

JOURNAL OF  
Educational &  
Psychological  
S C I E N C E S

**The Pedagogical Value of UAE English Skills Textbooks  
as Perceived by Supervisors and Teachers in Al-Ain  
Educational Zone in the United Arab Emirates**

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### **Abstract**

This study examines the potential pedagogical value of UAE English Skills for seventh, eighth and tenth grade students in Al-Ain Educational Zone in the United Arab Emirates from the perspectives of (11) supervisors and 304 teachers who taught the series during the academic year (2007/2008). The authors adapted Al-Barakat, Bataineh, Al-Karasneh, and Bataineh's (2006) evaluation checklist along the dimensions of content, layout, assessment, the Teacher Book, and teaching/learning resources. The findings suggest general agreement among supervisors and teachers on the pedagogical value of UAE English Skills to its target audience with no statistically significant differences ( $\alpha=0.05$ ) along the five dimensions of the Checklist. The findings further reveal that only the teachers poorly perceive the pedagogical value of the accompanying software, CD-ROM, DVD and laserdiscs. The authors conclude with relevant recommendations to those who are interested in UAE English Skills textbooks.

**Key words:** UAE English skills, teacher and supervisor perceptions, textbook evaluation.

## القيمة التدريسية لكتاب UAE English Skills كما يراها المشرفون والمعلمون في منطقة العين التعليمية في دولة الامارات العربية المتحدة

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### الملخص

بحثت هذه الدراسة القيمة التدريسية لكتاب (UAE English Skills) لصفوف السابع والثامن والعاشر في منطقة العين التعليمية في دولة الامارات العربية المتحدة كما يراها (11) مشرفاً و (304) معلمين من درّسوا هذه السلسلة في العام الدراسي (2007/2008). وقد اعتمد المؤلفون قائمة المراجعة التي صممها البركات والبطاينة والكراسنة والبطاينة (2006) بمجالاتها الخاصة بالمحتوى وطريقة العرض والتقييم وكتاب المعلم ومصادر التعليم/التعلم. وقد أظهرت النتائج اتفاقاً عاماً بين المشرفين والمعلمين حول القيمة التدريسية للكتاب دون وجود أية فروق ذات دلالة عند ( $\alpha=0.05$ ) على أي من المجالات الخمسة. كما أظهرت النتائج أن المعلمين، دون المشرفين، يعدّون القيمة التدريسية للبرمجيات، والقرص المدمج، والقرص الرقمي، وأقراص اللابزير المصاحبة للكتاب متدنية. وقد ختم الباحثون بعدد من التوصيات للمهتمين بهذا الكتاب.

**الكلمات المفتاحية:** كتاب UAE English Skills، آراء، المشرفون، المعلمون، تقييم الكتب.

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### **Introduction and Background**

A textbook, defined as printed instructional material in bound form, the contents of which are properly organized and intended for use in elementary or high school curricula (Warren, 1981), is often the sole source of information in the foreign language classroom. However, textbooks are versatile and can function as a starting point for teachers to create lessons for their classes, as resource books for ideas and activities rather than as instructional materials, and as an initial framework adapted by a teacher to match his/her students' needs (Allwright, 1990; Cunnings worth, 1984; Kitao & Kitao, 1999).

Textbooks are meant to teach students what educators believe they ought to learn. Not only are textbooks the visible, tangible and practical manifestation of the curriculum (Hussian & Mahmood, 2002), but they also "tell children what their elders want them to know" (FitzGerald, 1979).

Textbooks are believed to play an instrumental role in foreign/second language teaching and learning. On average, teachers worldwide spend about (50) percent of their weekly teaching time on textbooks (Schmidt, McKnight and Raizen, 1996). Generally, textbooks determine what and how to teach in primary, elementary, and secondary classes and are often second in significance only to the teacher (Riazi, 2003) who usually uses the textbook as his/her principal curriculum guide and source of lessons

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(St. John, 2001). Nevertheless, researchers (see, for example, Ornstein, 1994) warn against viewing the textbook as the only source of knowledge or turning it into the curriculum itself.

More recently, the issue of textbook utility has been a matter of controversy. On one hand, textbooks are believed to offer considerable advantages for both students and teachers in English as a foreign or second language (EFL/ESL) and other subject matters. Of their primary advantages are that they are essential for concretely measuring student progress and achievement (Haycroft, 1998); they match the students' belief that published materials have more credibility than teacher- or school-generated materials (Sheldon, 1988) and, thus, motivate and foster learning; they are essentially sensitive to students' needs, even if they are not specifically designed for them (O'Neill, 1982); they are relatively inexpensive and involve low lesson preparation time (O'Neill, 1982; Sheldon, 1988); they allow for adaptation and improvisation (O'Neill, 1982) on the part of the teacher; they are versatile and multipurpose: they can be used as an effective student reference and resource for self-directed learning, as a source for ideas, activities, and presentation material, as a syllabus with valuable pre-determined learning objectives and activities, and as support for less experienced teachers and scaffolding upon which they can build more informed experience (Cunningsworth, 1995; Hutchinson & Torres, 1994).

On the other hand, textbooks are challenged as too inflexible and generally biased by the pedagogic, psychological, and linguistic orientations of their authors (Allwright, 1990); as generic and unresponsive to the specific needs of their users; as essentially inhibiting to teacher creativity (Ur, 1996); as potential sources of documented examples of gender bias, sexism, and stereotyping (Carrell & Korwitz, 1994; Clarke & Clarke, 1990; Florent & Walter, 1989; Renner, 1997); as sources of scripted, unauthentic and essentially inappropriate language for communicative real-life practice of pronunciation (Levis, 1999), language structures, idioms, vocabulary and conversational rules, routines and strategies (Cathcart, 1989; Bardovi-Harlig, Hartford, Mahan-Taylor, Morgan & Reynolds, 1991; Yule, Matthis, & Hopkins, 1992); and as unrealistically author- or publisher-promoted artifacts despite potentially serious theoretical problems, design flaws, and

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practical shortcomings (Sheldon, 1988).

The literature (cf., for example, Sheldon, 1988) suggests that no general list of criteria can be readily and generically used to evaluate all textbooks. However, there are accounts (cf., for example, Cunningsworth, 1995; Harmer, 1996) that all evaluation checklists should share components, such as those pertaining to layout and organization, to help teachers, supervisors, and curriculum designers realize the points of strength and weakness for the purpose of determining whether a textbook need be modified or replaced to better achieve the objectives of the course.

According to McGrath (2001), there are three basic methods for evaluating textbooks. To begin with, the impressionistic method involves analyzing a textbook on the basis of a general impression which would be gained by reading the blurb and the table of contents and then skimming through the book to get a sense of organization, topics, layout and visuals. Second, the checklist method uses a systematic list of criteria which are checked off in a certain order. Finally, the in-depth method involves a careful examination of representative features such as the design of one particular unit or exercise or the treatment of particular language elements. As all three methods have their own strengths and weaknesses, McGrath (2001) recommends an integrated approach which uses a unique set of criteria for each case of material selection.

Similarly, three different types of material evaluation have been in use (Cunningsworth, 1995; Ellis, 1997), the most common among which is the predictive or pre-use evaluation designed to examine the potential performance of a textbook. The second type is the in-use evaluation designed to examine currently used materials, as is the case with the current research. The retrospective or post-use evaluation targets a textbook that has been used in any respected institution.

The decision to utilize a textbook should, therefore, be carefully considered. Textbook content influences what teachers teach and learners learn. If the textbook is too advanced or too simple for the students, the teacher is inevitably faced with problems. Local cultural taboos could force the teacher to leave out certain parts, not to mention that the content of the textbook might not be of the kind to which students can relate (Fredriksson

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& Olsson, 2006).

In some contexts, teachers are free to choose their own textbooks. The vast majority of teachers worldwide, however, have textbooks suggested, prescribed, or assigned to them (Garinger, 2001), as is the case in the United Arab Emirates (UAE). However, it is paramount to keep in mind that no matter how good a textbook is, it is simply a tool in the hands of the teacher who essentially determines its value with what he/she can do with it. To this effect, Brown & Yule, (1983) state that

It is, in principle, not possible to find materials which would interest everyone. It follows that the emphasis should be moved from attempting to provide intrinsically interesting materials, which we have just claimed is generally impossible, to doing interesting things with materials ... [which] should be chosen, not so much on the basis of their own interest, but for what they can be used to do.

The Emirati educational system, which started officially after establishing the Union in (1971), has developed rapidly. It consists of three cycles: the primary stage which spans the first to fifth grades; the elementary stage which spans the sixth to ninth grades; and the secondary stage which spans the tenth to twelfth grades. The goals of the Ministry of Education and Youth (MoEY) are for students to be able to communicate with native and non-native speakers, read and understand authentic English texts, and express their views in writing (MoEY, 2000).

In order to improve the quality of English language teaching in the UAE, the MoEY introduced a new textbook series called UAE English Skills for the seventh, eighth, ninth, and tenth grades in all UAE public schools in the academic year (2006/2007). UAE English Skills, especially authored for the UAE by Terry & Anna Phillips (2006), consists of a student's book, a workbook, and a Teacher Book as well as cassettes and a CD-ROM.

UAE English Skills is reportedly learner-centered and geared towards students going on to study in English at the tertiary level rather than towards general communication. UAE English Skills does not assume that graduates from the course are going to become world travelers or use English as a lingua franca but rather engage in further study in English.

The authors of the series (Phillips & Phillips, 2006) report that the three

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basic principles underlying UAE English Skills are as follows:

1. Students need transferable knowledge about history, geography, science and nature to help them better understand things when they read or hear about the real world.
2. Students need transferable skills to enable them to listen, speak, read and write in the real world.
3. Students need broad and deep vocabulary.

### **Problem, Purpose and Questions of the Study**

Having been taught for the first time in the academic year (2006/2007), UAE English Skills need be evaluated to determine its strengths and weaknesses. To the authors' best knowledge, no attempt has been made to evaluate the textbook series and, thus, an examination of its pedagogical value from a stakeholders' (viz., supervisors and teachers) perspective may provide deeper insights into its utility and pedagogical effectiveness which may, in turn, inform its utilization in the language classroom.

This study examines the potential pedagogical value of UAE English Skills for its target audience along the dimensions of content, layout, assessment, the Teacher Book, and teaching/learning resources and proposes ways to improve the series. More specifically, it attempts to provide answers to the following questions:

1. What are the supervisors' and teachers' perceptions of the pedagogical value of UAE English Skills along the Checklist and each of its five dimensions?
2. Are there any significant differences ( $\alpha=0.05$ ) between the supervisors' and teachers' perceptions of UAE English Skills along the Checklist and each of its five dimensions, which can be attributed to occupation?

### **Review of Related Literature**

Even though no prior evaluation of this textbook series has ever been attempted, the literature has a plethora of evaluations of ESL/EFL textbooks which generally focus on their pedagogical value or the appropriateness, or lack thereof, of their cultural content, for evaluation is considered one of the basic methods for gaining feedback on and improving the quality of

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textbooks. The authors review some of these evaluations, which may or may not have any bearing on the current findings.

Jaradat, Akrabawi & Al-Kharoof (2002) evaluated Action Pack textbooks for the first and second grades in Jordanian public schools using two evaluation questionnaires on a sample of (238) EFL teachers and (57) supervisors. No significant differences were found among the respondents who viewed the content of the textbooks as suitable for the learners' needs, age, and interests. However, the number of classes per week was deemed inadequate and some teaching aids (e.g. computer programs) not properly utilized.

Al-Omari (2002) examined the perceptions of ten supervisors and (275) teachers about Action Pack textbooks for the first four primary grades using an 88-item questionnaire covering the dimensions of rationale, objectives, listening and speaking skills, reading and writing skills, grammatical and structural functions, vocabulary, methods of teaching, the Activity Book, teaching aids, and general aspects. Despite general agreement, the findings showed a mismatch in responses. For example, unlike supervisors, the teachers viewed content as unsatisfactory on the grounds of its irrelevance to the Jordanian society.

Masri (2003) examined (208) teachers' perceptions of the first grade English textbook in the northern district of Palestine using a (53) item questionnaire covering general aspects, instructional aids, structures and grammar, book content, and the Workbook. He reported significant differences in the teachers' evaluation attributed to gender, academic qualifications, and teaching experience.

Bataineh (2005) reported on a holistic qualitative analysis of the entire corpus of passages, activities, exercises and other reading supplements in the Students' Book, Workbook, Reader and Teacher Book of the Jordanian tenth grade English textbook, PETRA (6). The findings revealed that the content of the textbook is only moderately appropriate for the Jordanian environment, even though the environment, in general, is well represented and a lot of references are made to regional and international components. She concluded with a number of recommendations for including alternative or supplementary content for the purpose of creating relevant curricula

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which encourage learners to achieve and to view learning as a matter of personal relevance.

Karsou (2005) examined Action Pack textbooks (1-5) taught in Jordanian Public schools in terms of rationale, objectives, language skills, teaching aids, vocabulary items, content, methods, the Activity Book, the Teacher Book, and general aspects of the textbook. Using a (73) item questionnaire and interviews with EFL teachers, supervisors and students, he reported agreement among the respondents on the suitability of the textbooks for motivating learners to communicate, and the pedagogical value of reading material, teaching aids, and general aspects of the textbooks. However, although the teaching methods were found relevant to the general and specific objectives, the objectives themselves were found less relevant to the learners' real life.

Al-Shammari (2005) examined (140) teachers' perceptions of the Say it in English textbooks for the first and second intermediate grades in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia using a (66) item questionnaire along the eight dimensions of general aspects, content, structure, vocabulary, language skills, instructional aids, the Teacher Book, and the Workbook. Although the teachers were found to agree on the suitability of the series in terms of its rationale, objectives, grammatical and structural functions and Teacher Book, they viewed the gradual complexity in grammar exercises as inappropriate and the presentation of the language skills as fairly irrelevant to the students' backgrounds. Significant effects for gender were found in the teachers' evaluation, for experience in most dimensions, and for academic qualifications in two aspects: the Teacher Book and language skills.

Ta'amneh (2005) investigated Action Pack for the first six grades in Jordan from (21) supervisors' and 181 EFL teachers' perspectives using a (40) item questionnaire. The respondents were found to agree on the suitability of the textbooks concerning content, methods and techniques, objectives and ways of evaluation. Moreover, although no significant effects were found for position, gender, and experience in responses to the dimensions of content, methods and techniques, and objectives and evaluation, a significant difference was found for directorates of education in methods and techniques.

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Al-Barakat, Bataineh, Al-Karasneh & Bataineh (2006) evaluated the pedagogical value of the Action Pack Textbook Series (APTS) taught in the first four primary stage classes in Jordanian public schools as perceived by (300) teachers using an evaluation checklist and a semi-structured interview. They found that poor ratings were minimal, and that APTS is adaptable to both teachers' and pupils' needs, provides a broad range of resources that can be selectively integrated into the curriculum, has interesting, engaging and effective instructional materials, has a flexible, versatile and easy to follow Teacher Book, has appropriate non-text materials for promoting learning, and has students' materials which are well written, age-appropriate and compelling in content.

Ghabashneh (2007) examined (30) teachers', (100) parents', and (163) pupils' perceptions of the Zoom In textbook taught to sixth grade students at Yarmouk University Model School and other Jordanian private schools. He reported that even though the respondents agreed on the suitability of Zoom In, a statistical difference was found between teachers and pupils, for while teachers reported that reading comprehension texts and writing activities should be increased, pupils considered them sufficient and suitable.

The above review of, rather indirectly, related literature was undertaken of research which assesses the merits and demerits of other textbook series. The review focused mainly on EFL textbooks, primarily drawn from the Arab region during the past few years. To the authors' best knowledge, the current study is the first to evaluate the pedagogical value of the UAE English Skills series as perceived by supervisors and teachers. Its findings are hoped to provide stakeholders with insights into the pedagogical value of this series and potential venues for improvement.

### **Subjects, Instrumentation, and Data Collection and Analysis**

The subjects of the study are (11) English language supervisors and (304) teachers of UAE English Skills at the public schools of Al-Ain Educational Zone in the United Arab Emirates during the academic year (2008/2009).

To achieve the aim of the study, which is to evaluate the pedagogical value of UAE English Skills from supervisors' and teachers' perspectives, the authors adopted a slightly modified version of Al-Barakat et al (2006)

evaluation checklist. The rationale for using Al-Barakat et al's checklist is two-fold: (1) theirs is one of the most recent studies on the topic, and (2) their checklist was designed to evaluate a Jordanian series which is bound to hold uncanny similarities to one used in the UAE.

After obtaining permission from Al-Ain Educational Zone, the Checklist was hand-distributed to and collected from the subjects. They were asked to rate the items of the Checklist on a three-point scale: excellent, satisfactory, or poor. Their responses were classified into three categories with the following numeric intervals:

- 1 to 1.5: Poor
- 1.51 to 2.5: Satisfactory
- 2.51 or more: Excellent

To establish the reliability of the Checklist for the current study, it was administered to a pilot sample of (29) TEFL supervisors and teachers, excluded from the main sample of the study, with a two-week interval between the two administrations. The correlation coefficient was found to be 0.89, which is appropriate for the purposes of this study.

Although the Checklist had originally been validated for Al-Barakat et al (2006) study, its validity was re-established for supervisors and teachers in the UAE. A jury of seven TEFL professors from the United Arab Emirates and Abu Dhabi universities checked the validity of the Checklist. They recommended adding four items to its original (50), yielding a total of (54) items. Among the added items were content encourages pupils to think critically and the Teacher Book helps the teacher understand the philosophy and methodology of the textbook. Table (1) shows the number of items in each dimension before and after re-validation.

**Table (1)**  
**Number of Items in each Dimension of the**  
**Original and Modified Checklists**

No.	Dimension	Numbers of Items	
		Before re-validation	After re-validation
1	Book content	20	22
2	Layout	9	9
3	Assessment	6	6

**Table (1)**

No.	Dimension	Numbers of Items	
		Before re-validation	After re-validation
4	Teacher's Book	10	11
5	Teaching / learning resources	5	6
Total		50	54

### Findings and Discussion

Both supervisors and teachers reported favorably on the pedagogical value of UAE English Skills which they judged as satisfactory on the Checklist and each of its five dimensions, as seen in Table (2) below. Moreover, using a t-test for independent samples, the authors did not find any significant differences between the supervisors' and teachers' mean scores on the Checklist and each of its five dimensions, which can be attributed to occupation.

**Table (2)**

#### Means, Standard Deviations and T-Test Results of the Supervisors' and Teachers' Responses along the Five Dimensions of the Checklist

Dimension	Occupation	Mean	SD	t	df	Sig.
Content	Supervisor	2.02	0.458	-0.049	313	0.961
	Teacher	2.03	0.412			
Layout	Supervisor	2.13	0.455	-0.312	313	0.755
	Teacher	2.17	0.437			
Assessment	Supervisor	2.09	0.462	0.403	313	0.687
	Teacher	2.03	0.487			
Teacher Book	Supervisor	2.22	0.450	0.553	313	0.580
	Teacher	2.14	0.493			
Teaching/Learning Resources	Supervisor	1.99	0.302	1.197	313	0.232
	Teacher	1.81	0.472			
Total	Supervisor	2.08	0.396	0.276	313	0.783
	Teacher	2.05	0.393			

To identify perceptions of the various items in each of the five dimensions of the Checklist, a t-test for independent samples was used along with means and standard deviations, as shown in tables (3-7) below. Table (3) presents the means, standard deviations, and t-test results of the supervisors' and teachers' responses to the content dimension. Aside from being generally favorable for both groups of respondents, the responses reveal no significant

differences ( $\alpha=0.05$ ) between supervisors and teachers on any of the items of the content dimension.

**Table (3)**  
**Means, Standard Deviations and T-test Results of the Supervisors' and Teachers' Responses to the Items of the Content Dimension**

No.	Item	Occupation	Mean	SD	t	df	Sig.
1	Content is based on accurate, current information	Supervisor	2.18	0.40	-0.459	11.8	0.655
		Teacher	2.24	0.62			
2	Real-life applications are given	Supervisor	2.27	0.47	0.728	313.0	0.467
		Teacher	2.13	0.64			
3	Information and directions are clear to pupils	Supervisor	1.73	0.90	-1.382	313.0	0.168
		Teacher	2.05	0.75			
4	Activities are developmentally appropriate	Supervisor	2.09	0.70	0.224	313.0	0.823
		Teacher	2.04	0.70			
5	Dialogs are used to improve the pupils' language	Supervisor	2.18	0.98	0.476	10.4	0.644
		Teacher	2.04	0.72			
6	Exercises are presented in an interesting way	Supervisor	1.82	0.40	-0.619	12.5	0.547
		Teacher	1.90	0.73			
7	The reading materials are appropriate for pupils' levels	Supervisor	1.64	0.67	-1.515	313.0	0.131
		Teacher	1.96	0.69			
8	Non-text materials (e.g. maps, pictures, graphs) are accurately integrated into the text	Supervisor	2.00	0.77	-1.140	313.0	0.255
		Teacher	2.24	0.68			
9	Activities are appropriate for pupils' abilities	Supervisor	1.82	0.75	-0.753	313.0	0.452
		Teacher	1.97	0.63			
10	New vocabulary items are presented in context	Supervisor	2.46	0.52	1.033	313.0	0.302
		Teacher	2.23	0.71			
11	New vocabulary items are presented in life-like situations	Supervisor	2.27	0.65	0.994	313.0	0.321
		Teacher	2.06	0.71			
12	Previously learnt vocabulary items are used to teach new ones (vocabulary expansion)	Supervisor	2.00	0.63	-0.582	313.0	0.561
		Teacher	2.13	0.70			
13	Content gives pupils opportunities to use previously learnt vocabulary	Supervisor	2.09	0.70	-0.052	313.0	0.958
		Teacher	2.10	0.69			
14	The units are ordered logically	Supervisor	2.00	0.63	0.015	313.0	0.988
		Teacher	2.00	0.71			

**Table (3)**

No.	Item	Occupation	Mean	SD	t	df	Sig.
15	Content graduates from easy to difficult	Supervisor	1.91	0.54	-0.516	313.0	0.606
		Teacher	2.02	0.70			
16	Written and oral activities are related and integrated	Supervisor	2.00	0.45	-0.629	12.1	0.541
		Teacher	2.09	0.74			
17	Teaching handwriting is emphasized	Supervisor	1.73	0.79	0.580	313.0	0.562
		Teacher	1.60	0.72			
18	Written activities focus on repetition	Supervisor	1.82	0.75	-0.706	313.0	0.481
		Teacher	1.97	0.70			
19	Content provides pupils with activities that foster attainment and retention	Supervisor	2.09	0.70	0.803	313.0	0.422
		Teacher	1.95	0.58			
20	content encourages pupils to learn individually	Supervisor	2.00	0.63	0.515	313.0	0.607
		Teacher	1.90	0.67			
21	Content encourages pupils to think critically	Supervisor	2.09	0.54	0.762	313.0	0.447
		Teacher	1.93	0.69			
22	Workbook exercises are integrated and linked to the content	Supervisor	2.27	0.65	0.941	313.0	0.348
		Teacher	2.07	0.71			

Table (3) shows no significant differences ( $\alpha=0.05$ ) between the supervisors' and teachers' perceptions on any of the items of the content dimension. To test for significant differences between the two groups' responses on the items of the Layout dimension, means, standard deviations and t-test statistics were used, as shown in Table (4).

**Table (4)**

**Means, Standard Deviations and T-test Results of the Supervisors' and Teachers' Responses to the Items of the Layout Dimension**

No.	Item	Occupation	Mean	SD	t	df	Sig.
23	Layout reflects the organization of the various parts of the textbook	Supervisor	2.27	0.47	0.624	313.0	0.533
		Teacher	2.16	0.60			
24	Illustrations are accurate and well integrated into the text	Supervisor	2.09	0.54	-0.333	313.0	0.739
		Teacher	2.16	0.69			
25	Layout integrates graphics into the text	Supervisor	2.18	0.75	-0.027	313.0	0.979
		Teacher	2.19	0.69			
26	The pictures are representative and appealing to students	Supervisor	1.91	0.70	-1.412	313.0	0.159
		Teacher	2.20	0.67			

**Table (4)**

No.	Item	Occupation	Mean	SD	t	df	Sig.
27	Visual illustrations help pupils distinguish various vocabulary items	Supervisor	2.09	0.70	0.143	313.0	0.887
		Teacher	2.06	0.72			
28	The pictures help pupils infer word meaning	Supervisor	2.18	0.60	0.681	313.0	0.496
		Teacher	2.04	0.68			
29	Paper quality is good and durable	Supervisor	2.46	0.69	0.205	313.0	0.838
		Teacher	2.41	0.69			
30	The textbook does not have any typographical errors	Supervisor	2.00	0.77	-0.234	313.0	0.815
		Teacher	2.05	0.69			
31	Size and format of print are appropriate	Supervisor	2.00	0.63	-1.501	10.9	0.162
		Teacher	2.29	0.71			

Table (4) shows no significant differences ( $\alpha=0.05$ ) between the supervisors' and teachers' responses to any of the items of the layout dimension. In other words, both supervisors and teachers perceived the pedagogical value of the layout of the textbook fairly favorably. Table (5) presents the means, standard deviations, and t-test statistics for the items of the assessment dimension.

**Table (5)**

**Means, Standard Deviations and T-test Results of the Supervisors' and Teachers' Responses to the Items of the Assessment Dimension**

No.	Item	Occupation	Mean	SD	t	df	Sig.
32	Assessment tasks focus on language use in the classroom	Supervisor	2.18	0.60	0.005	313.0	0.996
		Teacher	2.18	0.61			
33	Assessment tasks focus on developing the pupils' language abilities	Supervisor	2.09	0.54	-0.201	313.0	0.841
		Teacher	2.13	0.66			
34	Assessment tasks focus on language use in real-life situations	Supervisor	1.91	0.70	-0.618	313.0	0.537
		Teacher	2.04	0.70			
35	Assessment tasks are appropriate for the pupils' abilities	Supervisor	2.18	0.60	1.106	313.0	0.270
		Teacher	1.97	0.63			
36	Assessment tasks develop the pupils' thinking abilities	Supervisor	2.09	0.70	0.944	313.0	0.346
		Teacher	1.89	0.69			
37	A variety of assessment tools are provided	Supervisor	2.09	0.54	0.601	313.0	0.548
		Teacher	1.97	0.66			

Table (5) shows no significant differences ( $\alpha=0.05$ ) between supervisors'



and teachers' perceptions on each item of the assessment dimension. Supervisors' and teachers' responses were fairly similar. To test for potentially significant differences in the supervisors' and teachers' responses to the items of the Teacher Book dimension, appropriate statistics were used, as shown in Table (6).

**Table (6)**  
**Means, Standard Deviations and T-Test Statistics of the Supervisors' and Teachers' Responses to the Items of the Teacher Book Dimension**

No.	Item	Occupation	Mean	SD	t	df	Sig.																																																																																																									
38	Detailed directions to lesson procedures are provided	Supervisor	2.36	0.50	-0.091	313.0	0.927																																																																																																									
		Teacher	2.38	0.64				39	The Teacher Book helps the teacher understand the philosophy and methodology of the textbook	Supervisor	2.27	0.65	-1.026	313.0	0.306	Teacher	2.48	0.66	40	Objectives are appropriate for the pupils' levels	Supervisor	2.00	0.45	-1.238	11.9	0.240	Teacher	2.17	0.71	41	Objectives are clearly stated	Supervisor	2.18	0.75	-0.617	313.0	0.538	Teacher	2.31	0.69	42	Situations, which encourage pupils' self-expression, are included and capitalized on	Supervisor	2.18	0.60	0.610	313.0	0.543	Teacher	2.06	0.67	43	Pupils' needs and interests are emphasized	Supervisor	2.18	0.60	1.184	313.0	0.237	Teacher	1.93	0.69	44	Pupils' enjoyment of learning is emphasized	Supervisor	2.27	0.65	1.805	313.0	0.072	Teacher	1.88	0.71	45	The Teacher Book relates easily to student text	Supervisor	2.36	0.50	0.426	313.0	0.670	Teacher	2.28	0.67	46	A variety of learning activities are provided to meet a wide range of pupils' needs	Supervisor	2.09	0.54	-0.115	313.0	0.909	Teacher	2.12	0.69	47	Enrichment and remediation activities are provided	Supervisor	2.36	0.50	1.945	313.0	0.053	Teacher	1.94	0.71	48	A variety of course sequencing options are provided	Supervisor	2.18	0.60	0.958
39	The Teacher Book helps the teacher understand the philosophy and methodology of the textbook	Supervisor	2.27	0.65	-1.026	313.0	0.306																																																																																																									
		Teacher	2.48	0.66				40	Objectives are appropriate for the pupils' levels	Supervisor	2.00	0.45	-1.238	11.9	0.240	Teacher	2.17	0.71	41	Objectives are clearly stated	Supervisor	2.18	0.75	-0.617	313.0	0.538	Teacher	2.31	0.69	42	Situations, which encourage pupils' self-expression, are included and capitalized on	Supervisor	2.18	0.60	0.610	313.0	0.543	Teacher	2.06	0.67	43	Pupils' needs and interests are emphasized	Supervisor	2.18	0.60	1.184	313.0	0.237	Teacher	1.93	0.69	44	Pupils' enjoyment of learning is emphasized	Supervisor	2.27	0.65	1.805	313.0	0.072	Teacher	1.88	0.71	45	The Teacher Book relates easily to student text	Supervisor	2.36	0.50	0.426	313.0	0.670	Teacher	2.28	0.67	46	A variety of learning activities are provided to meet a wide range of pupils' needs	Supervisor	2.09	0.54	-0.115	313.0	0.909	Teacher	2.12	0.69	47	Enrichment and remediation activities are provided	Supervisor	2.36	0.50	1.945	313.0	0.053	Teacher	1.94	0.71	48	A variety of course sequencing options are provided	Supervisor	2.18	0.60	0.958	313.0	0.339	Teacher	1.99	0.66						
40	Objectives are appropriate for the pupils' levels	Supervisor	2.00	0.45	-1.238	11.9	0.240																																																																																																									
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Table (6) does not show any significant differences ( $\alpha=0.05$ ) between

the supervisors' and teachers' responses to the items of the Teacher Book dimension. To test for significant differences in the two groups' responses to the items of the fifth and final dimension, teaching/learning resources, appropriate statistics were used, as shown in Table (7).

**Table (7)**  
**Means, Standard Deviations and T-test Results of the Supervisors' and Teachers' Responses to the Items of the Teaching/Learning Resources Dimension**

No.	Item	Occupation	Mean	SD	t	df	Sig.
49	Student activity/ workbook	Supervisor	2.36	0.67	1.102	313.0	0.271
		Teacher	2.13	0.71			
50	Course cassette	Supervisor	2.55	0.52	1.629	313.0	0.104
		Teacher	2.17	0.75			
51	Assessment materials	Supervisor	1.91	0.70	0.005	313.0	0.996
		Teacher	1.91	0.71			
52	DVD and laserdiscs	Supervisor	1.64	0.67	1.305	313.0	0.193
		Teacher	1.39	0.61			
53	Software and CD- ROM	Supervisor	1.64	0.50	0.716	313.0	0.475
		Teacher	1.49	0.65			
54	Online materials	Supervisor	1.82	0.75	0.136	313.0	0.892
		Teacher	1.79	0.76			

Table (7) shows no significant differences ( $\alpha=0.05$ ) between the supervisors' and teachers' mean scores on the items of the teaching/learning resources dimension. However, the teachers viewed two items poorly. Item (52), DVD and laserdiscs, scored a mean of 1.39 and a standard deviation of 0.61 while item (53), software and CD-ROM, got a mean of 1.49 and a standard deviation of (0.65).

The findings revealed that supervisors and teachers were in near consensus on the pedagogical value of UAE English Skills textbooks which they viewed equally favorably. In other words, supervisors and teachers were satisfied with UAE English Skills both on the Checklist and on its five dimensions. The uncanny similarities in the perceptions of the two groups of respondents may be attributed to the fact that supervisors and teachers share the same background since supervisors themselves were originally

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teachers, not to mention the constant contact among the two groups during training workshops and continuous supervisory field visits.

The only point of departure between the two groups was evident in their responses to two items in the fifth dimension of the Checklist, teaching/learning resources. Items (52) and (53) (viz., DVD and laserdiscs and Software and CD-ROM) were viewed unfavorably by teachers. This can be explained if one kept in mind that these items are far removed from traditional teacher practice. These teachers may not be aware of the appropriate strategies for utilizing technology, which would be in line with previous research findings that some teachers shy away from using technology effectively or at all (Bataineh & Baniabdelrahman, 2006; Rowand, 2000). By contrast, supervisors, who supposedly possess the up-to-date knowledge and the technical know-how of the utility and value of these educational technologies for training teachers, viewed their pedagogical value as satisfactory.

### **Conclusions, Limitations, and Recommendations**

As the study reveals heartening views of the pedagogical value of UAE English Skills, its findings seem to suggest that the textbook series stands up reasonably well to the scrutiny of two major stakeholders (viz., supervisors and teachers), which revealed essentially positive views of all items. Except for a couple of reservations over two poorly rated items by the teacher subsample (viz., DVD and laserdiscs and Software and CD-ROM), the respondents judged UAE English Skills as pedagogically appropriate for its target population.

Moreover, the respondents reported that UAE English Skills raises students' interest in further language study. This may be instrumental for these students' literacy development and later literacy habits (Bataineh, Bataineh, & Al-Shorman, 2007), especially in light of research reports that children's reading patterns in later life are often determined by the reading habits they form between the fourth and eighth grades (Halsted, 1988).

Even though sound in methodology and design, this study has been limited to supervisors' and teachers' perceptions of the pedagogical value of UAE English Skills for the seventh, eighth, and tenth grades in Al-Ain Educational Zone in the UAE. No content analysis or any other actual

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verification of the validity of these perceptions has been conducted, which may limit the generalizability of the findings and call for a recommendation that a systematic in-depth content analysis be conducted to gain deeper insights and lend further credibility to the current findings.

### **A Final Word: From their Mouths**

Near the conclusion of the study, it came to these researchers' attention that one of the authors of UAE English Skills maintains an electronic blog (Phillips, 2009) where teachers and other stakeholders (mainly supervisors and parents) voice opinions, share concerns, or ask for advice. Even though this was not part of the original purpose of the study, an informal content analysis of the archives was conducted, which yielded a number of merits and demerits. A lot of the opinions voiced in the blog were found to provide further corroboration for the findings of the research. However, a good number of major shortcomings were also voiced even though none emerged in the findings of the current study.

More specifically, the following general advantages have emerged:

1. Despite its relative newness, UAE English Skills has managed to make a difference to both teachers and students, probably due to a variety of activities which work together in deliberate integration.
  2. UAE English Skills is so innovative that students now are learning about things their parents had heard about at the university (e.g., phonics).
  3. Students are learning the four major skills through practicing a group of integrated minor skills.
  4. The pictures and illustrations are clear and interesting; they draw students' attention and relate to real life situations.
  5. A variety of themes in each book of the series (e.g., education, daily life, work and business, science and world, culture and civilization, they made our world, art and literature, sport and leisure and nutrition and health) allows students to learn about life and, simultaneously, improve their language skills.
  6. There is a lot of language practice, which reinforces students' skills and helps them think and work independently of the teacher, not to mention the plethora of listening, speaking, reading and writing exercises which allow
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students ample opportunity for practice.

7. The Teacher Book is informative and well organized, not to mention that it provides teachers with answers for almost all exercises, methodology notes, and step-by-step procedures for teaching each lesson.

On the other hand, a number of disadvantages were voiced out, even though the participants were quick to offer that these can be easily overcome with a little effort and creativity on the part of the teacher.

1. Students are divided amongst themselves. Some claim that they cannot use the book at home, especially to study the listening and speaking sections for lack of audio tapes or scripts.

2. Even though the international edition is accompanied with audio CDs, these media are never used either in the school or at home.

3. Some redundancy is evident in the content of the series, which may cause students' boredom or reduce their motivation.

4. The material on the audio-cassettes is often spoken too fast for the students to grasp its content.

5. The exercises are generally long and time-consuming.

6. The books are not written for the UAE. Aside from being a little context-sensitive to the type of teachers and learners in this part of the world, UAE English skills has challenging materials which need trained personnel to deal with them.

7. Many teachers find the material challenging even to their own competence, especially that the training they receive is reportedly often quite cosmetic.

8. A large number of students struggle with the language and have few linguistic tools to cope with it. Thus, the material is, at times, frustrating to teachers and students alike.

While the content analysis identifies a few disconcerting problems with UAE English Skills, the findings suggest that the advantages far outweigh the disadvantages. Except for few reservations (e.g., challenging difficulty level even to some teachers), the respondents felt that UAE English Skills is fairly appropriate, which is in line with the findings of the current research.

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