CLT in Prospect Series: A Predictive Evaluation of Iranian Junior High School English Textbooks

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Abstract
Textbooks have a chief standing as an essential element of language teaching; therefore, analyzing and evaluating them is imperative to guarantee their efficiency and consistency with the objectives set and expected in language classes. Hence, this study utilizing a Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) model, examined Cognitive, Communicative, and Creature potentials of three Iranian recently published junior high school English textbooks, called Prospect Series. The results showed that the intended books aiming at following the CLT approach failed to satisfy communicative, cognitive, and creative potentials sufficiently and some crucial ingredients of CLT, such as strategy instruction, use of authentic materials, and skills integration. Additionally, the over-emphasis on Iranian culture caused sociocultural aspects of CLT to be relatively neglected in this series, and foreign cultures are roughly avoided. Although the development of the Prospects is surely a step forward toward designing high-quality Iranian English textbooks in Iranian schools, progressive modifications on textbooks are always needed to reach their greatest formats. The findings of this study have useful implications for the Iranian stakeholders in the field of teaching English as a foreign language and the authors of the Prospect series in terms of revising and modifying activities to achieve the highest congruency with CLT tenants.

Keywords: Cognitive Potential, Communicative Potential, Content Analysis, Coursebook Evaluation, Creature Potential, Prospect Series

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1. Introduction

Coursebooks play a crucial role process and are believed to be the pivotal ingredient of language teaching (See, Skierso, 1991; Tomlinson, 2012), or as Sheldon (1988) believes they are the "visible heart of any ELT program" (p.237). In the process of teaching and learning, coursebooks are the main source of information; furthermore, teachers make use of them to achieve their teaching goals and facilitate students’ learning process (Cunningsworth, 1995; Hutchinson & Torres, 1994). Skierso (1991) states that, without relying on a textbook, teachers can rarely handle teaching effectively.

In Iran, all textbooks taught at state schools, including EFL (English as a Foreign Language) textbooks, are developed by the textbook curriculum development and planning department of the Ministry of Education. Due to a series of criticisms leveled against previous school textbooks (Yarmohammadi, 2000), Prospect (P) 1, 2, and 3, being the first three parts of the six-volume series of English for High Schools, have been developed based on Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) principles by the Ministry of Education (Alavimoghadam, Kheirabadi, Foroozandeh, Sharabyani, Anani Sarab, & Ghorbani, 2013-2015) to be utilized as the English coursebooks for junior high school students. As this coursebook series are new-comers and taught to all Iranian students, naturally they need continual evaluations and analysis to reach their best. Although some studies attempted to evaluate and analyze these textbooks (Kamyabi Gol & Baghaeeyan, 2015), these series lack an analytic study in which the series are analyzed thoroughly against CLT tenets of textbook development. Hence, this study framed by Ellis’s Predictive evaluation utilized the model of CLT coursebook analysis by Dubin and Olshtain (1986) to evaluate the Prospect series.

2. Literature Review

In order to check the suitability of textbooks for an English program or classroom and conduct needed revisions, textbook evaluation and analysis becomes a necessity. Tomlinson, Dat, Masuhara and Rubdy (2001) state that textbook evaluation is “an applied linguistic activity through which teachers, supervisors, administrators, and material developers can make judgments about the effect of the materials on the people using them” (p.15). Many studies have emphasized the crucial part played by textbook analysis and evaluating the EFL process (Richards, 2001; Tomlinson, 2012, to name a few).
The development of Iran’s National Curriculum in 2012 can be deemed as a turning point since, whereas before that, in any formal document the goals and objectives of EFL teaching had never been stated (Zarrinabadi & Mahmoudi-Gahrouei, 2018), two pages in the National Curriculum (pages 37 and 38) have been devoted to EFL teaching and learning goals and policies. In National Curriculum (2012), it is clearly mentioned that, “the approach of foreign language teaching is an active and self-relying communicative approach” (p. 38). Thus, it can be claimed that the change toward a Communicative Approach program or CLT, as “the beginning of a major paradigm shift” in the twentieth century (Richards & Rodgers, 2014, p. 81), necessitates new responsibilities for both teachers and students.

Accordingly, Forouzande and Forouzani (2015) believe that the development of the new English coursebooks splits the history of EFL textbook development in Iran into two chief parts of pre-revolution series (1939-79) and post-revolution series (1982-2010) entitled Prospect series and Vision series (Kheirabadi & Alavi Moghaddam, 2016). The former series includes three volumes for the junior high school students and the latter series consists of three volumes for the senior high school students. The Prospect series which is the focus of the present study are alleged to help the learners to learn the four language skills from the beginning; with a dominant emphasis on listening and speaking skills (Kheirabadi & Alavi Moghaddam, 2016), instead, the Vision series gives more prominence to the writing and reading skills.

CLT is known as an approach to foreign or second language teaching aiming at enhancing communicative competence. The Proponents of CLT believe in a skill-based, discovery-based, collaborative approach to teaching and learning (Holliday, 1994) where classroom language learning usually occurs in small classes through group and pair work. Brown (2001) lists six interconnected features of CLT.

a) Concentrating on all of the constituents of communicative competence,

b) Engage learners in the pragmatic, authentic, functional use of language for meaningful purposes,

c) Emphasizing on fluency and accuracy,

d) Using Language productively and receptively,

e) Students ‘understanding of their own styles of learning, and

f) Using appropriate strategies for autonomous learning.
As the Prospect Series textbooks are newly published (2013) few studies have examined them thoroughly. For instance, Sardabi and Koosha (2015) compared the Prospect series with the former English textbooks of Iranian junior high schools. They revealed that even though the Prospect series does not cover up some of the shortfalls and lacks former textbooks, the new textbook based on the Communicative Language Teaching syllabus can be largely considered as a great achievement in teaching English in Iranian schools. However, in their study, no internal analysis based on existing frameworks was utilized. Moreover, they just explored 6 Iranian EFL teachers’ ideas about the Prospect series and learners’ views and needs were also wholly neglected.

In another study, Zohoorian, MatinSadr, and Shamabadi (2018) investigated the motivational design of P1 utilizing Keller’s ARCS model (Attention, Relevance, Confidence, and Satisfaction). In this study, 384 junior high school students filled out the questionnaire and 11 of them attended follow-up interviews. In general, it was revealed that the students’ motivation for this book is moderate. They also reported that P1 seems to be more effective in the Confidence and Relevance areas. However, the findings suggested that the students’ Satisfaction and Attention are not desirable.

In a recent study, Shahmohammadi (2018) employed an eclectic checklist that evaluated the Prospect series in Iran from teachers’ perspectives. In her study, 34 teachers were asked to evaluate the series according to the checklist. Also, 8 teachers attended follow-up interviews declare their views about the strength and weak points of the series. The findings of the study showed that pronunciation practices, language tasks, and activities need to be improved and revised. Further, teachers believed that vocabulary was the most acceptable aspect of the Prospects.

In the same way, Safari and Sahragard (2015) in a qualitative study explored English teachers’ problems, challenges, and constraints regarding Prospect Series. They reported that many teachers complained about the provision of facilities and rich teaching context in poor areas is an issue that should be taken into account to make the best use of the newly published series.

Accordingly, Torki and Chalak (2017) employing a 45-item questionnaire explored high school teachers’ and students’ views toward the Prospect series. The participants were also asked to take part in interviews to investigate their attitudes toward CLT and the Prospect series. They found that participants believed 80 percent of CLT principles are
considered and available in the *Prospects*, but modifications are needed to increase the efficiency of this series.

These reviewed studies along with other similar ones (Kamyabi Gol & Baghaeeeyan, 2015) are valuable in terms of collecting teachers’ and learners’ views; however, researcher’s thorough internal analysis of the textbooks is still absent.

Another recent study conducted by Mohammadi (2017) examined P3 utilizing Stufflebeam’s (1971) Context, Input, Process, and Product Evaluation Model. She collected questionnaire data from 140 teachers and an interview with the head of the development committee of Prospect Series. Her results indicated that generally both authors and teachers felt positive about the development and outcome of the textbook, respectively. Additionally, the results of the questionnaire revealed that the teachers were mostly satisfied with the textbook, however, they expressed that the textbook needs to be improved in terms of its design and illustration, supplementary materials, language skills, and practice and testing.

According to Ellis (1997), Predictive evaluation can be conducted in two main ways. In the first way, teachers refer to the evaluations carried out by experts specializing in textbook evaluation. This kind of evaluation; however, may be imprecise and implicit, as the experts normally incline to evaluate textbooks in accordance with general purposes. Hence, the results of these evaluations should be used with care. On the other hand, predictive evaluations can be conducted by teachers by means of several checklists and guidelines accessible in the literature (Çakir, 2004). Hence, this study framed by Ellis’s Predictive evaluation utilized the model of CLT coursebook analysis by Dubin and Olshtain (1986).

Accordingly, to attain a better understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the Prospect series and their adherence to CLT, the following research question was posed to guide the study.

-What are the strengths and weaknesses of the series seen based on the checklist of CLT coursebook evaluation by Dubin and Olshtain (1986)?

3. Methodology

3.1. Design of the Study

As Alavi Moghaddam, the chief executive of Prospects’ authors stated, the Prospect series are developed based on CLT tenants (Interview with Alavi Moghaddam, Communication with the official website of Curriculum Development Center, January 13,

2016); therefore, a quantitative approach in collecting data was employed to examine the series against the adapted version of Dubin and Olshtain’s (1986) checklist. This study was shaped by Ellis’s predictive evaluation framework (1997) aimed to evaluate the Prospects against their alleged communicative values. In so doing, three scales were used in this research for assessing the coursebooks’ activities in terms of their communicative, cognitive and creative (CCC) potentials.

3.2. Instruments

The version of the checklist used in this study was validated by Aftab (2011); however, to enhance the validity of the utilized checklist, its content validity was scrutinized and confirmed by two EFL experts. Further, to guarantee the reliability of the results, the coursebooks were analyzed based on the checklist by the second rater. Then, to calculate inter-rater reliability (Cohen’s Kappa), the results were fed into SPSS separately for each coursebook. The reliability statistics of the ratings showed high associations of 0.799, 0.864, and 0.876, for P1, P2, and P3, respectively (Table 1).

Table 1.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Kappa Prospect</th>
<th>Value</th>
<th>Asymptotic Standardized Error</th>
<th>Approximate T</th>
<th>Approximate Significance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Prospect 1</td>
<td>.799</td>
<td>.074</td>
<td>11.460</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No. of items</td>
<td>36</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prospect 2</td>
<td>.864</td>
<td>.056</td>
<td>15.767</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No. of items</td>
<td>42</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prospect 3</td>
<td>.876</td>
<td>.047</td>
<td>19.280</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No. of items</td>
<td>54</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Dubin and Olshtain (1986) have provided a scale for investigating the communicative potential of activities, nevertheless, their original scale exclusively emphasized communication as indicating an exchange of information. Therefore, a modified communicative potential scale by Aftab (2011) was employed in this study concentrating on all aspects of communicative activities. Based on this scale, the individual scores of the coursebooks and their tags are assessed according to Table 2.

Based on this checklist, only those activities score between ‘7’ and ‘12’ can be reckoned as wholly communicative, realistic and involve meaningful exchange of
information. On the other hand, those activities scoring less ‘7’ are not considered communicative. The cognitive scale includes the use of analytical skills, such as prediction, inference, analysis, and evaluation. Aftab (2011) has also updated Dubin and Olshtain’s (1986) cognitive potential scale and appended more score tags to it. The finalized and adapted version of the scale used in this study includes ‘0’ to ‘14’ scores, which is shown in Table 3.

Table 2.

*Explanations of the Tags of the Communicative Scale (Aftab, 2011, p. 138)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Score</th>
<th>Scale Tags</th>
<th>Explanations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0</td>
<td>De-contextualized reception of new information</td>
<td>Contrived exposure to new data</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>No processing of information</td>
<td>Exercises involving simple procedures</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>De-contextualized response to new information</td>
<td>Answering <em>comprehension</em> questions based on new data</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>De-contextualized expression of new information</td>
<td>Contrived production of language</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>De-contextualized negotiation of new information</td>
<td>Contrived exchange of data</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Contextualized reception of new information</td>
<td>Exposure to new data in a realistic scenario</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Contextualized examination of new information</td>
<td>Activities requiring comprehension of new data in a realistic scenario</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Contextualized evaluation of new information</td>
<td>Reflection about or interpretation of new data in a realistic scenario</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Contextualized non-verbalized application of new information</td>
<td>Non-verbalized use of provided data in a realistic scenario</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Contextualized verbalized transfer of new information</td>
<td>Using the provided data in a different realistic scenario</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Contextualized verbalized application of new information</td>
<td>Oral or written use of provided data in a realistic scenario</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Contextualized expression of new information</td>
<td>Expression of feelings, beliefs, reactions in a realistic scenario</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Contextualized negotiation of new information</td>
<td>Engaging in exchange for new data in a realistic scenario</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Tasks achieving scores from ‘7’ to ‘14’ (significant scores) are cognitive, whereas those obtaining scores of ‘6’ and less do not invoke any analytical abilities. Primarily, Dubin and Olshtain (1986) have presented the idea of the creative scale under notion of “Practical Applications” (1986, p. 104), but in this study, a scale of creative potential, developed by
Aftab (2001), seeking to assess the flexibility feature of both content and language of coursebooks, were utilized whose scores vary between ‘0’ to ‘11’ (Table 4).

Table 3.

Explanations of the Tags of the Cognitive Scale (Aftab, 2011, p. 141)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scores</th>
<th>Scale Tags</th>
<th>Explanations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0</td>
<td>Pure Reception of Data</td>
<td>No comprehension of data is required</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Reproduction</td>
<td>Involves simple repetition of provided data</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Reception with Comprehension</td>
<td>Exposure requiring an understanding of data</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Simple Mechanical Tasks</td>
<td>Basic steps involving addition and selection</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Controlled Production</td>
<td>Producing language with detailed assistance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Extended Selection</td>
<td>Finding answers to questions or chunks of information from the given texts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Limited Guided Production</td>
<td>Producing small chunks of language with the help of some basic provided instructions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Transference</td>
<td>Understanding and using provided data in different tasks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Interpretation</td>
<td>Tasks involving inference of provided data</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Guided Reflection /Evaluation</td>
<td>Assisted assessment of provided data or issues</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Extended Guided Production</td>
<td>Composing texts with provided instructions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Application</td>
<td>Using examined data to produce own text</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Analysis</td>
<td>Critically examining the component factors/ aspects of the provided data</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Free Production</td>
<td>Unaided composition of texts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Free Evaluation</td>
<td>Unaided appraisal of provided texts</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Activities score ‘7’ and more can be deemed as creative (the scores ‘7’ to ‘11’ are significant), while those activities obtaining ‘6’ and less are assumed not to be creative.

Table 4.

Explanations of the Tags of the Creative Scale (Aftab, 2011, p. 143)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Score</th>
<th>Scale Tags</th>
<th>Explanations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Tasks requiring reproduction and repetition</th>
<th>Activities only involving use of provided content and language</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Controlled mechanical operations</td>
<td>Activities involving selection from provided data</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Transferring tasks</td>
<td>Using provided data for undertaking other tasks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Summaries</td>
<td>Extended selection of relevant data from texts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Comprehension tasks requiring explanation, identification, selection and restatement of parts of the text</td>
<td>Activities involving clarification and selection of content from the text</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Controlled speaking/writing tasks</td>
<td>Producing language with detailed guidance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Tasks requiring interpretation and analysis</td>
<td>Activities involving inference</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Open mechanical operations requiring minimal output</td>
<td>Simple guided activities involving production of very small chunks of language</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Open summaries</td>
<td>Activities involving selection, manipulation and limited production</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Evaluative and reflective tasks</td>
<td>Activities involving assessment of data and issues</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Guided speaking/writing tasks</td>
<td>Producing language with the help of basic instructions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Free speaking/writing tasks</td>
<td>Unaided production of language</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### 3.3. Data Collection Procedure

All data required in this study were collected by the researchers through guidelines provided by Aftab (2011). Firstly, all the activities of the *Prospects* were checked and listed separately. This list included background details, explanations and comprehensive instructions. Then, all the listed activities were reckoned to calculate the overall number of tasks encompassed in each coursebook. Next, each item or activity was analyzed separately against the scale and was scored. Subsequently, each score of the scale along with the number of items receiving that particular score was tabulated and listed and the percentages of items in comparison to the complete coursebook were calculated based on the following formula:

\[
\text{Percentage of items} = \left( \frac{\text{Number of items receiving a particular score}}{\text{Total number of items in the textbook}} \right) \times 100
\]

Also, reading/listening comprehension activities were primarily investigated separately, as each activity included a group of questions that may assess dissimilar abilities. For each comprehension task, the overall number of questions and the number
of questions showing each relevant score were noted down. Then, the percentages of the questions representing the different scores were calculated in terms of the whole activity. The whole activity itself was given the score which was the greatest percentage of questions.

Finally, all the comprehension tasks were added to the other tasks of the coursebook with that same score. In these cases, equal percentage of questions of a single reading activity obtained two different scores; the activities were not given any scores and were labeled as could not be assigned any score.

### 3.4. Data Analysis Procedure

To analyze the collected data based on the guidelines of Aftab (2011), the task percentages having obtained the significant scores were added for each coursebook and the resulting totality called ‘significant score total task percentage’ (SSTTP) was reported. Furthermore, the percentage of mechanical operations incorporated in each coursebook (determined by the percentage of tasks having scored ‘1’ on the communicative scale) was noted down. Finally, the percentage of included controlled activities (calculated by adding the percentages of tasks having scored ‘0’ – ‘5’ on the creative scale) were tabulated. The textbook quantitative data interpretation key is wholly illustrated in Table 5.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Percentage Range</th>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Interpretation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>80% and above</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>Extremely High</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>60% – 79%</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40% – 59%</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>Moderate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20% – 39%</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>To a limited extent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19% and below</td>
<td>E</td>
<td>No consideration</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### 4. Results

#### 4.1. The Map of the Prospect series

Before starting to evaluate the Prospect series based on the checklist, the activities and the number of their occurrences were carefully analyzed and are reported in the following
Table. As Table 6 suggests, while the conversations, oral practices, and listening activities are the shared activities between the Prospects and vocabulary presentation, grammatical activities are left to P3. Also, it can be observed that the pronunciation activities under different headings started from P1 from letter sounds and ended in P3 to language melody and intonation patterns. Moreover, writing activities can be seen in P2 and P3.

After tabulating the activities of P1, P2, and P3 with their types (Appendix A), their potentials were meticulously measured and reported (Appendix B). Based on the frequency of the activities in each textbook and the provided formula in the data analysis section of this study, the CLT potentials of each textbook were measured and are reported in the following.

Table 6.

The Maps of the Coursebooks

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Coursebooks</th>
<th>P1</th>
<th>P2</th>
<th>P3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Number of Units</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Conversation</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Oral Practice1 &amp; 2</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Your Conversation</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Listening and Reading</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Speaking and Writing</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Sounds and Letters</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Spelling and Pronunciation</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Listening and Writing</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Reading, Speaking and Writing</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Role Play</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. Vocabulary Presentation</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. Language Melody</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. Grammar</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14. Find It</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15. Tell Your Classmates</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16. Listening and Reading, and Writing</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17. Reading, Speaking, Listening, and Writing</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4.2. Communicative, cognitive, and creative Potentials of P1

The communicative, cognitive, and creative potential of the P1 is shown in Table 7. As demonstrated in Table 7, whereas P1 enjoys a more moderate concern in creative potential (35% of the activities of P1), communicative and cognitive potentials of P1 remained at its lowest level which delineates lack of or no consideration of these two potentials. Hence, de-
contextualized negotiation of new information and very limited cognitive challenge are frequently observed than the other types of activities in P1.

Table 7.

**P1 – Student and Work Book Grades**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Communicative Potentials</th>
<th>Cognitive Potentials</th>
<th>Creative Potentials</th>
<th>Average</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>SSTTP</td>
<td>18%=E</td>
<td>8%=E</td>
<td>35%=D</td>
<td>20.33%=D</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No consideration</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
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<td>43%=C</td>
<td>22%=D</td>
<td>21%=D</td>
<td>28.66%=D</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Activities Score</td>
<td>Moderate</td>
<td>To a limited extent</td>
<td>To a limited extent</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Thus, the P1’s activities are of relatively moderate controlled activities (C) and communicative potentiality (E) is not roughly considered which stands against the claims proposed by their authors. Likewise, primarily owing to the insignificant use of discourse-level language and the preponderance of controlled activities, P1 does not seem to facilitate communicative competence in learners as the average SSTTP obtained is only 20.33% of all activities.

**4.3. Communicative, cognitive, and creative Potentials of P2**

The obtained data for communicative, cognitive, and creative potentials of P2 is illustrated in Table 8.

Table 8.

**P2 – Student and Work Book Statistics**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Communicative Potentials</th>
<th>Cognitive Potentials</th>
<th>Creative Potentials</th>
<th>Average</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>SSTTP</td>
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<td>25%=D</td>
<td>42%=C</td>
<td>34.66%=D</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>To a limited extent</td>
<td>Moderate</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>
As it has been presented in Table 8, no parts of P2 enjoy the relatively high extent of communicative, cognitive, and creative potentials (D), so the average SSTTP is only 34% of all the activities in average. Moreover, these textbooks do not include a high degree of controlled activities which ascertains that P2 could not achieve either controlled or communicative ends of the continuum in designing activities.

4.4. Communicative, cognitive, and creative Potentials of P3

Table 9 shows that the previous scenarios of P1 and P2 are similarly reflected in P3.

Table 9.

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<tr>
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<th>Cognitive Potentials</th>
<th>Creative Potentials</th>
<th>Average</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>SSTTP</td>
<td>12%=E</td>
<td>12%=E</td>
<td>33%=D</td>
<td>19%=E</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Controlled Activities</td>
<td>Moderate</td>
<td>Moderate</td>
<td>To a limited extent</td>
<td>No consideration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Score</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
5. Discussion

The aim of the present study was to carry out a predictive evaluation (Ellis, 1997) of the Prospect series taught in Iranian junior high schools Dubin and Olshtain (1986) to identify the strengths and weaknesses of the series according to CLT tenants. The obtained results of the present study revealed that, although the Prospects sought to follow the CLT approach and allocated the major proportion of every unit to communicative skills, the results showed that they failed to satisfy the communicative, cognitive, and creative potentials.

Although the presence of relatively authentic conversations might be the strong point of the Prospect series (Widdowson, 2007), in P1, it can be predicted that there is no guarantee whether they suit the beginners’ level or not. Based on Nunan (2003, p. 589), the critical problem of Asian countries is “…disjunction between curriculum rhetoric and pedagogical reality”, which can clearly be observed in the Iranian EFL context in the public sector (Kiany, Mahdavy, & Ghafar Samar, 2011). The pre-assumption is that seven-graders have not experienced any language learning situation, hence it is roughly improbable for a learner with no English background in remote deprived regions of Iran to understand the conversations or even repeat their line without any familiarity with English sounds (Safari & Sahragard, 2015). The dialogues seem to be more effective if they were shorter and postponed to the latter half of the coursebook. This point, which was also confirmed by in-service teachers in Eghtesadi and Hassanabadi’s study (2016), lowers all communicative potentials pertaining to the conversations. In line with Sardabi and Koosha (2015), conversations and even language practices in P1 and P2 are the major activities that mirror CLT tendencies of this series.

As Littlewood (1981) believes, one of the fundamental principles of communicative pedagogy is to teach language skills in an integrated way. Accordingly, Alavi Moghaddam, the chief author of this series, maintains these series are developed based on the fact that language should be taught in an integrated manner (Interview with Alavi Moghaddam, Communication with the official website of Curriculum Development Center, January 13, 2016); however, over-emphasis on this issue has tarnished the creative potential of this series in some cases. For instance, in some activities, such as listening or speaking, the authors have listed a group of skills as the aims of the activities which injects a sense of confusion amongst learners and teachers (Figure 1).
Additionally, the over-emphasis on Iranian culture caused sociocultural aspects of CLT to be relatively neglected in this series (Sardabi & Koosha, 2015), and foreign cultures are roughly avoided. Savignon (2018) maintains that the definition of a communicative language teaching context requires learners to obtain an understanding of the sociocultural contexts of language use. Hence, paying attention to the sociocultural contexts of language in textbooks increases the communicative potentiality of activities for learners. On the other hand, the cognitive load and potentiality of activities have been indirectly affected by embarking unnecessarily only on internal resources of intercultural talks. These findings are clearly in line with previous studies, such as Sadabi and Koosha (2015) and Shahmohammadi (2018).

Moreover, language learning and communicative strategies are absent in the Prospect series. As Brown (2001) maintains, the development of appropriate strategies for autonomous learning is a necessity of CLT classes. Besides, Wu (2010) believes that the presence of communicative strategies in CLT classes decreases tensions and contributes to learners’ connection with activities which might induce a lower cognitive and creative potentiality of the activities due to lack of deep connection.

Furthermore, this research will provide assistance to the future of Iran’s English textbook development; however, in brief, some critical issues need to be kept in mind. Firstly, it is faulty to compare the new English textbooks of Iranian educational system with the former ones, since the new series is alleged to be created based on recent achievements in English coursebook development. Hence, it is obvious that the Prospects are superior over the previous course books of Iranian junior high school due to the attempts to employ a communicative approach; however, a comprehensive modification of the activities included these textbooks through continual content and needs analyses will be more helpful than

Figure 1. Integrated activities in Prospect series
stabilizing the current textbooks and accepting them as they are. Secondly, teachers and learners’ insights, as the direct users of the textbooks, are valuable and should be culled and observed in textbook modifications and revisions. Thirdly, due to the fact that the students are going to learn an international language, it would be propitious to familiarize them with other cultures and use more authentic materials to help them perceive the international sense of English and to enhance the communicative values of the coursebooks. Fourthly, use of supplementary materials along with the text books can be an illuminating way to ensure efficiency of the Prospect series (Alishahi, Ghanizadeh, & Hosseini, 2019).

And finally, a comprehensive and revolutionary perspective toward teaching English in Iranian high schools is needed which invites all ideas and accepts all criticisms.

To put it in a nutshell, the Prospect coursebooks are presumed as a successful breakthrough in relation to the previous English textbooks taught in junior high schools of Iran (Yarmohammadi, 2000); however, it needs improvement in terms of activities regarding communicative, cognitive, and creative potentials.

6. Conclusion

This study sought to carry out a predictive evaluation (Ellis, 1997) on English coursebooks of Iranian junior high schools using the model of CLT coursebook analysis by Dubin and Olshtain (1986). Careful evaluation of the series revealed that despite the authors’ claims that the Prospect series are developed according to CLT tenants, these series lack the basic potentials of CLT which are communicative, cognitive, and creative potential. Although it is obvious that the Prospects are superior over the previous coursebooks of Iranian junior high school due to the attempts to employ a communicative approach, a comprehensive modification of the activities included these textbooks through continual content and needs analyses will be more helpful than stabilizing the current textbooks and accepting them as they are. Further, the use of supplementary materials along with the textbooks can be an illuminating way to ensure the efficiency of the Prospect series (Alishahi, Ghanizadeh, & Hosseini, 2019). Moreover, this study enjoys theoretical implications as it raises critical questions in terms of the claimed underlying communicative essence of the textbooks. As the findings revealed, none of the main three communicative potentials were fulfilled in this series. Therefore, two points can be concluded; the textbooks are not developed based on the alleged communicative approach or Iranian English material
developers have presented a new definition of CLT. These are the issues that need to be explained by the Prospects’ development team and the involved authorities. Additionally, the findings of the present investigation into the Prospect series may assist material designers to develop coursebooks that are more adapted to the alleged communicative aspects.

Meanwhile, this study is limited in terms of obtaining the teachers’ and learners’ retrospective opinions about the alleged underlying communicative tenants in the Prospect series. Such studies would also be illuminating and insightful in providing a more comprehensive overview of the status quo of the Prospect series in Iranian public schools.

References


### Appendix A

The activities of P1, P2, and P3 with their types

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Activities</th>
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<th>Communicative Scale Score</th>
<th>Cognitive Scale Score</th>
<th>Creative Scale Score</th>
</tr>
</thead>
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<td><strong>Prospect 1 – Student Book</strong></td>
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<td></td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>6</td>
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<tr>
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<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Sounds and Letters</td>
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<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
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<td>4. Listening and Reading</td>
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<td>6</td>
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<tr>
<td>5. Speaking and Writing</td>
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<td>10</td>
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<td>6. Your Conversation</td>
<td>8</td>
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<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
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<td><strong>Prospect 1 – Work Book</strong></td>
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<td>2. Finding Information</td>
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<td>3. Ordering Activities</td>
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<td>4. Differentiating Information.</td>
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### Appendix B

**The Potentials of the activities of P1, P2, and P3**

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**Creative Potential of Prospect 1**

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**Cognitive Potential of Prospect 3**

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