

Evaluating the Palestinian's English as a Foreign Language (EFL) Textbooks of the Secondary Stage Using Textbooks Evaluation Standards

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Abstract

The study aimed at evaluating the Palestinian EFL textbooks of the secondary stage in terms of standards for evaluating textbooks. In order to achieve the study objectives, the descriptive analytical approach was adopted. The study sample included four Palestinian EFL textbooks of the secondary stage in the scholastic year 2020/2021. In order to evaluate the textbooks, the instrumentation of a list of (32) standards for evaluating textbooks was built. The standards were listed under five domains (textbook introduction, textbook content, textbook activities, the assessment procedures of students, and textbook layout). In light of the new instrument, the process of evaluation was conducted. The study found that the Palestinian secondary stage EFL textbooks highly met the standards for evaluating textbooks, having reached a percentage up to (75.6%, a mean of 3.78); this percentage was interpreted based on the study scale. The study offered many recommendations, the most important of which were that the planners of the Palestinian secondary stage EFL textbook should prepare the textbooks to meet the students' life, the introduction of the textbooks should identify the learning sources and guide students on how to use the textbook, and the activities of the textbook should meet the students' level.

Keywords: Evaluation; EFL; Textbooks; Secondary stage; Standards

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تقويم كتب اللغة الإنجليزية الفلسطينية للمرحلة الثانوية باستخدام معايير تقويم الكتب المدرسية

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ملخص

هدفت الدراسة إلى تقويم كتب اللغة الإنجليزية للمرحلة الثانوية في فلسطين، وفق معايير تقويم الكتب المدرسية. ولتحقيق أهداف الدراسة أُتبِع المنهج الوصفي التحليلي. وقد اشتملت عينة الدراسة على أربعة كتب مدرسية للغة الإنجليزية في فلسطين للمرحلة الثانوية في العام الدراسي 2021/2020. ومن أجل تقويم الكتب المدرسية، بُنيت أداة مكونة من (32) معيارًا لتقويم الكتب المدرسية. ولقد أُدرجت المعايير ضمن خمسة مجالات، هي: مقدمة الكتاب المدرسي، ومحتوى الكتاب المدرسي، وأنشطة الكتاب المدرسي، وإجراءات تقويم الطلاب، وإخراج الكتاب المدرسي. في ضوء الأداة الجديدة، أُجريت عملية التقويم. وخلصت الدراسة إلى أن كتب اللغة الإنجليزية للمرحلة الثانوية في فلسطين تفي بمعايير تقويم الكتب المدرسية بنسبة عالية وصلت إلى (75.6%)، بمتوسط حسابي (3.78)، وفُسرت هذه النسبة بناءً على مقياس الدراسة. قدمت الدراسة العديد من التوصيات؛ أهمها أن على مخططي كتب اللغة الإنجليزية للمرحلة الثانوية في فلسطين إعداد كتب مدرسية تلائم حياة الطلاب، وأن على مقدمة الكتب المدرسية أن تحدد مصادر التعلم وأن تُوجّه الطلاب إلى كيفية استخدام الكتاب المدرسي، وأن الأنشطة في الكتاب المدرسي ينبغي أن تناسب مستوى الطلاب.

الكلمات المفتاحية: التقويم، اللغة الإنجليزية، الكتب المدرسية، المرحلة الثانوية، المعايير

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© 2022، أبو رزق، الجهة المرخص لها: دار نشر جامعة قطر. تم نشر هذه المقالة البحثية وفقاً لشروط Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial 4.0 International (CC BY-NC 4.0). تسمح هذه الرخصة بالاستخدام غير التجاري، وينبغي نسبة العمل إلى صاحبه، مع بيان أي تعديلات عليه. كما تتيح حرية نسخ، وتوزيع، ونقل العمل بأي شكل من الأشكال، أو بأية وسيلة، ومزجه وتحويله والبناء عليه، طالما يُنسب العمل الأصلي إلى المؤلف.

1. Introduction

The evaluation of school textbooks is considered one of the most important aspects in the field of curricula. School textbook is one of the core components of the educational system, as it is the tool for implementing the strategies, ideologies and plans of the Ministry of Education. Furthermore, textbooks are the continuum that has values, facts, ideologies, activities, culture and the specific aspects of a certain society. Given the above, textbooks ought to be well-prepared to develop students' skills and empower their skills in this competitive life.

English language textbooks, like other school textbooks, should be systematically constructed and should include the necessary information to develop students' skills, meet the standards of the Ministry of Education, and meet the standards of a good textbook. In this regard, the first conference of Al Aqsa University in Gaza, Palestine entitled "*The Palestinian Experiment in Constructing Curricula*", convened from 19 to 20 December 2006, recommended the necessity of reviewing the Palestinian textbooks to meet the skills of higher thinking and realizing the integration in the Palestinian school textbooks (Hammad, 2011). Additionally, Miekley (2005) recommended that the inclusion of an appropriate content should be done to reflect the national goals.

Constructing reliable textbooks demands certain requirements and criteria; one of these requirements is standards. El Zewāwi (2003) confirmed the importance of setting standards for education that conform to the international standards. He also referred to the need for establishing an agency to accredit the quality of education, including school textbooks. In the same respect, El Khāwāldā (2004) stated that textbooks are considered of high value if they are carefully constructed in terms of content selection, organization and layout. Additionally, the evaluation of textbooks assists teachers to know more about the textbooks; they will go beyond the lines to identify the level of a textbook and rate its quality for teaching (Ellis, 1997). Textbook evaluation is necessary for four main reasons. First, it is helpful for teachers or program developers to make decisions regarding the selection of appropriate textbooks. Second, evaluating the merits and demerits of a textbook will familiarize teachers with its likely weaknesses and strengths. Third, the evaluation process can ensure that the content of textbooks is consistent with the needs and interests of both the intended learners and the educational institute. Fourth, evaluation helps teachers in the classroom to properly practice and plan tasks for students (Sheldon, 1988). Furthermore, evaluating textbooks facilitates the development of new versions of textbooks in a better way with amended versions (Lee, 2013). Each textbook shall be subject to evaluation; it is impossible to find a perfect textbook. Charalambous (2011) stated, "All books have certain limitations and deficiencies and they all require evaluation, selection, adaptation, and supplementation." Thus, not all textbooks work in all situations or can be functional for all students or teachers. Alamri (2008) added that the evaluation of materials is an educational obligation, since it displays how a textbook can be justified or improved. Weddel (2009) also confirmed the role of textbooks in language teaching and the significance of evaluating them. She commented that teachers should use a checklist to evaluate the textbook they use for the learners, taking into consideration the goals of the program. The content of any textbook also ought to match the teachers' ability to teach and the students' needs and levels (Kim, 2015).

2. Theoretical background

Before analyzing the textbooks, the definition of standards, their importance, and their components were explained. Then, the presentation of literature review was introduced.

Definition of standards

El Ghamdy, (2009) defined standards as the expected level that is prescribed by a certain body towards examining or reaching a specific degree or level to achieve quality or excellence. El Ghabour (2009), cited in (El Ghamdy, 2009), defined standards, from an educational point of view, as a group of aspects that should be available in the field of education in order that it should serve students well. These standards should address students to become of distinguished abilities. The application of these views leads to realizing the realistic status and level of the issue wanted to be evaluated (Ellāqani, 2003). Accordingly, I can define standards as certain criteria that are carefully selected in a specific field to decide the quality of a certain work.

2.1. Significance of the educational standards

Standards are the way to judge an educational aspect such as curricula, teachers, school principals, objectives and activities. Standards can help provide evaluators with a scale to judge an educational work, reach a comprehensive quality, indicate the progress of any performance, enable learners and teachers to do better, and assist in improving textbooks (El Ghamdy, 2012).

2.2. Components of good standards

In order to get a correct judgment over any work, some constituents should exist in standards as follows:

Domains: The classifications of standards such as standards that measure objectives, content, textbook layout, or questions.

Criteria: The statements that address a specific aspect.

Indicators: The scales that measure the quality of something, or they are the scales that test the degree of standards.

Benchmarks: The words or clauses that state the level to which learners should reach. Learners should have some abilities when they reach a certain level.

Rubrics: They are the final measurement of the availability of standards. They decide the level of standards such as lowly available, moderately available, or highly available (The Egyptian Ministry of Education, 2003 cited in El Ghamdy, 2012, p. 26).

The Following is a short description of the evaluation and its importance.

2.3. Definition of evaluation

Evaluation is the issuance of decisions regarding certain things; it could be related to an idea, solution, method, material, or work. These decisions utilize criteria, levels and ranges in order to decide the merit of something (Bloom, 1975). In the same vein, El j̄bouri & El Sultāni (2013) clarified evaluation as the process of issuing decisions over something after diagnosing the weakness and strength points.

2.4. Significance of evaluation

No one can deny that evaluation plays an integral role in the educational process as it:

- Measures the level of materials compared to the international standards,
- Judges the adopted teaching method (Mānsi, 2002), and
- Facilitates the development of performance ('Al Dāfi, 2018).

2.5. Characteristics of good evaluation

Each evaluation has a certain number of characters as follows:

- Durability: It should be durable to always check the weakness and strength points.
- Comprehensiveness: It should measure each aspect of the material.
- Diversity: It should use different means of evaluation.
- Objectivity: The results of evaluation should not be subjected to the evaluator's own perception of impartiality ('Aqel, 2001).

2.6. Difficulties facing the process of evaluation

There are certain difficulties (i.e. there are no clear objectives for the educational institutions to work according to. This makes a state of confusion among evaluators. In addition, there are no specialists in the field of assessment and evaluation)'Al Dáfi (2018).

3. Literature review

The literature review section is divided into two domains: The first presents the studies that evaluated EFL school textbooks, while the second presents the studies that evaluated other school textbooks.

3.1. First: The studies that evaluated EFL school textbooks in terms of standards for evaluating textbooks

Al Harbi (2017) aimed at evaluating EFL textbooks for secondary stage in Saudi Arabia Public schools from ELT teachers' perspectives. The researcher made a list that consisted of (49) standards which were classified under (5) domains as follows: Layout and design, objectives of the textbook, teaching methods and activities, language skills, and evaluation. In order to evaluate the EFL textbooks, the researcher distributed the questionnaire to (173) teachers who teach secondary stage students in two cities: Madinah and Dowadmi. After analyzing the textbooks, the study uncovered an unsatisfactory level of the quality of the textbooks.

Abu Naba'h et al. (2016) aimed at finding out the views of (60) Saudi English language teachers towards "Lift off for Saudi Arabia" textbooks series. The researchers followed the analytical descriptive approach. A questionnaire of (42) standards was constructed and classified under (7) dimensions, in addition to an open-ended question. The results showed that the participants perceived "Lift off for Saudi Arabia" series as highly suitable. The researchers recommended that the number of units in the textbooks should be reduced to be compatible with the number of periods allocated for teaching English language.

Awad (2013) conducted a study entitled "*Evaluating "English for Palestine 12" in Terms of the EFL/ESL Textbook Evaluating Checklist from the Teachers' perspectives in Nablus Directorate Schools*". The analytical descriptive approach was followed. In order to evaluate the textbook, a 39-item checklist was distributed to (26) English language teachers who teach the EFL textbook for grade 12 in Nablus. The participants were randomly selected. The teachers revealed that the EFL textbooks are highly meeting the standards for evaluating the textbooks.

Dweikat (2011) aimed at analyzing the exercises and activities of "English for Palestine" textbook, grade ten, and investigating teachers and students' attitudes towards the appropriateness and usefulness of the activities and exercises. The study sample consisted of (25) male teachers, (34) female teachers, in addition to (59) male students and (52) female students. The tool of the study was a 29-item questionnaire distributed to teachers and students. The results indicated that

the activities and exercises included in the textbook were suitable for the targeted objectives. The study also found that the exercises were appropriate.

From the above studies, some of the standards were adopted to be applied in the current study. The tools and approaches of the previous studies are in conformity with the current study. All of the studies followed the descriptive-analytical approach and used a tool of standards to evaluate the textbooks.

3.2. Second: The studies that evaluated other school textbooks in terms of standards for evaluating textbooks

In this section, three recent studies conducted in Arabic language, mathematics, and religious education were selected.

'Al Dáfi (2018) study evaluated Arabic language textbooks for lower elementary grades in terms of content quality standards and organization. The descriptive analytical approach was adopted. The sample of the study contained all the eight textbooks of Arabic language applied in lower elementary grades, two textbooks for each grade in the year 2016-2017. The tool contained a list of (50) quality and content organization standards. After the process of analysis, the study reached that the majority of the textbooks meet the standards of quality and content organization.

Ahmed and Khalaf (2014) aimed to build a tool of standards to investigate the quality of mathematics textbooks in the primary stage in Iraq. To conduct the study, the analytical descriptive approach was adopted. The researchers consulted (24) mathematics teachers to take their views regarding the list of standards. After the teachers' modifications, the researchers reached a tool of (96) standards that were distributed under (5) domains (i.e. book preparation, content, presenting methods, book layout, and evaluative questions). The researchers recommended using the new tool for evaluating mathematics textbooks in the primary stage in Iraq.

Hammad (2011) study aimed at identifying the level of availability of content quality and organization standards in the Islamic education textbooks of the preparatory stage in Palestine (grade 7, grade 8, and grade 9). The researcher built a checklist consisting of (101) standards that were classified under (9) domains (textbook introduction, objectives, content, presenting, activities, instructional aids, evaluation, layout, and content organization). The evaluators were the participants of the study - 45 Islamic education teachers - who work at UNRWA schools in Khanyounis city, Gaza Strip, Palestine. Using the checklist, the teachers gave their opinions to evaluate the textbooks in terms of textbook standards. After analyzing their views, the study reached that the three textbooks ranked moderate level in terms of content quality and organization standards; the domain of evaluation standards of textbooks was highly available in grade 7 textbooks, and the standards of the layout were the highest available in grade 8 textbooks, while content standards domain was highly available in grade 9 textbooks.

After this short presentation of the related studies, I found that most of the studies relied on teachers in order to evaluate textbooks. However, in 'Al Dáfi (2018), the researcher himself was the person who evaluated the textbooks. In this research, I did not rely on other teachers to evaluate the textbooks, as I was the only source for the evaluation in terms of the list of standards for evaluating textbooks. Besides, another EFL teacher evaluated the same textbooks for ensuring the issue of reliability of the evaluation.

4. Statement of the problem

Generally, the Palestinian research needs more effort to develop its methodology. More research in various fields is required (Assaf & Abu Rezeq, 2018). The Palestinian Ministry of

Education is in the process of issuing trial textbooks for various school subjects, including the English language. The Ministry regularly changes textbooks as it seeks to build reliable textbooks that meet students' needs. Thus, this study is one of the endeavors to evaluate the construction of EFL textbooks of the secondary stage that were being taught the scholastic year 2020/2021. I evaluated these textbooks in terms of the list of standards for evaluating textbooks I constructed from different resources including (i.e. previous studies, books, and referees). In order to achieve the study objectives, the researcher addressed the following two major questions:

4.1. Questions of the study

The study addressed the two questions as follows:

1. What are the standards for evaluating the Palestinian EFL textbooks of secondary stage?
2. To what extent do the Palestinian EFL textbooks of secondary stage meet the standards for evaluating textbooks?

4.2. Objectives of the study

The study sought to:

1. Construct a checklist/instrument of standards for evaluating textbooks.
2. Identify to what extent the Palestinian EFL textbooks of secondary stage meet the standards for evaluating textbooks.

4.3. Significance of the Study

The study is significant for the following reasons:

1. It provides the concerned researchers with a new list of standards for evaluating the Palestinian EFL textbooks of the secondary stage.
2. It could provide curricula experts with an evaluation of the Palestinian EFL textbooks of the secondary stage.

4.4. Definitions of the study operational key terms

Evaluating: It is the process of deciding the degree of standards for evaluating the Palestinian EFL textbooks of secondary stage based on the list that was built in this study.

Palestinian EFL textbooks: These are the textbooks prescribed by the Palestinian Ministry of Education to be taught to the Palestinian students in the secondary stage. These are four textbooks; two textbooks for each grade are used for the whole year.

Secondary Stage: It is the stage that comes after the preparatory stage in Palestine. It has just two grades: Grade 11 and 12. It is the last stage in school in Palestine.

Standards for Evaluating Textbooks: These are the standards prepared after reviewing the educational literature and consulting the referees to evaluate the Palestinian EFL textbooks of secondary stage.

5. Methodology

5.1. Research approach

The study adopted the descriptive analytical approach to evaluate the Palestinian EFL textbooks of the secondary stage.

5.2. Population of the study

The population of the study consisted of all the (24) “English for Palestine” textbooks series that were being taught for the students in the scholastic year (2020/2021).

5.3. Sample of the study

The sample of the study encompassed four “English for Palestine” textbooks in grade eleven (two textbooks), and grade 12 (two textbooks).

5.4. Instrument of the study

Having reviewed the previous studies, a preliminary list of (40) standards was made. Then, it was distributed to a panel of referees who wrote their comments: adding, deleting, modifying, and clarifying. After collecting the distributed list, the list of standards was ended up with a list of (32) standards classified under (5) domains. It is displayed in Appendix (1).

5.4.1. Instrument validity

5.4.1.1. Referees’ validity

To validate the study tool, the list of standards was distributed to a group of referees specializing in English Language, curricula and instruction. The final version was made after considering the referees’ comments regarding the correct language, the affiliation of the items to domains and other comments written by the referees. The referee validity was up to (85%), which is the percentage of the agreement on the tool items.

5.4.1.2. Reliability of the instrumentation

To ensure the reliability of the card of analysis (the checklist), I first evaluated the textbooks alone. Then, I asked another EFL teacher to use the same card to evaluate the same textbooks. After applying Holsti equation to show the reliability of the analysis of the two evaluators, the two evaluators reached a point of the agreement up to (98%), which is a very high degree.

5.5. Steps of analyzing the textbooks

1. Building the analysis tool - checklist after reading the previous literature.
2. Easing the process of analysis through examining the four textbooks of the study thoroughly.
3. Recording the level of the available standards. Each standard got ranks ranging from (1-5).
4. Then, interpreting the ranks of each standard according to the study scale.

5.6. The Study scale

In order to decide the quality of the textbooks, this scale was prepared to evaluate the quality/availability of each standard. Each standard has a specific degree as follows:

Table (1): The degree of each single standard in the textbooks

Degree	Point
Very high	5
High	4
Moderate	3
Low	2
Very low	1

These points were used to evaluate the quality/availability of each standard in the textbooks.

For example, if a standard got (3) points, it means that it is moderately available. The researcher was the analyzer and the evaluator for the textbooks in this study. The evaluation worked as follows: (i.e. when I need to evaluate the printing quality of the textbooks, I review the whole pages and evaluate the degree of that standard. I give a point from (1) to (5) to this standard. If the majority of the pages are clear, I give this standard (5) points. If not, I give it (1) or (2); it depended on the availability of the certain standard.) I did the same with each standard. This scale was just used to decide the level of each standard and was not used to calculate the total mean scores of standards. The total mean scores were calculated based on a new scale as shown in table (3).

5.7. Statistical Tools

The study used the following statistical tools: Frequencies, percentages, Holsti Equation, and mean scores.

6. Results

There are two results for the research two questions. The first result dealt with the manner of building the study tool - the standards for evaluating the textbooks. The second result dealt with the degree of evaluation of these standards in the textbooks.

6.1. Results of the first question

The first question was stated as “*What are the standards for evaluating the Palestinian EFL textbooks of secondary stage?*” In order to answer the question, the related studies and literature were reviewed to build a preliminary list of the standards to evaluate the textbooks. After making the preliminary list, the researcher distributed it to a group of referees to consult them regarding the standards and domains. After collecting the initial list from the referees, their comments were considered. Then, a tool that included five domains and (32) standards was made as stated in table (2) below.

Table (2): The standards of evaluating the Palestinian EFL textbooks of secondary stage

No.	Domain of Standards	Standard
1	Introduction of the Textbook	The introduction gives a general idea about the textbook.
2		The introduction identifies the learning sources.
3		The introduction guides students to use the textbook.
4	Content of the Textbook	The content makes a balance between the theoretical aspect and the practical one.
5		The content explains the new acronyms and expressions.
6		The content is connected to the students' needs and experiences.
7		The content includes values, facts, and principles.
8		The content includes modern topics.
9		The content develops higher thinking skills.
10		The content presents the material logically.
11		The content is connected to the students' life.
12		The content presents realistic information.
13		The content is divided into units and then lessons.
14	Each unit ends with a summary that introduces the next unit.	

No.	Domain of Standards	Standard
15	Activities of the Textbook	The textbook includes multiple activities.
16		The activities urge students to use learning aids.
17		The activities are suitable for individual and group work.
18		The activities meet students' level.
19		The activities develop the four skills of the English language.
20	The Assessment Procedures of Students	The questions contain higher thinking skills.
21		The assessment stems from the textbooks objectives.
22		The textbook includes formative and summative evaluation.
23		Students are assessed by different strategies.
24		The textbook questions have the qualities of good questions.
25	The Textbook Layout	The textbook is printed clearly.
26		The textbook has good paper quality.
27		The textbook is paginated.
28		The textbook has clear pictures and drawings.
29		The textbook front page is appealing and reflective.
30		The last page of the textbook presents full information about the author and the publishing house.
31		The textbook contains a list of defining acronyms and new words.
32		The textbook has an index.

The table above displayed all the standards that received the referees' consensus to be used to evaluate the Palestinian EFL textbooks of secondary stage. Most of these standards are general standards for evaluating textbooks. This means that these standards could be used for evaluating other textbooks than English language. The tool reflects five major domains. The first domain included standards that are related to "Introduction of the Textbook". This domain included (3) standards. The second domain was "Content of the Textbook" domain which included (11) standards. The third domain was "Activities of the Textbook". It included (5) standards. The fourth domain was "The assessment procedures of students". It included (5) standards. Finally, the domain of "The Textbook layout" included (8) standards. As noticed, the standards cover the whole aspects of the textbook, beginning from the introduction and ending with the layout.

6.2. Second: Results of the second question

The second question was stated as "To what extent do the Palestinian EFL textbooks of secondary stage meet the standards for evaluating textbooks". In order to answer the second question, two steps were followed: First, a scale to decide the degree of each standard in the textbooks was prepared, as clarified in table (1). Second, a scale mentioned in (Mustafa, 2016, p. 104) was adopted to decide the overall quality/availability of all standards (combined) in the textbooks by calculating the range of the overall means as shown in (table 3).

Table (3): The scale to decide the degree of the overall average of standards

Range of means	Degree
1_1.80	Very low
1.81_2.60	Low
2.61_3.40	Moderate
3.41_4.20	High
4.21_5	Very High

*Adopted from Mustafa (2016, p. 104)

In order to decide the degree of the overall average of the analysis, the above scale was adopted. It is a five-range scale that begins from (1) to (5). This scale mainly helps to exactly answer the second question that aimed to decide the level of standards for evaluating the Palestinian EFL textbooks of the secondary stage. The four textbooks were analyzed collectively as they typically have the same features and organization. Since the four textbooks have the same qualities, it was not a good idea to evaluate each textbook separately.

Table (4): The degree and percentage of each standard and the overall means

No.	Domain of Standards	Standard	Degree	Percentage %
1	Introduction of the Textbook	The introduction gives a general idea about the textbook.	3	60
2		The introduction identifies the learning sources.	0	0
3		The introduction guides students to use the textbook.	1	20
4	Content of the Textbook	The content makes balance between the theoretical aspect and the practical one.	4	80
5		The content explains the new acronyms and expressions.	5	100
6		The content is connected to the students' needs and experiences.	5	100
7		The content includes values, facts, and principles.	5	100
8		The content includes modern topics.	4	80
9		The content develops higher thinking skills.	4	80
10		The content presents the material logically.	4	80
11		The content is connected to the students' life.	1	20
12		The content presents realistic information.	5	100
13		The content is divided into units and then lessons.	5	100
14		Each unit ends with a summary that introduces the next unit.	5	100
15	Activities of the Textbook	The textbook includes multiple activities.	3	60
16		The activities urge students to use learning aids.	2	40
17		The activities are suitable for individual and group work.	5	100
18		The activities meet students' level.	1	20
19		The activities develop the four skills of English language.	5	100

No.	Domain of Standards	Standard	Degree	Percentage %
20		The questions contain higher thinking skills.	5	100
21		The assessment stems from the textbooks objectives.	5	100
22	The Assessment Procedures of Students	The textbook includes formative and summative evaluation.	3	60
23		Students are assessed by different strategies.	3	60
24		The textbook questions have the qualities of good questions.	4	80
25		The textbook is printed clearly.	5	100
26		The textbook has good paper quality.	3	60
27		The textbook is paginated.	5	100
28	The Textbook Layout	The textbook has clear pictures and drawings.	4	80
29		The textbook front page is appealing and reflective.	2	40
30		The last page of the textbook presents full information about the author and the publishing house.	5	100
31		The textbook contains a list of acronyms and new words.	5	100
32		The textbook has an index.	5	100
The total average			3.78	75.6

The results of the second question showed that the total average means of standards available in the Palestinian EFL textbooks for secondary stage was (3.78), representing a percentage of (75.6). This result could be vague, unless it is interpreted according to a clear scale. Therefore, by comparing the mean result of this question (3.78) to the scale of averages as shown in table (3), it is located between (3.41_4.20), which is a high degree. It was concluded that the Palestinian EFL textbooks for secondary stage highly meet the standards for evaluating textbooks.

To analyze the results more accurately, the following are the classification of standard in the Palestinian EFL textbooks for secondary stage:

1. The following are the standards that were *very highly* available in the textbooks:

- The content is connected to the students' needs and experiences.
- The content includes values, facts, and principles.
- The content presents realistic information.
- The content is divided into units and then lessons.
- Each unit ends with a summary that introduces the next unit.
- The activities are suitable for individual and group work.
- The activities develop the four skills of English language.
- The questions contain higher thinking skills.
- The textbook has good paper quality.
- The textbook is paginated.

- The last page of the textbook presents full information about the author and the publishing house.
 - The textbook has an index.
 - The assessment stems from the textbooks objectives.
 - The content explains the new acronyms and expressions.
 - The textbook contains a list of acronyms and new words.
- 2. The following are the standards that were highly available in the textbooks:**
- The content makes balance between the theoretical aspect and the practical one.
 - The content includes modern topics.
 - The content develops the higher thinking skills.
 - The content presents the material logically.
 - The textbook questions have the qualities of good questions.
 - The textbook has clear pictures and drawings.
- 3. The following are the standards that were moderately available in the textbooks:**
- The introduction gives a general idea about the textbook
 - The textbook includes multiple activities.
 - The textbook includes formative and summative evaluation.
 - Students are assessed by different strategies.
 - The textbook has good paper quality.
- 4. The following are the standards that were lowly available in the textbooks:**
- The activities urge students to use learning aids.
 - The textbook front page is appealing and reflective.
- 5. The following are the standards that were *very lowly* available in the textbooks:**
- The introduction guides students to use the textbook.
 - The content is connected to the students' life.
 - The activities meet students' level.
- 6. The following are the standards that were *not available* in the textbooks:**
- The introduction identifies the learning sources

As shown in the above classification of results, the overwhelming majority of the standards (15) were classified under “very high” domain. Then, there were (6) standards highly available in the textbooks. On the contrary, there were (5) standards that were moderately available in the textbooks, just (2) standards were low and (3) were very low in the textbooks. One standard “introduction identifies the learning sources” was not included at all.

7. Discussion

In this section, the two results of the study were discussed. The first discussion addressed the formation of the study tool and the standards used. The second discussed the degrees of standards

and why the study reached this result. Furthermore, the findings of this result were linked to the results of the previous studies.

7.1. Discussing the results of the first question

The first question was set to build a tool (checklist) of standards to be used to decide to what extent the Palestinian EFL textbooks for the secondary stage meet the standards for evaluating textbooks. This tool aimed to evaluate nearly every aspect of the textbook. It was a modified version collected after surveying the following studies: 'Al Dáfi (2018), Al Harbi (2017), Ahmed and Khalaf (2014), Awad (2013), and Hammad (2011). The tool of standards was built after deleting unnecessary standards mentioned in the aforementioned studies. Furthermore, the tool is considered a bridged one for the evaluation of textbooks.

The number of standards in the study tool contradicts most of the tools of the previous studies that aimed to evaluate different textbooks. The current study reached a tool of (32) standards, while 'Al Dáfi (2018) included a tool of (50) standards, Al Harbi's (2017) study included a tool of (49) standards, Abu Naba'h et al. (2016) included a tool of (42) standards, Ahmed and Khalaf (2014) included a tool of (96) standards, and Hammad (2011) included a tool of (101) standards.

The tool of this study was closely related to the tool of standards mentioned in Awad (2013). Awad's study included (39) standards and aimed to evaluate "English for Palestine" 12 in terms of the EFL/ESL textbook evaluating checklist from the teachers' perspectives in Nablus Directorate schools in Palestine. The other previous study that was closely related to the results of this question was Dweikat's (2011) study, which included (29) standards and aimed to analyze the exercises and activities of "English for Palestine" textbook for the tenth grade.

I believe that the standards used in the current study tool were core ones that should be available in every textbook. As mentioned above, there are tools that used a doubled number of standards than the current study. When reviewing these tools, many repetitions of the same standard were found. For example, Hammad's (2011) study mentioned (12) standards regarding 'objectives' in the Islamic Education textbooks. When the study was surveyed, I deleted the (12) objectives standards, as it is known that the Palestinian English language textbooks do not mention objectives at all. Thus, there was no need to mention (12) standards about objectives. It was certain that these standards would not be considered. Therefore, one standard was used in my list concerning objectives, which was standard number (21) 'the assessment stems from the textbooks objectives' in table (2). In the same study, Hammad (2011) mentioned (11) standards regarding teaching aids in the Islamic education textbooks, while English language textbooks do not mention teaching aids. Therefore, another (11) standards from Hammad (2011) were excluded. This is why the list of standards of the current study had only (32) standards, unlike other studies. Thus, the current list of standards was made after modifying the tools of the previous studies and after consulting the English language and methodology experts. The standards that were reached were adapted to be closely related to the nature of the current Palestinian EFL textbooks for secondary stage.

7.2. Discussing the results of the second question

The second question aimed to decide to what extent the Palestinian EFL textbooks for secondary stage meet the standards for evaluating textbooks. The study found that overall average of the results was high representing a percentage of (75, 6%). In the following lines, the status of each domain of standards was explained in details to reach a comprehensive, realistic and reflective discussion of the results.

- *Commenting on the standards of the first domain: Standards to evaluate the introduction of textbook*

The introduction fairly discusses the textbooks objectives. In the introductory pages of the textbook, there was a wide table that showed the titles of the units and lessons. No paragraphs were written to guide the students how to use the textbook. The introduction did not mention further resources for learning or on how students can use the textbook. The introduction was, to some extent, vague and could not be understood except by the teacher. It mainly included the headings of reading passages, grammatical rules, vocabulary, and writing.

- *Commenting on the standards of the second domain: Standards to evaluate content*

The textbooks highly made balance between the theoretical and practical sides. From my experience in the field of teaching, I can say that there was little space for practice. To explain more, the textbooks highly include the practical activities that make students practice the theoretical aspect, but there is negligence in practicing these exercises due to the students' weak level in English language. Thus, the majority of teachers neglect focusing on the practical aspects. Generally, English practicing is low in the Palestinian schools (Abu Rezeq & Abu Taha, 2018b).

There were very few acronyms in the textbooks. They were explained once they are mentioned. The correct English writing requires English writers to mention the full words of the abbreviation once it is mentioned for the first time. Thus, acronyms were correctly mentioned in the textbooks.

The textbooks very highly met the student's previous learning and needs because they were prepared based on the spiral curriculum; teachers teach much more information of the same point when they move from grade to another grade (Afāna & Al Lūloū, 2013). For example, the second graders are taught simple present: they are just given a very slight explanation of this tense, and they are taught that the pronouns (He, she and it) take the letter 's' after the verb, while the pronoun (I) takes the infinitive only. However, twelve graders are taught in simple present that this is the tense that is used for future official arrangements and for describing facts. In grade 12, teachers do not explain the form of the tense, as it is previously explained in previous grades.

The textbooks very highly included values, facts, and principles. To justify this, Abu Rezeq (2018) analyzed the values included in English language textbooks and found that there was variety of values in the content of English language textbooks. The textbooks also had facts as most of the lessons are about reports, studies and authentic topics (i.e. globalization, the world customs, and famous football players). This is also in conformity with the standard '*The content presents realistic information*'. As for principles, Abu Rezeq (2019) conducted a study in which he analyzed English language textbooks in terms of human rights principles and found a high degree of human rights in English language textbooks.

The textbooks highly included modern topics. Anyone who reads the Palestinian English language textbooks for secondary school will obviously see that nearly the majority of the lessons are modern, while small number of lessons are just confined to literary texts.

The textbooks highly developed higher thinking skills. Teaching English language for non-native speakers requires higher thinking skills. When evaluating the textbooks, questions like (comment, explain, justify and connect facts to each other) were found in the textbooks.

The textbooks highly present the material logically. This was found when presenting a comprehension passage. The planners of the textbook explained the new words first, then some general questions about the passage. After that, the teacher explains the passage that is followed by questions.

The content of the textbooks is not linked to the students' life. This is transparent when

reading the textbooks. English language textbooks for the secondary stage in Palestine could be taught to non-Palestinian students. The textbooks mainly include the general topic. However, just a lesson that is directly connected to the students' life was found. It entitled ' *building bridges*'. That lesson described the life of the late leader Yasser Arafat, a Palestinian leader and symbol, and his endeavors for peace. This is in conformity with Abu Rezeq's (2016) study that showed the political topics in the Palestinian EFL textbooks were lowly mentioned.

The textbooks are very highly divided into units and then lessons and each unit ends with a summary.

- *Commenting on the standards of the third domain: Standards to evaluate activities*

The textbooks mainly mention discussion activities, group and pair work. There were not enough details of how to conduct the activities. There was no variety in the activities such as visiting public facilities, or writing a report about various topics. From my experience as a teacher, the activities do not meet students' level as they have a poor level in English. Surely, there was a variety of activities addressing the four skills of English language.

- *Commenting on the standards of the fourth domain :The assessment procedures of students*

The questions in the textbooks very highly contain higher thinking skills. This could be noticed throughout the questions of the reading passages and the questions of writing. The assessment also very highly stems from the textbooks' objectives. In general, the English language aims to develop the four skills, and this is reflected in the textbook questions that address various skills. The textbooks moderately include a formative evaluation. There is no summative evaluation in the textbooks. Students are moderately assessed by different strategies as the main tool for assessment is written exams. In this line, Abu Rezeq and Abu Taha (2018a) confirmed that the Palestinian EFL teachers do not use alternative assessment strategies and mainly depend on paper and pencil strategy in the written exams, neglecting the majority of other assessment strategies. Finally, the textbooks' questions very highly meet the qualities of good questions.

- *Commenting on the standards of the fifth domain: Standards to evaluate textbooks' layout*

The textbooks' printing is of very high quality. They moderately have good paper quality. It is perceptible when anyone touches it. Obviously, the textbooks are paginated. The textbooks have clear pictures and drawings. However, the textbooks' front page does not reflect the content. The front page is about an eye, within it is the Dome of the Rock. The other textbooks have a front page that is about embroidery. This meant that the front pages of the textbooks just reflected the Palestinian culture and had nothing to reflect about the English language. The last page of the textbook very highly presents full information about the author and the publishing house. The textbooks contain a list of acronyms and new words, and they also have an index.

The results of the second question match Abu Naba'h et al. (2016) that showed a high degree for the standards of textbooks, Awad's (2013) study, which reached a high level of evaluation to grade 12 English language textbook, and Dweikat's (2011) that indicated that the activities and exercises included in the textbook were suitable for the targeted objectives. The study is also in conformity with 'Al Dáfi's (2018) study that reached that the textbooks met the standards of the quality and content organization. However, the results of this question contradict Al Harbi's (2017) study that reached the unsatisfactory level of quality in the textbook, and Hammad's

(2011) study that reached a moderate level in the three textbooks in terms of content quality and organization standards.

8. Conclusion

The study aimed to evaluate Palestinian EFL textbooks for the secondary stage in terms of standards for evaluating textbooks. The study concluded that the textbooks of this stage met a high level of standards for evaluating textbooks. Despite having some deficiencies, the overall percentage was (75.6%). In addition, the majority of standards were classified under 'very high' and 'high' domains.

The Palestinian EFL textbooks for the secondary stage should consider the following: The activities should urge students to use learning aids. The front page should be reflective. The introduction should identify the learning sources and guide the students to use the textbook. The content should be connected to the students' life. The activities should meet students' level.

9. Recommendations

Based on the study results, the following recommendations to the English language curriculum experts are put forth:

1. The introduction of the Palestinian EFL textbooks for secondary stage should tell students about further resources and guide them properly to use the textbook.
2. The activities of the textbooks should meet the students' realistic level.
3. The activities should urge students to use learning aids, and explain more about how to conduct the activities.
4. The textbook front page should reflect the content of the textbooks and English language.
5. The content of the textbooks should be linked to the students' life - the Palestinian society and culture.

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Appendix (1)

The Study Analysis Card- Checklist

No.	Domain of Standards	Standards	Very low	low	Moderate	high	Very high
1	Introduction of the Textbook	The introduction gives a general idea about the textbook.					
2		The introduction identifies the learning sources.					
3		The introduction guides students to use the textbook.					
4	The Content of the Textbook	The content makes a balance between the theoretical aspect and the practical one.					
5		The content explains the new acronyms and expressions.					
6		The content is connected to the students' needs and experience.					
7		The content includes values, facts, and principles.					
8		The content includes modern topics.					
9		The content develops higher thinking skills.					
10		The content presents the material logically.					
11		The content is connected to the students' life.					
12		The content presents realistic information.					
13		The content is divided into units and then lessons.					
14		Each unit ends with a summary that introduces the next unit.					
15	The Activities of the Textbook	The textbook includes multiple activities.					
16		The activities urge students to use learning aids.					
17		The activities are suitable for individual and group work.					
18		The activities meet students' level.					
19		The activities develop the four skills of the English language.					

No.	Domain of Standards	Standards	Very low	low	Moderate	high	Very high
20	The Assessment Procedures of Students	The questions contain higher thinking skills.					
21		The assessment stems from the textbooks objectives.					
22		The textbook includes formative and summative evaluation.					
23		Students are assessed by different strategies.					
24		The textbook questions have the qualities of good questions.					
25	The Textbook Layout	The textbook is printed clearly.					
26		The textbook has good paper quality.					
27		The textbook is paginated.					
28		The textbook has clear pictures and drawings.					
29		The textbook front page is appealing and reflective.					
30		The last page of the textbook presents full information about the author and the publishing house.					
31		The textbook contains a list of defining acronyms and new words.					
32		The textbook has an index.					

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