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RESEARCH ARTICLE

An Evaluation of the English Language Textbooks for Iranian Junior High Schools Based on the Objectives of Fundamental Reform Document of Education (FRDE)

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Abstract: Although several studies have been carried out after the approval of the Fundamental Reform Document of Education (FRDE) in 2011, a small number of studies have reviewed the textbooks of Iranian schools in the light of this document, and unfortunately, English language textbooks have almost been ignored. Accordingly, the present study sought to answer the questions of what objectives are included in this document regarding English language teaching at schools, and to what extent the English language textbooks for Iranian Junior High Schools are based on these objectives. Therefore, the text of the document was first analyzed using directional content analysis. Then, based on the objectives extracted from the FRDE, the content of English language textbooks were reviewed. The results showed that the objectives of teaching English in accordance with this document should be (1) critical understanding and analysis of non-Iranian culture, (2) responsible interaction to introduce Iranian-Islamic culture and civilization, as well as dissemination of local findings and achievements and (3) establishing effective interaction and communication with non-Iranian parties, which is specifically explained in the form of two micro-goals (a) knowledge and mastery of local issues and (b) knowledge and awareness of global issues. Then, using deductive content analysis, English textbooks were analyzed. The results showed that these

textbooks deal mainly with Iranian culture, and the balance between Iranian and "non-Iranian" culture, which is clearly defined in the document in three regional, Islamic and global forms but is not noticed. Accordingly, the findings of this study implied that it is essential that prospect series be revised to include non-Iranian cultural issues, especially those from Islamic countries and nations. In addition, there is a need to include global issues while domesticating them moderately.

Keywords: Content Analysis; Fundamental Reform Document of Education (FRDE); High School English Textbooks; Prospect.

Introduction

Regardless of the nature of an English language teaching program, textbook is considered its main component, and as Sheldon (1988) stated, textbooks represent the visible heart of any language teaching program. Therefore, their continuous evaluation is necessary (Tomlinson, 2003). For this purpose, taking into account the variety of goals of textbook evaluation, several approaches have been established to achieve them. While the main goals of such studies were often evaluating teaching methods and practices (Tucker, 1975), more recent studies also include the perspectives of language learners and/or teachers (Janfeshan, 2018) and even some other aspects of English language teaching such as the critical perspectives in L2 education (Sardabi, Biria & Golestan, 2019). In order to

have better productive and practical outcomes, teachers must adopt a realistic view of society which is "usually not so good, problematic, inequitable, and very much in need of critique and improvement".

In recent years, numerous and diverse studies have been conducted on high school textbooks in Iran, and the educational, cultural and ideological aspects of English textbooks were also explored. For example, these textbooks were studied as a textual body from the point of view of discourse analysis (Ahmadi et al., 2019); the Iranian-Islamic identity of their content has also been the focus of researchers (Ghiyasiyan et al., 2017). Also, in recent years, Iranian researchers have conducted research to investigate the educational value of these textbooks, with

reference to a number of criteria such as physical characteristics of textbooks (e.g., as design, and organizational specifications), teaching methods, goals and coherence (Ahmadi et al., 2019). The content, suitability to students' needs and modern teaching approaches have not been neglected (Ebrahimi & Sahragerd, 2017; Jahangard, 2007; Janfeshan, 2018; Shabani & Nejad, 2013). But it seems that what remains hidden from the eyes of many researchers in this field is the superior documents of the field of education, which are considered as the constitution for textbook development or other educational decisions. In this regard, it is possible to mention the Fundamental Reform Document of Education (FRDE), which has not received the attention of Iranian researchers to evaluate high school English language textbooks. Therefore, it can be claimed that there is a serious research gap in this field, which the present study tried to address.

The FRDE determines the priorities of education at all levels in Iran. In this regard, it can be claimed that foreign language education in the official education system in Iran should not be an exception. Accordingly, this

document has to be counted on in the compilation of English language textbooks for high schools. Therefore, taking the key position of this document in the education system into consideration in this research, and with a qualitative analysis of the content of the junior high school English language textbooks (Prospect series), it is possible to determine to what extent these textbooks are consistent with the FRDE. Therefore, two research questions were raised in this study:

1- What explicit and implicit criteria for teaching English to Iranian language learners can be inferred in the FRDE?

2- To what extent do the Iranian junior high school English textbooks, Prospect series, address the criteria proposed for English language teaching in the FRDE?

Review of the Related Literature

The process of English education in Iran has been documented in a growing number of works including Farhady et al. (2010), Borjian (2013), Atai and Mazlum (2013), Iranmehr and Davari (2018), Nezakatgoo (2018), Davari, et

al., (2020), Maghsoudi (2021) and Mallahi (2022). After the approval of the Fundamental Reform Document of Education in 2011 and the implementation of the National Curriculum, we have witnessed the implementation of a new curriculum on English in the education system. The program, with a change in the teaching approach, as well as the preparation and compilation of newly developed textbooks, has had a major difference with the previous traditional and inefficient program.

Based on this post-revolutionary system of English language education in Iran, education, in general, is a significant instrument for promotion of the country's qualified human capital in various areas and the English language education in the Iranian formal system, in particular, has experienced its most fundamental controversial reform (Davari, 2020).

The FRDE (2011) claims it focuses on an education system capable of materializing Hayate Tayyebah (the ideal Islamic life), universal justice and Islamic-Iranian civilization. Therefore, humanity shall be prepared for realization of a global reign for

perfect mankind and under such governance the talents and potentials of the mankind shall boom towards perfection. A significant part of this document is devoted to providing a long series of solutions to the current educational deficiencies and setbacks. In other words, the compilation of the FRDE is thought to be due to the lack of achievement of educational goals at the time of penning the document and the lack of response to the actions taken until then to make environmental and social changes.

In this document, not only were the general goals and operational objectives explained, but the basis of organization and theoretical framework of each of them has also been determined. In this order, the duties and directions of each sub-system of education in Iran were stated according to its operational objectives (Qajari et al., 2019). The six subsystems of this document are as follows:

- 1- Educational leadership and management subsystem
- 2- Curriculum subsystem
- 3- Teacher training and provision of human resource subsystem
- 4- Financial resource provision and allocation subsystem

5- Educational aid and technology subsystem

6- Research and evaluation subsystem

Each subsystem has a statement that includes propositions that present the overall picture of the subsystem based on the theoretical foundations of the FRDE. In fact, these propositions form the necessary theoretical basis for determining and defining the goals of each subsystem. Accordingly, operational objectives and strategies related to each sub-system are mentioned (Qajari et al., 2019).

The FRDE seems to be a controversial document since it has been criticized in some previous studies while it has simultaneously been approved by some other experts. For example, Marzooghi, et al. (2015) examined the conceptual and theoretical organization of this document and stated that the FRDE is not methodologically and conceptually consistent and also lacks structural coordination and organization, as far as its components are considered. The same issues were emphasized by Marzooghi et al. (2016). Amralahi (2015) examined the FRDE from the point of view of

education managers and showed that this document suffers from lack of their support and participation when it comes to its implementation. Dizavi (2013) analyzed the philosophical foundations of the FRDE and stated that the document potentially responds to the needs and cultural conditions of the society after the revolution. Meanwhile, in this research, it was pointed out that in order to achieve the educational goals of this document, more attention should be paid to the cultural differences within Iran, as well as at the global level. Saffarheidari & Hossainnjad (2014) and Mozannabi (2013) argued that this document is to some extent idealistic, and inefficient, as well, because it does not take account of cultural differences and globalization, supervisory guidelines, socio-cultural factors, and economic developments.

Since evaluation is respected as an integral part of educational contexts, academic communities and materials such as textbooks set a plan-do-evaluate-act cycle to warrant high quality, well-targeted teaching and learning opportunities in their contexts (Zakeri, Kiyani and Baradaran, 2018). The program evaluation of schools is indispensable to ensure

continuing relevance, coherence, balance, and progression within the curriculum. More importantly, the process establishes an evidence source for successive judgement and decision making on developed curriculum or on curriculum development and revision. As said by Zakeri, Kiayni and Baradaran (2018), evaluation can scrutinize the curriculum and should be pondered as an advantageous process that accredits the strategic development, implementation, and maintenance of quality academic course or program.

Although this study is limited to Iranian context in terms of the frame of reference for textbook evaluation and material, Prospect series, it has to be noted that the approach which was adopted in this study, that is, evaluating a locally developed textbook based on locally developed educational documents, has been recurrently adopted within the field of textbook evaluation. For example, Widodo (2018) focusing on moral education, or character education, in English language teaching (ELT), viewed locally developed textbooks as sociocultural artifacts featuring pre-defined moral values or character virtues.

Hiring critical micro-semiotic discourse study, he examined how values are depicted in one Indonesian school English textbook, and revealed that visual artifacts and verbal texts represented numerous values of which both teachers and students have to be aware. Similarly, You et al. (2019) evaluating Korean textbook reform policy, analyzed national curriculum alignment with school textbooks. They concluded that the textbooks only partially focused on the objectives of the mandated curriculum. In line with such studies, this study also focused on the FRDE, as the basis of evaluating Prospect series.

With reference to the key role defined for the FRDE by the Ministry of Education and other supreme committees and councils in Iran, it is expected that its defined goals, operational objectives and strategies play a fundamental role in developing materials for schools in Iran. A glance at the previous studies is well enough to notice the gap in the literature in terms of using the FRDE as the basis for evaluation of educational practice, such as material development and evaluation. To fill this gap, this study attempted to place the FRDE as the theoretical cornerstone based on

which the researcher examined what was included in Iranian junior high school textbook, Prospect series, in terms of its consistency with the FRDE. To fulfill this objective, directed content analysis method was utilized, as it is described in the section below.

Materials and Method

This study can be categorized as qualitative research and its method can be considered as content analysis. From this point of view, according to the above-mentioned research questions, the content of two separate bodies, the FRDE, the document of the fundamental reform of document education, as well as the textbooks, the implicit and explicit references to foreign language learning and teaching were analyzed. In this way, the findings of the content analysis of the FRDE about foreign language education provided a platform for the analysis of the content of the English textbooks for junior high school, Prospect series.

At first, the FRDE was analyzed based on a directional analysis; unit of analysis was sentence and open coding was implemented. If

a sentence contained explicit or implicit code in the direction of foreign language teaching or learning, it was extracted to be classified under a theme. To ensure the dependability of the results, three professors, specialists in English language education, also reviewed the results including the thematic classification of the extracted codes, and after their approval, the themes were used for textbook evaluation. For example, under operational objective 1, strategy 5, “provision of foreign language education within the optional (Core-elective) section of the curriculum framework by observing the principle of stabilization and enforcement of the Islamic–Iranian identity” (FRDE, 2011 p. 32), included a relevant code, “stabilization and enforcement of the Islamic–Iranian identity” which was later classified under the theme “the introduction of Iranian-Islamic culture and civilization”.

The second stage of content analysis included the review of the content of the English language textbooks. Considering the fact that "a textbook is a text that presents educational goals in the form of text, images, and assignments" (Hassan Moradi, 2008, p. 50), the unit of analysis included goals, text,

images, questions, and exercises of Prospect series (Rahnami & Khosh-Akhlaq, 2019). Content analysis at this stage was comparative; the content of the textbooks was compared with the themes extracted from the FRDE in the previous step. At this stage, the content analysis started with the purposeful and non-random selection of textbook text samples (Abolmaali, 2013). That is, the main contents of the units, including conversations, grammar and vocabulary activities, short reading and writing activities, and pictures were examined. Based on the themes, the samples extracted from each textbook were categorized. In order to ensure the reliability of the results, the codes arranged under each theme were presented to three experts to be evaluated on a three-point scale ranging from inappropriate to appropriate (Khosravi, 2008; Rezapour Nusratabad, 2017); the agreement coefficient was calculated which was 96.33, implying high level of credibility.

Results

In this section, the answers to the research questions are presented separately. The first

question of the research was about what explicit and implicit criteria can be inferred for teaching English to Iranian language learners in the FRDE. The findings showed that the introduction, the first chapter (general formal education system), the third chapter (mission statement), the fifth chapter (major goals) and the eighth chapter (institutional framework and implementation system of the fundamental reform of education) do not include any explicit or implicit reference to the language category. In other words, the present researchers could discover some related codes in the second, fourth, sixth and seventh chapters of the FRDE.

In the second chapter of this document, foreign language is mentioned as a tool for interacting with other cultures on page 18, Statement 22 states that "preservation of Islamic-Iranian culture through a conscious assessment and critical interaction with other cultures based on an Islamic norm system". Therefore, it can be said that the textbooks should be a good platform to increase students' ability to understand and critically analyze non-Iranian cultures by emphasizing Islamic standards. Due to the idea of Islamization of

humanities after the Islamic revolution in Iran, the concept of identity found new dimensions. To shape the learners' identity based on an Islamic norm system and to react to the possible threats, awareness of other cultures can be the most prominent one. That is, learners are expected to understand who they are and who they think other people are.

In the perspective presented in the fourth chapter (FRDE, 2011, page 21), public formal education and training system in the horizon of 2025, relies on the eternal power of God, and is based on the standards of Islamic-Iranian culture and civilization. In the light of excellent educational capabilities, the style of the Islamic Republic of Iran is expected to expand at the regional level, and inspire the education and training systems at the world level. It is expected to establish an effective link between the issues and problems of society at the local, regional and national scale with active presence in social life (FRDE, 2011, page 22). In the sixth chapter (page 28), which lists the major strategies of education and upbringing, Statement 14 emphasizes the development of educational capacities for active and constructive presence in the international and

regional scenes in line with the realization of the goals and missions contained in superior documents and the general policies of the Supreme Leader and the five-year plans. In this way, effective communication and interaction with non-Iranian individuals, groups, institutions, and centers should also be among the priorities set in the textbooks. In this regard, students' mastery and knowledge is emphasized both on local (local and national) and transnational (regional and global) issues.

In the seventh chapter, where the operational objectives and strategies are stated, students are expected to have a spirit of responsibility and excellence, and also possess communication skills in family and social life at local or global levels (FRDE, 2011, page 37) and try to preserve and improve cultural, civilizational, and artistic heritage at the national and global levels based on Islamic standards (FRDE, 2011, page 38). In the same part, in strategy 5, it is stated that providing foreign language education (as an option), is for establishing and strengthening the Islamic-Iranian identity, which indicates the importance of teaching/learning a foreign language. Therefore, English language

textbooks should be able to prepare students for responsible interaction to introduce Iranian-Islamic culture and civilization and the achievements of the country in the near future.

In the seventh chapter, in Operational Objective 11 under Strategy 11, active participation in international interactions, with the priority of the Islamic world and the reflection of successful domestic ideas and experiences in international scientific circles and centers (FRDE, 2011, page 43) was in focus. Students are expected to present and

introduce local achievements at the global level. Likewise, in Operational Objective 23, under Strategy 3, it is stated that material and moral support for successful projects and local innovations, documenting and publishing research findings inside and outside the country, and creating an active and efficient database (FRDE, 2011, page 51) have to be in focus; double emphasis on mastering a foreign language with the aim of disseminating activities on a global scale is evident.

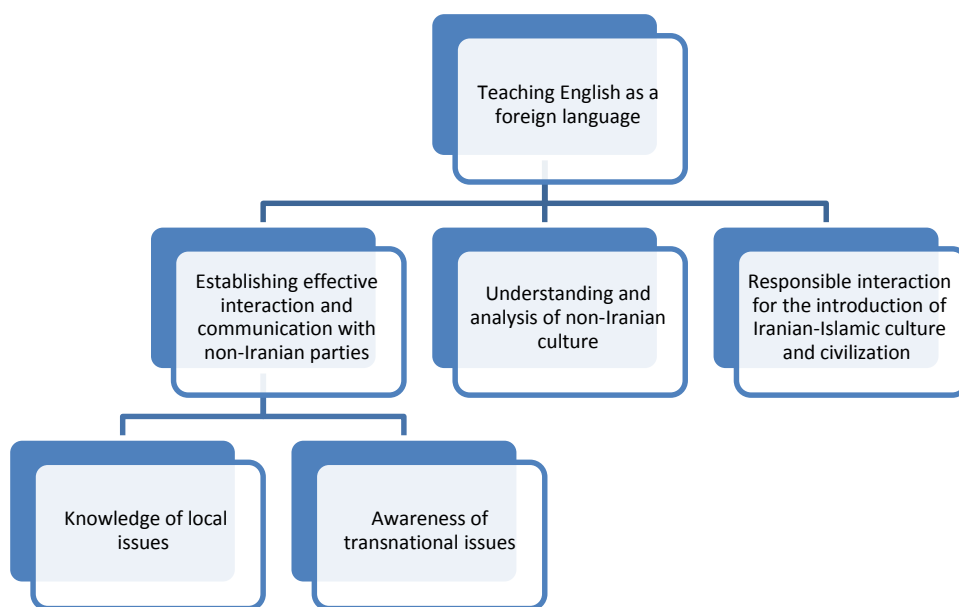


Fig. 1. The objectives of teaching English as a foreign language extracted from the FRDE

From this point of view, it can be said that although the FRDE has not independently allocated a section to foreign language

education, it is limited to its importance in different sections - the second, fourth, sixth, and seventh chapters. According to the

findings, the goals set for teaching English as a foreign language, as shown in Figure 1, include three main goals and two secondary goals. In this way, it can be said that the objectives of teaching English according to the FRDE should be (1) critical understanding and analysis of non-Iranian culture, (2) responsible interaction for the introduction of Iranian-Islamic culture and civilization and the dissemination of findings and local achievements, and (3) establishing effective interaction and communication with non-Iranian parties; the latter includes two micro-

objectives (a) knowledge of local issues, and (b) awareness of transnational issues.

After extracting the framework of foreign language learning objectives in the FRDE, the ground was provided for content analysis and the discovery of the answer to the second question asking: to what extent the Prospect series have addressed the criteria proposed for English language teaching in the FRDE? In order to find out the answer to this question, each textbook was examined separately, and the results are described below.

Table 1. Examples of the content related to the objectives extracted from the seventh grade English book (Prospect 1)

Lesson	Objectives			
	Critical analysis and understanding	Effective interaction and communication	Knowledge of local issues	Awareness of translational issues
1	-	-	-	-
2	-	-	-	-
3	-	-	-	-
4	-	-	-	-
5	-	4	-	-
6	-	-	-	-
7	-	-	-	-
8	-	2	-	-

In the first, second, third, and fourth lessons of Prospect 1, basically, no examples or works of non-Iranian culture can be found either visually or textually, and all the images are taken from geography, sightseeing places, clothing of Iranian urban people, food and other equipment that can be found in the conventional class of Iranian schools (e.g. white-boards, desks, seats, etc.). Another interesting thing to note is that even the names chosen for conversation and exercises are conventional Iranian names and do not include non-Iranian names - even from Muslim countries or neighboring countries - or names related to local sub-cultures. For example, in the exercises of the second lesson, two Iranian people are talking in English to get to know each other at school and welcome each other. As another example, in the third lesson, topics related to the date, days and months of a year are discussed; the months of the solar calendar are written in English. There are neither trace of days and months of the Gregorian calendar nor examples of its comparison with the solar calendar. Therefore, it can be said that there is no opportunity to get to know and analyze non-Iranian cultures,

learn about local or transnational issues, or introduce local cultures in the book. As another example, in the fourth lesson, in addition to observing the things that were mentioned above, it can be seen that there is no trace of native customs or culture, or reference to native Iranian or non-Iranian occupations; the topics are completely related to conventional urban life.

In the fifth lesson, only in two pictures (pages 29 and 30) and two exercises-one is a conversation (page 30) and the other is a reading and listening exercise (page 31) - women's hijab, such as chador, was mentioned. It should be noted that in this lesson, even this level of introduction is limited to the conventional clothing of urban women and that of indigenous sub-cultures of the country is not considered at all. In addition, the clothing of other Islamic or neighboring nations has not been considered at all.

The sixth and seventh lessons not only focused on understanding local and transnational issues, and encouraging critical thinking, but also contain an opportunity to present local achievements and characteristics. However, natives are not considered; in these

lessons, even in the pictures, there is no trace of native architecture or the traditional material of Iranian and non-Iranian local houses. The words, phrases, and sentences as well as the pictures indicate the conventional life of the urban middle class of the Iranian society. In the eighth which is about foods, only in two cases, local aspects are covered and there is no trace of international awareness.

According to the findings presented in this section, it should be said that the 7th grade

English language book (Prospect 1) did not seriously address any of the objectives of the FRDE and, to a very limited extent, knowledge of local issues in the field of hijab (covering) and food has provided the field of awareness. It should be noted that in these cases, the introduction and expression of social and cultural values and issues, which is one of the important parts of the FRDE, were not addressed.

Table 2. Examples of content related to the objectives extracted from the FRDE in the 8th grade English book (Prospect 2)

Lesson	Objectives			
	Critical analysis and understanding	Effective interaction and communication	Knowledge of local issues	Introduction of Iranian-Islamic culture and civilization
1	-	2	2	-
2	-	-	-	-
3	-	-	-	-
4	-	1	-	-
5	-	1	-	2
6	-	1	-	1
7	-	-	-	-

In Prospect 2, in the first lesson, in the pictures on page 11, the Holy Shrine of the 8th Imam of the Shiites (AS) and also a picture of a village on the slopes of the mountains is shown, which is somewhat encouraging and is the stimulus for knowing about and discussing the Iranian-Islamic identity. In the conversation on page 12, a person of Iranian origin, who lives in France, is introduced. Then, he comments about life in Iran. These exercises, along with the exercise on page 14, which contains maps of other countries such as Egypt, India, Japan, Indonesia, etc., and the exercise on page 17, about a guest from another country, can encourage activities which raise transnational awareness.

There is a section on local and transnational issues in the class, but it still does not open a way for critical categories or introduction of achievements. In the second lesson, however, this promising trend is completely lost and no exercise in this lesson deals with daily and weekly programs, introduce local and transnational categories or compare them critically. In the same way, the third lesson does not introduce any of the native, local, and national "abilities" or compare it with the

abilities and achievements of other nations. The fourth lesson also proceeds according to the procedure of the second and third lessons, with the only difference that on the last page of the lesson (page 39), the picture of famous Iranian figures, such as Avicenna, Dr. Majid Samii and Dr. Mohammad Gharib, are placed next to the picture of Louis Pasteur; however, there are no instructions for practice or class activity; that is, the intention of the authors in bringing these images is not clear.

At the beginning of the fifth lesson (page 42), the conversation between Morteza and Panindra (from India), which introduces Isfahan, can be an opportunity to introduce Iranian-Islamic culture and Iran's economic and artistic achievements. In the same way, on page 44, the language learners are asked to practice their conversations by looking at the pictures of famous historical, sports, and religious places in Iran. Finally, on page 47, they are asked to introduce their place of residence and native areas, which can be an example of knowledge about local issues.

In the sixth lesson, the topic of conversation on the first page of the lesson (page 48), about Qazkalah, a village in West Azerbaijan, is one

of the few sources of dealing with local issues in this book. Similar to the fifth lesson, in the final part of this lesson, the language learners are asked to introduce their village in a hypothetical conversation with a tourist, which eventually turns into an opportunity to introduce local characteristics and achievements. But in the seventh lesson, which deals with hobbies, there is no opportunity to introduce native hobbies, Iranian and non-Iranian lifestyles, or to compare Iranian hobbies and lifestyles to those of nations.

Table 3. Examples of content related to the objectives extracted from the 9th grade English book (Prospect 3)

Lesson	Objectives			
	Critical analysis and understanding	Effective interaction and communication	Knowledge of local issues	Introduction of Iranian-Islamic culture and civilization
1	-	1	-	1
2	-	1	-	1
3	1	3	1	3
4	-	1	-	1
5	-	1	-	-
6	-	-	-	-

In the first lesson, in an exercise on page 23, students are asked to introduce their characteristics and it gives them an opportunity to introduce themselves and their characteristics to interact and communicate with non-native people. On page 25, under an irrelevant topic to the subject of the lesson, learners are asked to introduce Iran and its characteristics, which, despite some deviation from the subject of the lesson, provides an opportunity to increase students' awareness of local subjects. The second lesson begins with a conversation between a German tourist and a hotel receptionist (page 30), which despite the

topic of the conversation, in this exercise there is no opportunity to achieve the goals set in the FRDE. On the last page of the lesson, page 41, learners are asked to role-play a conversation between a tourist and a hotel receptionist, which can be used as an opportunity to create awareness about native and local issues as well as practice presentation of culture or local achievements in the form of interaction and communication.

The third lesson, which deals with celebrations and festivals, begins with a picture of Haftsin's table and a conversation between Elham and Nasrin about what they do in Nowruz (page 50), which can be considered an opportunity to learn about local issues. Likewise, on pages 52 and 53, along with the introduction of new words, pictures and words related to local clothes and New Year customs, an opportunity is provided to increase learners' awareness of local issues. Next, in a conversation between Sam and Shayan, the topic of Nature Day (April 13) and its related customs are mentioned, which is considered to be a way of communication and interaction to introduce local culture. After that, on page 58, students are engaged in a conversation, in

which the goal of raising awareness about local issues and cultural interaction can be pursued. Next, on page 59, language learners have the opportunity to raise awareness of transnational issues in the form of a listening exercise about Chinese New Year. On the last page of this lesson, page 61, learners are asked to talk about national and international festivals, which is one of the few opportunities for critical analysis of local and non-Iranian issues; it also can be a chance for practicing the introduction of local culture and achievements.

The fourth lesson includes an exercise on the final page of the lesson, page 75, in which students have to describe the services in their city, which can be used as an opportunity for interaction and introduction of local characteristics and achievements. The fifth lesson deals with the introduction of the Fajr Film Festival in the picture and the conversation at the beginning of the lesson, on page 82, is considered as an opportunity to raise awareness of local/national issues, despite the fact that there are no questions before or after it. In the sixth lesson, none of the exercises have considered the main and secondary goals proposed in the fundamental principles.

Overall, it can be claimed that the textbooks have a variety of exercises to achieve the objectives mentioned in the FRDE, but the distribution of exercises is not homogeneous.

Figure 2 depicts the distribution of the number of exercises in Prospect series, according to the objectives mentioned in the FRDE. It can be seen that the goal of critical understanding and analysis has been neglected in Prospect series, except in Prospect 3. To some extent, awareness of transnational issues is not seriously covered in Prospect series. On the other hand, it can be seen that the recognition of local issues is more seriously

emphasized in these books, and the only item which the three textbooks of Prospect series have in common is emphasis on Iranian-Islamic customs and culture, as reflected in knowledge of local issues. However, the other goal, i.e. introducing Islamic-Iranian culture and civilization and its achievements is neglected in Prospect 1 and is heavily emphasized in Prospect 3. Another point is that with the increase in learners' language ability and cognitive capacity, the variety of exercises addressing the goals of the FRDE also increases, but the activities covering these goals are not homogeneously distributed.

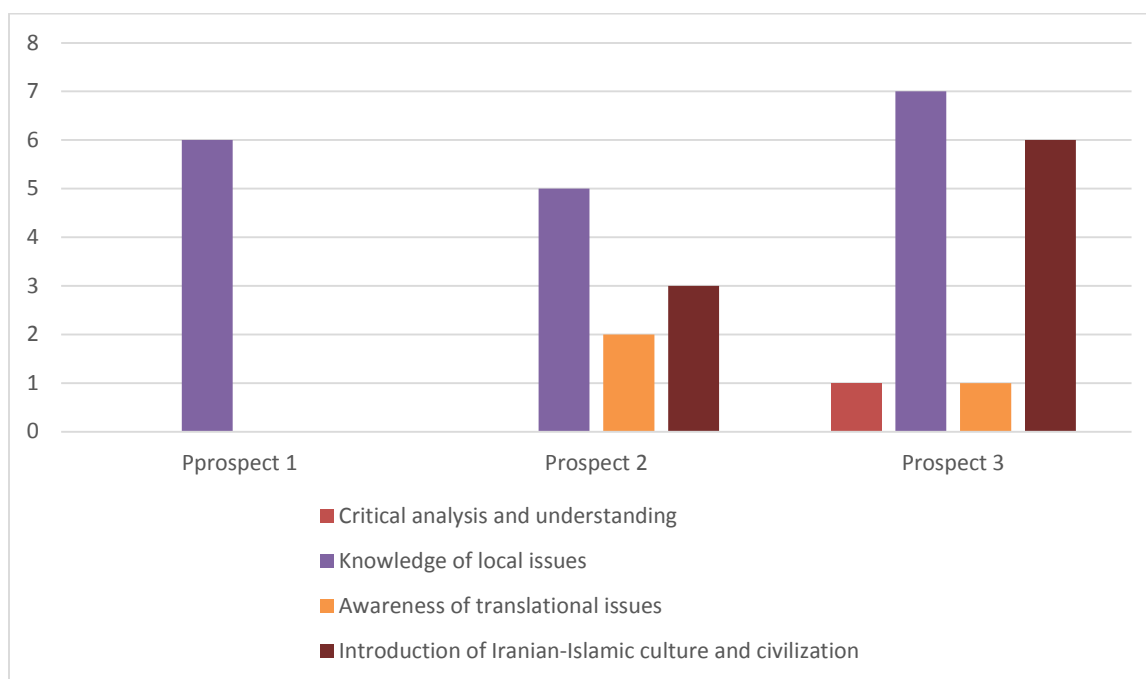


Fig. 2. The goals of the FRDE as reflected in Prospect series

Discussion

The findings of this research indicated that Prospect series mainly deal with Iranian culture and there is not a balance between native culture and "non-native" one. The content analysis of the FRDE indicated that critical analysis and understanding, introduction of Iranian-Islamic culture and civilization, awareness of translational issues, and knowledge of local issues are the four main objectives of teaching and learning English which are expected to be implemented in Prospect series, as junior high school English language teaching materials. However, the results revealed that knowledge of local issues is the main theme available in all three books of Prospect series. Moreover, it was shown that the distribution of the material contributing to these objectives are imbalanced; Prospect 1 is mainly dedicated to the promotion of knowledge of local issues. Prospect 2 mainly deals with knowledge of local issues, whereas critical analysis and understanding of non-Iranian culture and responsible introduction of Iranian-Islamic culture and civilization are attended to some extent. Prospect 3, however,

covers four objectives but the distribution of these objectives in this book series is to some extent imbalanced.

As Bahrainy (2013) stated, a textbook cannot be free of any cultural value. They should be considered as carriers of different beliefs and ideologies. In another word, the awareness of cultural values could not be avoided by English learners. This theme is also seen in the FRDE as an objective of foreign language learning/teaching; however, in Prospect series, such values and beliefs are not seriously discussed, with reference to regional and global frames. Based on what was extracted from the FRDE on foreign language teaching, it can be argued that this document, recurrently but implicitly, advocates teaching English as an international language or lingua franca. Considering this fact, based on the FRDE, students are expected to not only be familiar with the local Iranian-Islamic culture, but also to be aware of non-Iranian or "other" cultures. Based on the analysis conducted above, the latter type of "awareness" is to a great extent absent from these textbooks. The textbooks neither have the contents in the form of pictures or facts making students aware of

“other” cultures nor include sufficient instances of interaction and communication in the form of chats and conversations with English speakers, whether native or non-native, from “other” cultures. Interestingly enough, this issue has been discussed by several researchers who have recently evaluated Prospect series (e.g., Asakereh et al., 2019; Moharami & Daneshfar, 2022; Tafazoli & Egan, 2022). It seems that the results of this study also confirm their results by emphasizing the neglected components of the FRDE in these textbook series.

The FRDE seems to be partially implemented in Prospect series, as implied by the findings of the present research. It can be argued that the authorship of Prospect series suffered from either lack of attention to or mal-interpretation of the operational objectives and statements of the FRDE in terms of teaching foreign language in junior high schools in Iran. Similar claims are echoed in the recent criticism of the official documents issued by governmental authorities in terms of its implementation in high school textbooks and programs, and it cannot be seen as a unique phenomenon especial to Iranian context. For

example, You et al. (2019) also showed that in South Korea, a similar condition also existed when developing high school textbook. In line with their studies, such a phenomenon may be attributed to the fact that the development of official textbooks is a multi-agent process requiring harmonized yet independent managerial tasks (Amralahi, 2015), the mal-execution of each step may collapse the whole jigsaw to be developed.

Another justification may be embedded in the FRDE. It seems that the FRDE is partially hard-to-implement document not only for teaching English as a foreign language but other high school subjects (Hamidi et al., 2021). As Marzooghi, et al. (2015) emphasized, the organization of the document and the fact that the statements of the document are open to interpretation may be a barrier when setting the goals of textbook development. Mozannabi (2013) also argued that this document is to some extent idealistic, and inefficient, as far as this issue is concerned. It does not take account of cultural differences and globalization, supervisory guidelines, socio-cultural factors, which seems to be identified shortcomings identified in this study.

As stated above, the objectives of foreign language learning/teaching, as stated in the FRDE, were not implemented in Prospect series harmoniously. It can be argued that these objectives may be inherently impractical within the scope of junior high school pedagogy considering the cognitive and socio-affective development of the students as determining factor for learning socio-cognitive issues such as knowledge of local and global issues, or critical understanding and analysis (Schulze & Saalbach, 2022). That is, the objectives implied in the FRDE were not attributed to a specific age group or particular educational level. This is in line with what was already mentioned in previous research indicating the inherent deficiencies of this document (e.g., Dizavi, 2013; Saffarheidari & Hossainnjad, 2014). Accordingly, if such objectives as introducing Iranian-Islamic culture and civilization and awareness of trans-national or international issues may be beyond what can be expected from a thirteen-year-old student attending high school classes. From this point of view, the gradual emphasis on different objectives of the FRDE in Prospect series, as the proficiency level of the students

increases, is well-justified and can be considered as the strength of Prospect series. That is, this perspective justifies why the scope of objectives is expanded in Prospect series as the students, grow older.

However, the issue of imbalance of the distribution of the FRDE objectives in Prospect series in general, and each of the textbooks in particular, can be interpreted from a pessimist view. Based on what is learnt from previous studies such as Amralahi (2015) and Dizavi (2013) it can be argued that the FRDE is hard to support due to its conceptual and theoretical inconsistencies (Abbasi et al., 2020). As indicated by Abbasi et al, (2020), the FRDE suffers from swinging from linear approach to intertwined approach to settling the argument of reform, its operational objectives and strategies which make its interpretation complicated, and even controversial. Taking this inherited feature of the FRDE into account, the material developers may face inconsistent interpretations of the FRDE objectives which may lead to mal-implementation of the language teaching objectives of the FRDE in Prospect series. It seems that Prospect series are a kind of

reaction against the fact that most of the English language teaching books available in the country have a high non-native culture (Zarei, 2011; Taheri et al., 2015). That is, in Prospect, it seems that to prevent what is interpreted as the invasion and dominance of the English language and culture (Phillipson, 1991; McKay, 2006), the authors attempted to adopt a defensive method which led not only to the removal of traces of the culture of the English-speaking society, but also cultural values and frames of the region, and the Islamic world, as mentioned in the FRDE. In this regard, it should be noted that today, awareness of the different methods and purposes of using English is needed more than ever, and English in today's world does not belong to any single culture. It is crucial to recognize the multicultural context in which English is used and to rely on a more globalized view (McKay, 2006) in line with the FRDE. It may lead to increasing ability to understand and criticize local values, as well as regional/global issues, and to present the achievements of Iranian-Islamic civilization and culture.

All in all, after the approval of the Fundamental Reform Document of Education and the implementation of the National Curriculum the implementation of a new curriculum on English in the education system of Iran was witnessed. One of the main differences between the newly- developed program and the previous inefficient one was that the new program included the preparation and compilation of newly developed textbooks with a change in the teaching approach. In all, the findings of this study along with the previous ones (Maghsoudi, 2021, Karimi & Mozaffar, 2019 and Moradimoghdam & Farahman, 2013) indicated that the new program, along with its strengths, suffers from deficiencies in teacher education, ignorance of non-Iranian culture and the customs of other cultures of the region, the Islamic world, and global issues, as well, as stated in the FRDE.

Conclusion

The present article, which was conducted with the aim of examining the level of adaptation of Prospect series with the FRDE, using the content analysis method, indicated that Prospect series give priority to the native

culture of Iran so that non-Iranian aspects, values and frames are almost neglected. Although this can be seen as an indicator of anti-western tendencies that try to confront the one-sidedness of the attitudes and lifestyle of English-speaking countries, it can be said that the goals of foreign language education in the FRDE is to a great extent ignored. Although the imported textbooks available on the Iranian book market are full of western cultural values, this should not cause an unrealistic or extremist reaction to the position of English as an international language. This means that teaching English can be a platform for increasing awareness of local culture and issues and global issues, as well, as stated in the FRDE.

The findings of the present study have a number of implications which may be of significance for revising both the FRDE and Prospect series. Accordingly, it is suggested that by making the necessary changes in the content of Prospect series, better conditions are provided for raising the awareness and understanding of Iranian learners through interpretation and comparison of the norms of different cultures and communities in the

region or the world. For example, these textbooks should be arranged in such a way that, in addition to providing interaction between Iranian speakers and English speakers (if necessary), the interaction between non-English speakers who communicate in English is presented more dominantly (Alptekin, 2002). In fact, it is suggested that according to the priorities of language education in the FRDE, these textbooks include local and global cultures, which is a combination of different cultures, in a homogeneous, symmetrical, and awareness-raising manner that can be achieved through moderate domestication approach to textbook development. The findings of the study may have a further implication for future reforms made in the FRDE. An independent chapter or section can be dedicated to foreign language teaching to determine how it is viewed within the frame of reformed educational goals. Furthermore, this chapter of section is hoped to include clearly stated operational objectives and statements guiding the foreign language curriculum, especially, in terms of instruction and evaluation.

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تحلیل محتوای کتاب درسی زبان انگلیسی دوره متوسطه اول (پراسپکت) براساس اهداف زبان آموزی سند تحول بنیادین آموزش و پرورش

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چکیده: هرچند پس از تصویب سند تحول بنیادین آموزش و پرورش در سال ۱۳۹۰ تحقیقات متعددی درباره آن انجام شد، تعداد کمی از آنها به بررسی کتب درسی مدارس ایران در پرتو این سند بوده است و متأسفانه کتب آموزش زبان انگلیسی در این میان نادیده گرفته شد. بر همین اساس تحقیق حاضر به دنبال پاسخ به این پرسش بود که چه اهدافی برای آموزش زبان انگلیسی در این سند لحاظ شده و کتب درسی زبان انگلیسی که اکنون در دوره‌های اول متوسطه تدریس می‌شود تا چه اندازه بر این اهداف منطبق است. از این جهت، ابتدا متن سند تحول بنیادین با استفاده از روش تحلیل محتوای جهت‌دار بررسی شد و نتایج نشان داد که هدف آموزش زبان انگلیسی مطابق با سند تحول بنیادین باید (۱) درک و تحلیل انتقادی فرهنگ غیرایرانی، (۲) تعامل مسولیت‌پذیرانه برای معرفی فرهنگ و تمدن ایرانی-اسلامی و نیز انتشار یافته‌ها و دستاوردهای بومی و (۳) برقراری تعامل و ارتباط مؤثر با طرف‌های غیرایرانی است که این مورد آخر به‌طور اخص در قالب دو هدف خرد (الف) شناخت و تسلط بر موضوعات بومی و (ب) شناخت و آگاهی از موضوعات فراملی تبیین شده است. پس از آن، با استفاده از تحلیل محتوای قیاسی، کتب درسی زبان انگلیسی بررسی شدند که نتایج نشان داد که این کتب به‌طور عمده به فرهنگ بومی می‌پردازد و در آن تعادلی بین فرهنگ بومی و فرهنگ غیربومی، آن‌چنان‌که در سند تحول آموزش و پرورش به سه صورت منطقه‌ای، جهان اسلام و جهانی یاد شده است، به چشم نمی‌خورد. بر این اساس، پیشنهاد شد که با استفاده از روش بومی‌سازی متوسط، تغییراتی در نسخه‌های بعدی پرسپکت ایجاد شود، یافته‌های این پژوهش حاکی از آن است که ضروری است سری کتاب‌های پرسپکت به گونه‌ای بازنگری شود که موضوعات فرهنگی غیرایرانی به ویژه موضوعات مربوط به کشورها و ملل اسلامی را دربر گیرد. علاوه بر این، نیاز به گنجاندن مسائل جهانی و درعین حال بومی سازی متعادل مطالب و موضوعات اجتماعی و فرهنگی نیز ضرورت دارد.

واژه‌های کلیدی: پراسپکت، تحلیل محتوا، سند تحول بنیادین آموزش و پرورش، کتب آموزش زبان انگلیسی دوره متوسطه.