instructors perception (p<0.05).

Table (5): The subjects’ perception on the context of the textbook

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Context</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>Chi-square results</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Does the text coincide with the course goals?</td>
<td>4.20</td>
<td>1.19</td>
<td>0.060</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Is the textbook appropriate for them students who will be using it?</td>
<td>3.94</td>
<td>0.97</td>
<td>0.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Is the textbook appropriate for the teacher who will be teaching it?</td>
<td>4.48</td>
<td>0.83</td>
<td>0.130</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Are the examples and explanations understandable?</td>
<td>4.11</td>
<td>1.17</td>
<td>0.143</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Significant P<.05

Regarding the context of the textbook, both groups revealed positive attitudes. In their point of view, the texts coincide with the course goals (mean =4.20 and SD=1.19 for the students; and mean=5 and SD=0.00 for the instructors). Besides, the textbook is considered appropriate for students (mean=3.94, and 4.40; and SD=0.97, 0.52 for the students and instructors, respectively) and teachers (mean=4.48, and 4.80; and SD=0.83, and 0.42, respectively) who will be using it and students will enjoy the reading selections. Also, based on their views examples and explanations of the book are understandable (mean= 4.11, and SD=1.17 for students; and mean=5.00, and SD=0.00 for instructors). The Chi-square results indicate significant differences between the students and instructors perceptions regarding the effectiveness of the book for students who will be using it (p<0.05).
Table (6): Subjects’ perception on the General Features of the book

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>X²</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>i.</td>
<td>Does the manual help teachers understand the objectives and methodology of the text?</td>
<td>3.02</td>
<td>1.09</td>
<td>0.090</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ii.</td>
<td>Are correct or suggested answers given for the exercises in the textbook?</td>
<td>4.84</td>
<td>0.23</td>
<td>0.088</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Significant P<.05

Based on Table 6, the students are not sure about the usefulness of manual for teachers (mean=3.02 and SD=1.09) but the instructors agreed that the manual helps them understand the objectives and methodology of the texts (mean=4.5 and SD=0.41). In the second item of this part, both students and instructors emphasized that the correct answers for the exercises are provided in the textbook (means are 4.84, and 5; and SD=0.23, and 0.00, respectively). The Chi-square results showed no significant differences between the students and instructors’ perceptions about the general features of the textbook (p<0.05).

**Discussion and Conclusion**

In this study, Miekley's checklist (2005) was employed to evaluate the textbook titled Medical Terminology according to the students and instructors’ viewpoint. To be precise, six criteria including content, vocabularies and grammar, exercises and activities, attractiveness of the text and physical make-up, context, and general features of the textbook were addressed. Regarding the content of the textbook, both groups expressed positive attitudes towards the presentation of subject matter both functionally and topically; and also towards the authenticity of the reading selections. This textbook covered varieties of topics to enhance learning process and meet the needs of the medical students. The participants think that these topics have the capacity of expanding students' awareness and enrich their experience. The textbook is divided to three parts following a logical order in selecting topics and their level of difficulty.

Authenticity also has also been pointed to by various authors as a key feature in ESP courses. Authentic materials are especially important for ESP trainees, since they reproduce an immersion environment and provide a realistic context for tasks that relate to learner’s needs.

Vocabularies and grammar rules of the textbook also satisfy our learners' needs. The grammar rules are presented in a logical order in terms of difficulty, and new vocabularies are presented in a variety of ways and repeated in subsequent lessons.
Concerning the exercises and activities of the book, the participants feel that there are not enough interactive and task-based activities leading students to use new vocabularies to communicate. The exercises are mostly multiple-choice, true-false, and fill-in-the-blanks. Regarding the instructions of the textbook, both groups revealed positive attitudes and they believe instructions in the textbook tell students to read for comprehension. Tomlinson (1998) argues that a part of pedagogical realization of material is efficient and effective writing of instructions. In a different vein, the students think that the activities do not facilitate the students' use of grammar by creating situations in which these rules are needed and they do not promote critical thinking. Eventually, these texts make comprehension easier by addressing one new concept at a time instead of multiple new concepts.

As another aspect, attractiveness of the text and physical make-up was investigated for which both groups feel that the cover of the book and its visual imagery are attractive for students. The appearance of the book also can be helpful for students and can motivate them for better learning. Making use of visualization techniques is a strategy which has been emphasized in various teaching methodologies and is considered as a vital technique by material developers in designing instructional materials. In fact, students make their first impression of every book based on its physical appearance regardless of its content.

Context of the book was considered by asking different questions. Both students and instructors have positive attitudes towards the context of the book. They believe that the textbook is in harmony with the needs of the learners, teachers and course goals.

Finally, towards the general features of the textbook, both groups expressed a positive view and they believed that the manual help teachers understand the objectives and methodology of the text. Also, correct answers of the exercises are given in the book which can be helpful for individual study of the students.

Overall, the results of the study indicate that the selected textbook is considered appropriate in many aspects according to the students and instructors’ viewpoints. The findings of this study are in agreement with the findings of the study carried out by Hessamy and Mohebi (2014), Syaifulloh (2014), and Shahmohammadi (2018). The shortcomings acknowledged by the participants regards the lack of interactive activities that required students to use new vocabulary to communicate and use of grammatical rules by creating situations in which these rules were needed which need further consideration and modification. To make it short, any course demands textbook evaluation so that in case of any shortcoming, modification can be applied to make it more compatible with the objectives set in advance.

The most highlighted issues under investigation in this study were concerns pertaining to the content, vocabulary and grammar, exercises and activities, physical make-up, context, and general features of the book. Based on the results, in spite of having some demerits, the chosen textbook
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seemed to be effective taking into account the objectives of the course. It is worthy of note that since evaluation in is considered as a dynamic process, it would be a good idea to include other stakeholder’ perspectives such as administrators aimed at discussing the issue from various dimensions which might contribute and lead to fruitful results.

References