

AN EVALUATION OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEXTBOOKS OF MILD/EDUCABLE MENTALLY RETARDED SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS IN IRAN

***Samira Ghanaat Pishehand and Farzin Fahimniya**

*Department of English, College of Humanity Science, Bandar Abbas Branch, Islamic
Azad University, Bandar Abbas, Iran*

**Author for Correspondence*

ABSTRACT

This study aimed at evaluating the three English Language textbooks titled “Right Path To English” for mild/ educable mentally retarded secondary school students (7th, 8th, 9th grade) to find out to what extent the textbooks meet the students’ needs. Due to having the same format, the three textbooks were not evaluated separately. This study was kind of in-use evaluation. The participants of this study were 22 male, mild/ educable mentally retarded students selected non randomly along with 4 English teachers at Omid Special School in Bandar Abbas. The teachers participating in this research were totally untrained in the field of English language teaching and special education. Both quantitative and qualitative data were obtained through three classroom observations and a self-constructed checklist (70 items, 5-point likert scale) evaluated and analyzed by the researcher according to the students’ needs. All criteria developed in the checklist analyzed the actual feature of the textbooks namely, physical features, objectives and supplementary materials, content, language skills, organization of the content and its presentation and textual language. The data in the checklist was analyzed by calculating the mean scores, percentages and frequencies. The data gathered from the classroom observations were analyzed by using qualitative technique. According to the findings, the three English language textbooks were considered inappropriate for achieving the goals and meeting the particular needs of these students. The three textbooks failed to comply with most criteria contained in the checklist. In the light of these findings, the researcher revealed the main strengths and the shortcomings of the books to be avoided and treated in the future. Finally, some recommendations were offered for the textbook writers, the curriculum designers, the administrators at the Ministry of Special Education and the future researchers to satisfy the students’ needs.

Keywords: *Mental Retardation, Mild/ Educable Mental Retardation, Learning Disability, Material Evaluation, In- Use Evaluation*

INTRODUCTION

Foreign language study is a crucial part of education everywhere. In a globalised world, being able to speak English is becoming a sine qua non; not being able to speak languages other than the mother tongue could be considered a form of illiteracy (Rondal, 2000). Today, most students can learn a foreign language in their public school, and they are being encouraged to do so in greater numbers. In addition, students with special needs are increasing these days and they take part in the educational process each and every day.

As foreign language learning is a musical exercise that develops the muscle in the brain, it would be a great challenge to learning disabled students (Schwarz, 1997). Learning English as a foreign/second language would also increase professional opportunities of the disabled students as well as enhance their integration into the society of the normal individuals (Araluce, 2002).

Mentally retarded children are children with intelligence barriers who need special treatment in learning (Sukoco, 2009). The mentally retarded generally learn more slowly than non-retarded people and may show social immaturity. Mental Retardation (MR) is a significantly sub average general intellectual functioning, existing concurrently with deficits in adaptive behavior and skills and manifested during the developmental period that adversely affects a child educational performance. Mental retardation is

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defined as IQ score below 70-75. It has generally been classified into 4 groups: mild, moderate, severe, and pro-found.

To date, many studies have focused on first language acquisition in mentally disabled children, but the issues of FLL in mentally disabled children have not been much explored. There are many scholars who believe that students with identified learning disabilities should be included in foreign language classes (Duvall, 2006; Kleinert *et al.*, 2007). As Bok & Hoon (2007) noted in their study, an effective education can definitely acquire a foreign/second language. At this point, having appropriate tools is necessary. One of the essential tools is a proper textbook. Textbooks play a vital role in the realm of language teaching and learning. They are regarded as the most important factor in the second/ foreign language classroom after the teacher (Riazi, 2003). Textbooks realize the purposes of education, which lead them to be a significant source in educational lives of students as one of the educational materials (Uyulgan *et al.*, 2011).

English language learning as a foreign/second language should be taken into account as an important school subject for all learners with disability, including those with mental disabilities. In Iran, normal students study English for nearly seven years, i.e. 3 years in secondary school, 4 years in high school. However, English courses which are applied for students with special needs are different. Here, the students with mild mental retardation receive English courses as optional in just 3 levels which are taught in the, 7th, 8th and 9th grade. In other words, they study English just for 3 academic years and do not have any English courses in higher levels of their education.

As a matter of fact, English literacy has a low priority in Iranian especial education especially for those with mental retardation. Bok & Hoon, (2007) stated that because our society does not expect a great deal from these students, they are not provided with the best possible English education for their special needs, and unfortunately this fact can be obviously seen in special educational system, in Iran.

The content of education textbooks especially English language textbooks in Iran is different from those who with mental retardation. So, the purpose of this study is to evaluate and investigate the English language textbooks of secondary school students who are diagnosed with mild/educable mental retardation. This study can help to enhance the effectiveness of the use of the textbooks and understand what areas of the textbooks need further modification, or to what extent adaptation of other new teaching materials is necessary. The results of the study are expected to answer the question below.

Research Question

To what extent do the English textbooks meet the needs of secondary school educable/mild mentally retarded students in Iran?

Review of Related Studies

Foreign Language and Special Education

When most people think of the term “Special Education student”, there are so many terms with various deficits that come to their minds, such as impaired, slow, behavior problem and etc. but surely not the word capable. People often see students with special needs through a black and white lens: either they are special education and limited, or they are regular education and competent (Evarris & Knotek, 2006). They believe that all students have strength and areas that may benefit from improvement. According to Schwarz (1997), one of the pioneers in research on foreign language education of learners with special noted, “For the student unencumbered by a learning disability, foreign language study is indeed an enriching and rewarding experience.

For the learning disabled student, however, it can be an unbelievably stressful and humiliating experience, the opposite of what is intended”. Ortiz (2001) added that “these difficulties may become more serious over time if instruction is not modified to address the students’ specific needs. Unless these students receive appropriate interventions, they will continue to struggle, and the gap between their achievement and that of their peers will widen over time”.

There are many scholars who believe that students with identified learning disabilities should be included in foreign language classes (Duvall, 2006; Kleinert *et al.*, 2007). Often, students with disabilities are excluded from opportunities that broaden their own world views (Kleinert, 2007). They believe that

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students with disabilities would benefit from an opportunity to enroll in a general curriculum foreign language course due to some reasons including (a) the increase of students with disabilities being accepted to and attending universities since many require a foreign language course; (b) the study of a foreign language aiding in the acquisition of a student's native language; (c) instilling cultural sensitivity and diversity in students (also see Kubota, Austin, & Saito-Abbott, 2003); (d) increasing students' sense of intellectual wealth by tackling a perceived difficult course; (e) enrolling in an environment of acceptance that many foreign language classes foster; and (f) the means, methods, and materials of foreign language courses often differ from other secondary courses which will provide an experience different from what they are accustomed. Ultimately, special needs students are and will continue to enter the foreign language classroom in increasing numbers (Reese, 2009).

English as a Foreign Language in Mental Retardation (MR)

As mentioned, just few researches have been done in this area. According to Bok and Hoon (2007), our society has had low expectations and neglect for mentally retarded students. As an English teacher in Korea, they have found some fundamental problems and solutions in the English language educational methods for these students. The first problem they faced was a lack of classification. As they noted, there are students with various types of disabilities and with varying intelligence levels and they should be classified according to IQ, personality, and disability; the second problem was the frequent use of the "cramming methods" which means students are taught to memorize sentence patterns, for example adjective-noun- proposition-verb- object and simply to replace appropriate words in the formula, like a machine. The third was mundane and soporific classes. They believe that the students in Korea simply followed the mundane test preparatory curriculum designed for normal students, but did not learn to the degree that they could have. They mentioned that most of these students are not preparing for college examinations, and would be better off learning English for practical usage. To achieve this, there must be effective educational methods to help them. They suggested there should be something that will excite and keep these students amused. They believed using resources such as PC games, non-PC games and other enjoyable activities can be helpful, due to the low levels of maturity and extreme impatience of mentally retarded students in the class. Arries (1994) claimed that teaching with students' interests and abilities in mind, versus grammar oriented classes which can help students with learning disabilities and language acquisition (also see Dörnyei, 2005; Ehrman, 1996). Other methods he proposes are teaching with videotapes to develop listening comprehension skills. He acknowledges that the language course for these special populations should be clearly goal oriented. It should be developed with the students' knowledge and interests in mind (also see Hunter & Brown, 1979).

In another study has been done by Krapež (2010), she discusses some aspects and outcomes of English language teaching and learning in mentally retarded students in Slovenia. The results reveal that these students are capable of achieving certain FL skills. But it is teachers' FL competence and their pedagogical approach which both play a decisive role in the process of FL acquisition. According to her research data, the interactive teaching learning process between teachers and learners is of paramount importance for the English language acquisition. She acknowledged that despite the importance of the innovative programme, learners and teachers play the most important role. Similarly, Allwright and Bailey (in Nunan, 2001) point out: *"no matter how much intellectual energy is put into the invention...what really matters is what happens when teachers and learners get together in the classroom"*.

As has been noted, the individuals with special needs can benefit from mastering another language as a second or foreign language, successfully. Based on the research in this area, they are even able to speak three or more languages. Rondal (2000) has argued many retarded children and adults exhibit some degree of bilingual competence.

Buckly (1998) also reported that she met a number of people with Down Syndrome who were capable of speaking two, and even three languages. It shows that the mentally retarded are surely capable of learning languages. Therefore, as Bok & Hoon (2007) have mentioned in their study, an effective education can definitely acquire a foreign/second language.

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Textbook Evaluation

As the researcher could not find any studies concerning language textbook evaluation of mentally retarded individuals, the present review briefed some related studies on EFL/ESL textbook evaluation.

In Iran, though limited, a number of researchers have focused on the issue of EFL textbook evaluation. Ansari & Babaii (as cited in Riasati & Zare, 2010) evaluated a number of textbooks available in Iran. As they suggested a good EFL/ESL textbook is based on, 1) a theory about nature of language; 2) the nature of learning and how the theory can be applied in use; 3) an objective for the whole course book and for individual units; 4) teachers' satisfaction with the guide books of the syllabus; and 5) learners' satisfaction with clear instructions for exercises. Jahangard (2007) conducted a study on high school EFL textbooks. In his study, concerning tasks and topics, the textbooks were quite interesting and useful; however, there were two major weak points in the textbooks. The first one was the lack of sufficient context for learners to comprehend the new vocabulary and the second, listening skill was completely ignored in those textbooks. Tavakoli (1995) used Searle's (1976) model of speech act to analyze dialogues excerpted from high-school English textbooks in order to investigate different forms of speech acts. He concluded that only three language functions (representative, directive, and expressive) were introduced in the textbooks, while others were completely ignored (as cited in Riazi & Mosalanejad, 2010). Talebinejad & Namdar (2011) investigated the reading comprehension sections of Iranian high school English textbooks to find out the extent of using Discourse Markers (DM) and their types, based on Fraser's (1999) category. The results showed that there was a significant difference between the frequencies of DMs.

Some studies have evaluated the strength and weaknesses the EFL textbooks. In 2007, Jahangard has evaluated the high school and pre-university English textbooks for their advantages and shortcomings. The researcher concluded that the tasks and topics of the textbooks are interesting and attractive to learners. However, there are shortcomings concerning vocabulary explanation and the practice of listening skill. Ghorbani (2011) Investigated the research question, "To what extent does the EFL textbook (English 1) used in Iranian senior high schools conform to the common consensus-reached and universal characteristics of EFL/ESL textbooks?". He concluded that "only 63% percent of the book conforms to the universal characteristics of textbooks".

Riazi & Mosalanejad (2010) evaluated three high-school textbooks and the sole pre-university textbook in order to investigate how the content of textbooks represents Bloom's taxonomy of educational objectives. The findings revealed that there was a logical sequence of difficulty in the textbooks, in terms of level of difficulty and text length. Also, the most prevalent learning objectives in the textbooks were lower-order cognitive skills. Another study carried out by Yasin & Hua (2011) regarding the Iranian high school English textbooks evaluation based on Dougills' textbook evaluation checklist in order to find out to what extent the textbooks can prepare learners to go with the language skills needed for a learner of English as a foreign language. According to them, the home-made textbooks lack the authenticity of natural English in terms of content and presentation. They are short in the variety and attractiveness in the passages. The materials are not generally presented from the easy to hard order and they are mainly void of cultural and communicative points (Abdollahi-Guilani, 2011).

Al-Yousef (2007) evaluated secondary level third grade intermediate English textbooks used in Saudi Arabia. He used the checklist based on the work of Cunningsworth (1995) which was suitable for the local environment. The checklist was given to both teachers and students for a post-use evaluation of the textbook. The method was quantitative. Two unstructured interviews were also conducted with two administrators in the Saudi Arabian Ministry of Education to provide supporting data to the evaluation findings.

Hong (2004) carried out an evaluation study and investigated criteria for assessing ESL textbooks. The first goal of the study was to provide a list of criteria for selecting a "good" ESL textbook for high school students in Alberta, Canada. Second, it aimed to investigate issues that local ESL teachers face in textbook use. Six ESL teachers participated in the study. It was based on a qualitative methodology including written questionnaires and recorded interviews. The researcher concluded that this study

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examined only the perspectives of teachers and the other views should be taken into account including publishers, author developers school administrators curriculum specialists, educational consultants, parents and finally former ESL graduates and students.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Research Method

Participants

The study sample comprised 22 male, mild/educable mentally retarded students at 7th, 8th and 9th grades of secondary school along with four male English teachers who worked and taught English language at that school. The students were chosen non randomly due to their few numbers. The IQ level of the students was 65 to 75. Due to few numbers of subjects, they were selected nonrandom. The age of the students ranged from 14 to 17.

The study was conducted at Omid special school in Bandar Abbas. The English teachers of the course who were teaching those textbooks were not trained at all. They were asked to do it due to the lack of English language teachers for students with special needs. The teachers had at least 2 to 5 years' experience of teaching.

As Ortiz (2001) stated most English language learners who need special education services are further disadvantaged by the shortage of special educators who are trained to address their language- and disability-related needs simultaneously.

Materials

The materials to be evaluated in this study included the three English language textbooks titled "Right Path to English" currently being taught at secondary school (7th, 8th and 9th grade) for students who were Mild/Educable Mentally Retarded written by Marjan Salimi and Manijeh Salimi.

The second edition of this book was published in 2011. According to goals set for developing and writing these English textbooks for mild/ educable mentally retarded to learn English language by Ministry of Special Education discussed in the teacher's book of the textbooks, the students studied English through these books in order to get to know English language briefly. In fact, these books were designed to encourage the students to use English in their daily life and enable them to read and understand some simple words and phrases in English particularly in order to use computer, ATM, and so forth.

Instruments

In order to achieve the objectives, this study was conducted through a checklist developed and analyzed by the researcher and three classroom observations.

Checklist

One of the best instruments and effective way to evaluate English language teaching materials and textbooks is a checklist and it should be tailored to the needs and wants of the learners who will use the textbook. One major advantage of using the checklist approach is to provide a very economic and systematic way to ensure all relevant items are considered for evaluation (Cunningsworth, 1995 & McGrath, 2002). A number of researchers such as Sheldon (1988), Harmer (1991), Skierso (1991), Cunningsworth (1995) have proposed the use of checklist to see how textbook materials can match up with students' needs. As the researcher could not find any studies on evaluation of English language textbooks for students with mental retardation, the textbook evaluation criteria in the checklist developed by the researcher. The checklist was provided based on the literature review related to EFL/ESL materials evaluation. She also studied many EFL/ESL textbook evaluation checklists which were developed by other researchers for normal students. Then, important elements in EFL/ESL textbooks were identified and selected by the researcher based on the needs of the special students according to the related literature review. The checklist included 70 items in the form of 5-point Likert scale (0= totally lacking, 1= poor, 2= adequate, 3= good, 4= excellent). It was divided into six focus areas, namely: 1. Physical Features, 2. The objectives and Supplementary Materials, 3. Learning-Teaching Content, 4. Language Skills 5. Organization of the Contents and its Presentation, and 6. Textual Language of the textbooks (see Appendix A).

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Classroom Observations

The classroom observations were conducted in three sessions in order to gather information. The students attended the classes once a week and each session took 45 minutes. As the researcher was not allowed to film the sessions, they were just voice recorded.

Validity of the Instruments

According to Farhady *et al.*, (2007), "validity refers to the extent to which a test measures what it is supposed to measure." The validity of a test is also reported in Hatch and Farhady (1981) as "the extent to which the result of the procedure serves the uses for which they were intended". For this study, face validity was very important in the sense that it served to ensure the appropriateness and the usefulness of the present instrument. The instruments' validity was confirmed by three Ph. D. instructors who are experts in the area of ESL/EFL at Azad university of Bandar Abbas.

Procedures

Data collection procedure was carried out in Bnadar Abbas, Iran among 4 English teachers and 22 male, mild/educable mentally retarded secondary school students who were non randomly selected. This study conducted at Omid special school. In this study both quantitative and qualitative data were obtained through checklist for the in-use evaluation of the textbooks. The 70-item checklist was 5-point Likert scale type developed and analyzed by the researcher. To analyze the data in the checklist, the criteria were numerically rated by the researcher from 0 to 4 (explained in previous section) in the blank space of the score column. The data collected from checklist was entered into the SPSS for further analysis. The data was presented in tables and figures for better understanding. The three classroom observations were conducted at Omid special school in three different sessions with three different teachers, which included 22 students altogether along with 4 English teachers who taught at that school. The data from observations collected via voice recording and taking-note. In the end, the all data described and analyzed qualitatively.

Design

This is kind of descriptive study and will utilize both quantitative and qualitative methods to obtain the data from sample population and instruments which were applied through this research to do English textbooks evaluation of secondary school students with mental retardation.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The results of the textbooks evaluation designed for mild mentally retarded secondary school students based on both the checklist and classroom observations. The table below (Table 4. 1) shows the means and the highest percentages for each of the main parts of the checklist analyzed and evaluated by the researcher.

Table 4.1: The Total Means and Highest Percentages of the Six Categories of Evaluative Criteria in the Checklist Evaluated by the Researcher

Main Categories	N	Mean	The highest Percentages
1. Physical Features	15	1.66	60% poor
2. The Objectives and Supplementary Materials	10	1.25	60% poor
3. Learning – Teaching Content	14	0.86	64% poor
4. Language Skills	24	0.9	38% totally lacking
5. Organization of the Content and its Presentation	4	2	50% poor
6. Textual Language	3	1.33	65% poor

Table 4.2: The total number of items rated in the checklist

Number of Items	Rating
15 items	Totally lacking
36 items	Poor
5 items	Adequate
9 items	Good
5 items	Excellent

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The results in the Table (4.1) & Table (4.2) display, most of the items in the checklist are considered as poor with lowest means (less than 2). As illustrated in Table (4.2), out of 70 items in the checklist, there are 15 items rated as “Totally lacking”, 36 items as “Poor”, 5 items as “Adequate”, 9 items as “Good”, and 5 items as “Excellent” (See Appendix A).

The 15 items which are totally lacked in the textbooks deal with visual aids (item 15), supplementary materials (items 22 & 25), cultural context of the content (items 37, 38, and 39), language skills (items 42, 43, 45, 48, 49, 59, 61, 62, and 63). They are considered as the weaknesses of the textbooks (See Appendix A).

On the other hand, there are 14 items which rated and categorized into good and excellent in the check list. They deal with general appearance (items 4, 5, 6 and 10), visual aids (item 14), supplementary materials (items 20 & 21), subject and content (item 29), language skills (items 40, 41, 44, 56, and 58), and organization and presentation of the content (item 67). These items are the strong points of the textbooks from the researcher’s perspective. (See Appendix A)

Based on the investigation and analysis on the physical features of the textbooks, the results showed that the textbooks seemed to be negative in terms of type, font size, art work and colors used. According to the findings, all illustrations are drawing and there are no photos or mixture of both drawings pictures and real photos to make situation more natural. Using “an optimum density and mix of text and graphical materials on each page” (Sheldon, 1988). He also focuses on the importance of having colorful and appealing artwork in the textbooks.

The objectives and supplementary materials of the textbooks were not satisfactory either and categorized into poor based on the criteria mentioned in the checklist, as shown in the Table 4.1). In general, setting an objective is the first and important factor to write a textbook. Ornstein & Hunkins (1999) say that, “educational objectives can be of two sorts: those that describe the school-wide outcomes and those that are more specific and describe behaviors to be attained in a particular unit, a subject course, or a particular grade-level program”. Cunningsworth (1995) points out that there should be a correspondence among textbooks, aims and objectives of the language learning program, and the learners’ needs.

Textbooks are also used as supporting teaching materials (O’Neil, 1982, & Ur, 1996). The student’s book usually comes with other materials such as a workbook, a teacher’s book or even additional multimodal texts for reference as a textbook package (Masuhara & Tomlinson, 2008). The supplementary materials accompanying the English language textbooks developed for both students and teachers includes teachers’ book, work book, flashcards and CD which all discussed more in the second part of this chapter. The results about the supporting materials of the textbooks indicated that they are not distributed equally in all cities in Iran due to insufficient products in this respect, such as CD, flash cards, teacher’s book, etc. Regarding the content, the results revealed, for most lessons, the content does not harmonize with the titles. Most of the topics in the textbooks are neither related to the context, nor interesting. As Breen and Candlin (1987) pointed out that the content of an instructional material should be appropriate to the personal interests of the learners.

They also highlights that the learners will automatically be interested in certain themes and topics and the materials developers or textbook writers can anticipate what is relevant, interesting and motivating from the subject matter. Cunningsworth (1995) states that the textbooks must include subject-matter and topics of the area of interest as part of real life. They should include topics that will draw their attraction and inform learners at the same time. He concludes that course materials that fail to cover relevant and interesting topics are in danger of losing the attention of its users.

The findings also showed the level of the textbooks is high for the students. Thus, the level of the particular textbooks is not appropriate for the level of secondary school students with mild retardation. However, the appropriateness of the level of materials to the language level of students is one of the mostly mentioned criteria in evaluating a textbook or a teaching material by researchers (Cunningsworth, 1995; Breen and Candlin 1987; Skierso, 1991).

The textbooks do not represent the culture of the target language. Cultural contexts should be presented in the textbooks as part of the students’ learning experiences. According to Easton (2002), “Culture is the

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combination of the attitude toward life and learning that drive the school and the mechanisms that emanate from that attitude”.

As for the exercises and activities, the findings indicated that they are not designed based on students' interest. So, they do not increase their desire to learn English either. In addition, the textbooks are not satisfying in terms of the number of exercises, adequate review sections, the communicative activities. Skierso (1991) suggests that textbooks should provide meaningful communication through communicative tasks and activities. Aliakbari (2004) stated that a textbook can be a teacher, in the sense that it contains materials which are intended to instruct students directly about English speaking cultures.

The quantitative and qualitative data analyses indicated that there are not sufficient coverage of four language skills and sub skills in the textbooks. McDonough and Shaw (1993) indicate that skill development is important and material developers should provide the students with sufficient opportunity to develop those skills through adequate practice. Dealing with vocabulary and grammar, it was found that the number of vocabulary provided for the students is not suitable. As suggested by many ELT specialists suggest the number of vocabulary items to be taught in one lesson for active use should better not be more than seven (Celce-Murcia, 2001; Cunningsworth, 1995; Willis, 1982). However, the glossary provided at the end of each textbook is not detailed and complete.

No grammar presentation is provided in the textbooks. Cunningsworth (1995) points out that the first considerations of textbook writers are what grammar items to include and to what extent they will correspond to learner needs. He believes that with the effective teaching of grammar, learners are equipped with the ability to make their own sentences and will be able use target language for their own purposes.

Moreover, the textbooks should be reconsidered in terms of kind of presentation with using more interesting and attractive colors. The textual language of the books is not appropriate for the learners. Some structures used in the books are beyond the level of the students. Some type errors are also observed in the books which should be avoided.

Finally, considering the results of the three classroom observations, the claim is that students with mental disabilities are capable to socialize in English. They can either develop some communication skills or learn and understand simple English words. But because of the teachers' low English proficiency and even having no formal education in English language especially for the disabled students, they could not deliver a quality English language teaching. Having not enough trained staffs is considered as the key problem of special education in Iran. However, the students from the 3rd observation achieved much higher level of performance compared to their peers from the 1st and 2nd observation, which was mostly due to the teacher's approach to teaching. He focused more on the learners' FL communicative ability. Breen and Candlin's (2001: 104) argument about a communicative curriculum: "...it makes sense for the teacher to see the overall purpose of language teaching as the development of the learner's communicative knowledge in the context of personal and social development". The results show that the teacher plays an important part in FLL in mentally disabled children.

Conclusion

According to the findings and discussions made, the following conclusions are drawn:

1. The English Language Textbooks do not appeal the students regarding its general appearance. However, the realistic photos with more happy and attractive colors should be used.
2. The topics of the textbooks are not interesting. Most of the topics do not meet the students' needs. In addition, for most lessons, the topic and content of the textbooks are not related to each other.
3. The target language culture is not presented.
4. The textbooks are beyond the level of students.
5. The objectives of the textbooks did not suit the level of the learners. Also, they could not be covered within the time allocated for the textbooks.
6. The supplementary materials are not satisfactory. They are not equally distributed in all cities of Iran due to the deficiency of the materials.

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7. The textbooks lacked communicative activities such as speaking, working in pairs or group, games, etc. are widely ignored in the textbooks. Moreover, The number of exercises in the workbook does not compatible with both students' capabilities and the time set for this course.
8. There not adequate review sections in the textbooks for these students.
9. The textbooks are not designed based on four main language skills.
10. The vocabulary load is not reasonable for the level of the students and they are not much functional and practical. However, an appropriate glossary should be added in a detailed way by providing the meaning and different parts of speech of each word.
11. The grammar points are not provided for the learners.

Regardless of the above shortcomings, the textbooks had also some strong points. For example,

1. The concept of the textbooks is clarified with the help of pictures.
2. The pictures are relevant to the texts.
3. The books have a complete and detailed table of contents.
4. New lexical items appear in each unit.

Due to the results derived from this study, the EFL textbooks were shown inappropriate for the students. They need a complete change and it is hoped that the authorities will be willing to do that for the benefit of the whole students with special needs especially those who are with mental retardation.

Implications

Implications for Material Development

The findings of this study recommend a number of important issues regarding the EFL textbooks for these students. First, since the textbooks were designed for the secondary school students with mild mental retardation, according to their ages in comparison with the normal students, the cover of the textbooks should be in a way that they attract the students at first sight to encourage them to look inside the textbooks. The font size of the texts and the real size of the textbooks should be easy to handle and carry for the students. There should be used more real photos or at least combination of both drawing pictures and real photos in the books to make the situation more natural and authentic. The colors and the illustrations used in the books should be happy and attractive. The topics can be rearranged or chosen by taking into consideration their ages, expectations, and needs in their real lives. The topics should be related to the content in the textbooks. The target culture should be presented. The textbooks should be supplemented with an adequate number of additional materials, such as CDs, Flash Cards, Posters, workbook, etc. They should be available to both teachers and students to help them learn the English Language in a motivating atmosphere. A CD Rom aiding the learners to practice four skills including oral skills should also be available to all. There should be a sufficient coverage of four skills, namely reading, speaking, writing, and listening in the textbooks. Every lesson should contain exercises and activities that enable learners to apply their knowledge and communicate with each other. Exercises or lessons in general should promote cooperative learning among students. Exercises should provide space for interaction between: (1) learner to learner, (2) learner to teacher, and finally, (3) teacher to learner (Henriques, 2003). The level and number of exercises should be based on students' abilities, interest, and the time allocated for the course. Presenting the workbooks in color with using different illustration is advisable to motivate the learners to do the tasks. The number of vocabulary should be reasonable for the level of the students. The vocabulary items should be repeated and reviewing in the next units. The textbooks should include more review sections for each new parts or lessons. An appropriate glossary with detailed information should be added. Finally, the grammar part should be included based on the structure used in each unit.

Implications for Professional Organizations and Special Educational Administrators

Professional organizations in regard to foreign language learning and advocacy play an integral role in the development of language learning for all students (Zavodjancik, 2012)

Professional organizations are important for providing and improving foreign language instruction for all students. According to Zavodjancik (2012) and the survey he has done, having proficiency requirements and support for language teachers and departments should be an essential role of the organizations. Both

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professional organizations and special educational administrators need to carefully plan for the future of foreign language special education. They need to change the policy regarding educating all students with special needs especially those who with mental retardation, otherwise these students cannot be as global citizens, one of the members of foreign language education.

First of all, there is needed to train and prepare teachers in the area of special education and language teaching/ learning to help the students in a best way. Second, all students with special needs should have the equal curricula and instruction in the general education for the normal students. The English language course should be applied as the main course just like the normal students, not as an optional. Besides this, the time considered for the English language course should be taken in to account. There should be more time for these students to take part in this course, at least twice a week, 1 hour per session. Teachers argued that they cannot work on all aspects of the textbooks in a short amount of class time. Third, as these students need to require English language for their future career and education, they should receive English courses in higher levels of their education. Lastly, based on data from the study and interviews, teachers indicated classrooms should be equipped with a variety of resources to reach all students, such as different materials, softwares, and technology to engage all learners.

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Appendix A

	(0)	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
I. Physical Features					
A. General Appearance					
1. The size of the book is suitable for learner.				√	✓
2. It is convenient for handling and carrying.			√		
3. The outside cover is informative and attractive.					
4. The paper used for the textbooks is of good quality					
5. The textbooks used a lot of pictures with different color to show the content of the books.					
6. Different type size is used for the cover page (Title, text and captions).					
7. The font size and type used in the books are appropriate for this group.					
8. Printing used is good.					
9. The spacing between the words, line and paragraph is even and satisfactory.					
10. The books have a complete and detailed table of contents.					
11. The books are free from any type of errors.					
B. Illustrations (Visual Aids)					
12. The Visuals are varied and attractive.					
13. The colors used for visuals are attractive					
14. They are relevant to the text.					
15. They are realistic					
II. The objectives and Supplementary Materials of the Textbooks					
A. Book Objectives					
16. The objectives are related to the learners' needs and interests					
17. The objectives make a balance between the four main skills, listening, speaking, reading and writing					

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18. The textbook raises students' interest in further English language study.

19. The textbooks match to the specifications of the syllabus.

B. Supplementary Materials

20. There is an available teacher's guide to aid the teacher.

21. The workbook is available with some additional exercises to improve the language skills

22. The workbook has colorful presentation to attract and motivate the students.

23. The CD-ROM that accompanies the books is available and suitable.

24. The posters and flash cards that accompany the books are available and suitable.

25. The textbooks provided some additional materials to help students suffering from various disabilities (visually impaired or deaf..)

III. Learning-Teaching Content of the Textbook

A. Subject and Content

26. The subject and content of the textbook are interesting, challenging, and motivating.

27. The subject matter and content presented either topically or functionally in a logical, organized manner.

28. The content contains real-life issues.

29. The concept of the books is clarified with the help of pictures.

30. It covers a variety of topics from different fields.

B. Exercises

31. The number of exercises provided for the students is suitable.

32. The exercises are according to the students' interest.

33. The textbooks provided various activities to develop the four main skills.

34. The number of exercises suit the time allocated for this course.

35. The exercises have both individual pair and group work.

36. The exercises have a clear instruction.

C. Social and Cultural Contexts

37. The textbook content represents the culture of the target language. ✓

38. The content discusses some well –known characters from different areas of the world. ✓

39. The content displays different traditions and customs from different countries. ✓

IV. Language Skills

A. Listening

40. The textbooks have appropriate listening tasks for improving listening skills.

41. The CD covers all materials in the textbooks correct pronunciation.

42. The CD is produced by specialists in the field of English language learning/teaching and special education. ✓

43. The CD exposes the students to the voices and pronunciation of the native speakers of English. ✓

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B. Speaking

- 44. The textbooks developed some dialogues to encourage student-student and student-teacher oral communication.
- 45. There are some activities based on dialogues and content which invite students to talk about their concerns and interests. ✓
- 46. The conversations used in the textbooks sound natural and help students use English in their daily lives.
- 47. The dialogs are based on students' interests.

C. Reading

- 48. There is a range of varied and interesting reading tasks that can engage students to read the new words and dialogues in the books. ✓
- 49. There are extra materials, or resources to improve reading skill.

D. Writing

- 50. Tasks have achievable goals and take into consideration learner capabilities.
- 51. Writing tasks are interesting.
- 52. Writing activities are suitable in terms of length and level of the students.
- 53. It is graded in order of difficulty.

E. Vocabulary

- 54. Each unit gives the students some useful and practical words to know.
- 55. The exercises for vocabulary are rich and adequate.
- 56. New lexical items appear in each unit.
- 57. The number of new words in each lesson is appropriate to the level of students.
- 58. There is a list of vocabulary items tagged at the end of the textbook.
- 59. The Farsi equivalents given under each word.
- 60. The words are related to the topic.

F. Grammar

- 61. The grammar exercises are included.
- 62. The grammar rules are presented in a logical manner and in increasing order of difficulty.
- 63. The grammar examples are interesting and appropriate to the students' level.

V. Organization of the Content and its Presentation

- 64. Every unit is given an appropriate title.
- 65. Length of each lesson suits the learners.
- 66. The style of presentation is simple and interesting.
- 67. Each unit begins on a fresh page.

VI. Textual Language

- 68. The textual language is according to the mental level of the learners.
- 69. It is appropriate to the situation or context.
- 70. The language used is correct.