



EFL TEACHERS' PERCEPTIONS ABOUT THE EIGHTH AND NINTH GRADES ENGLISH TEXTBOOKS USED IN PALESTINIAN SCHOOLS

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Abstract:

Investigating teachers' perspectives on language materials could help in developing them (Ellis, 1998). Based on Gaza EFL teachers' complaints about the English textbooks of eighth and ninth grades, the present study aimed to explore the teachers' perceptions about such textbooks. The researcher administered a quantitative questionnaire to 63 teachers teaching English to Gaza eighth and ninth graders in 31 schools. She also conducted focus-group interviews with 18 teachers selected from the 63 teachers. The results of the questionnaire indicated that the participants had positive perceptions of the textbooks. However, the interview analysis showed the problematic aspects of such textbooks, such as the irrelevance of some topics to students' interests and needs, irrelevance of some reading topics to students' content background knowledge, irrelevance of speaking exercises and activities to authentic use of English language, and lack of gradation in writing activities included in the eighth grade English textbooks. Finally, the researcher provided relevant implications.

Keywords: EFL teachers, Palestinian schools, perceptions, textbooks

1. Introduction

1.1 Issues that Motivated the Research

The importance of materials in language teaching is highlighted by many authors (e.g., Al-Busaidi, 2018; McGrath, 2013; Tomlinson, 2008). Language materials introduce the basics of learning, and in some settings, English as a foreign language/English as a second language (EFL/ESL) materials are the major source of contact with a target language (Al-Busaidi, 2018). Some materials aid and promote language acquisition while others obstruct it depending on their features (Tomlinson, 2008). Indeed, evaluating second language/foreign language (L2/FL) materials is essential since well-prepared materials can support learning, provide information, and stimulate interest (McGrath, 2013).

To develop materials, including textbooks experts should evaluate them (Mahmoud, 2011). Materials evaluation should be related not only to aims and content

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but also to classroom procedures. Textbooks assessment should focus on the perceptions of the users of materials, such as teachers (Rea-Dickins & Germaine, 1992; Tomlinson, 2011). Investigating teachers' perspectives on language materials could help in developing them (Ellis, 1998). Additionally, students could trust materials if teachers value them (Tomlinson, 2008). Reinders and Lewis (2008) also refer to the positive effects of involving teachers in the evaluation process.

In fact, many empirical studies emphasized the importance of teachers' role in evaluating materials in different EFL contexts. For example, Alhamami and Ahmad (2018) explored Saudi EFL teachers' attitudes toward the commercial textbooks used in English programs. Orfan, Noori, and Akramy (2021) identified Afgani EFL instructors' views on English textbooks used in Afgan. Sadeghi (2020) investigated Iranian teachers' attitudes toward the third-grade secondary school new English textbook.

Additionally, various studies examined Palestinian EFL teachers' attitudes towards *English for Palestine* textbooks. Aqel (2009) identified Palestinian teachers' views on the 11th grade English textbook. Awad (2013) also evaluated the 12th grade English textbook as perceived by Palestinian teachers. Hammad (2014) explored Palestinian EFL teachers' attitudes toward English textbooks used in the first three grades of the primary stage. Additionally, Mahmoud (2007) examined Palestinian EFL fourth-grade teachers' opinions on the fourth-grade English textbook.

To the best of the researcher's knowledge, none of the Palestinian studies investigated EFL Palestinian teachers' viewpoints on *English for Palestine 8* and *English for Palestine 9*. Therefore, the study attempted to identify Palestinian EFL teachers' perceptions of such textbooks.

1.2 Research Context

Education in Palestine includes basic and secondary schooling periods. Basic education covers grades one to 10 whereas secondary schooling includes the 11th and 12th grades. Most Palestinian schools are single-sex schools (all-boys and all-girls schools), and every school day lasts five hours with six 45-minutes class periods.

English is taught as a compulsory subject in all grades in Palestine. *English for Palestine* series, which was developed by the Palestinian Ministry of Education in cooperation with Macmillan's, has been used for teaching English to elementary and secondary school students. Among *English for Palestine* series textbooks are the textbooks of eighth and ninth grades. *English for Palestine 8* and *English for Palestine 9* were first used in 2007 and 2008. Both textbooks have the same outline and construction. Each textbook includes 13 units, and each unit is supposed to be delivered through 12 class periods.

The researcher, who has taught English language teaching courses to Al-Aqsa University pre-service teachers for 17 years, found that most Gaza pre-service and in-service teachers had problems with the English textbooks of eighth and ninth grades. Therefore, the present study aimed to explore Gaza EFL teachers' perceptions of such textbooks.

1.3 Research Questions

The study addressed two research questions

1. What are Gaza EFL governmental school teachers' perceptions of *English for Palestine 8* and *English for Palestine 9*?
2. Are there statistically significant differences between eighth-grade teachers and ninth-grade teachers in their perceptions of the English teaching materials they use in Gaza governmental schools?

2. Research Key Terms

2.1 Perceptions

Macmillan Education Limited (2022) refers to *perception* as a particular way of thinking about something. Cambridge University Press (2022) also defines *perception* as opinions held by many people and based on how things seem. Rezalou and Yagiz (2021, 114) view that *perception* as "*individuals' beliefs and opinions towards events, situations, and things*".

The researcher defined *perceptions* in this study as the beliefs and opinions of teachers about a sample of English textbooks used in Palestinian schools (*English for Palestine 8* and *English for Palestine 9*).

2.2 Textbook

For Tomlinson (2003), a *textbook* is a kind of language material that is employed to assist students in learning a language. Richards (2014, 19) also refers to a *textbook* as "*a map that lays out the general content of lessons and a sense of structure that gives coherence to individual lessons, as well as to an entire course*". Furthermore, Merriam-Webster Incorporated (2022) defines a *textbook* as a book that is utilized in studying a subject.

The present study adopted the definition of Tomlinson (2003).

2.3 EFL Teachers

EFL teachers are full-time teachers who teach scheduled classes of English as a foreign language. The present study focused on EFL teachers of eighth and ninth grades in Gaza *Eighth* and *Ninth Grades*

According to Palestinian Educational system, *eighth* and *ninth grades* are basic schooling grades that are preceded by seven grades and followed by three other grades.

3. Previous Studies

The previous studies section in the present study included studies that were carried out in different EFL contexts, including Palestinian context. The five studies of Alhamami and Ahmad (2018), Laabidi and Nfissi (2016), Mavaddat and Akbarpour (2021), Orfan, Noori, and Akramy (2021), and Sadeghi (2020) examined EFL teachers' perceptions of different English textbooks. Alhamami and Ahmad (2018) explored 43 Saudi EFL teachers' views on the commercial textbooks used in English programs. The researchers

utilized a questionnaire, and results showed that such books were not relevant to the courses objectives and the students' linguistic proficiency. Laabidi and Nfissi (2016) examined 50 Moroccan teachers' opinions on *Visa to the World* used in Moroccan schools. Results of a questionnaire revealed that the textbook did not satisfy the teachers' expectations. Mavaddat and Akbarpour (2021) evaluated *Connect series* textbooks as perceived by 67 Iranian EFL teachers. An evaluation checklist analysis indicated that the teachers had positive attitudes toward the textbooks. Orfan, Noori, and Akramy (2021) identified 60 Afgani instructors' views on English textbooks used in Afgan. The participants were teaching English in higher education institutions. Results of a questionnaire indicated that the participants had positive perceptions about the English textbooks, as the four skills of English were equally represented in the textbooks. Sadeghi (2020) investigated 25 Iranian teachers' attitudes towards the third-grade English textbook. A textbook evaluation checklist was employed in this study. Findings revealed the textbook weaknesses like lack of a glossary list and inadequacy of time allocated to teaching such textbook.

As for the Palestinian EFL context, many studies examined the English textbooks used in different stages of learning in Palestine. For example, some studies evaluated the preparatory stage (seventh, eighth, and ninth grades) English textbooks like a study by Ali (2011) that aimed at investigating the five Cs considered in *English for Palestine 9*. An evaluation list was employed to assess the content of the textbook in light of the five Cs. Findings indicated that the communication goal got the highest score, followed by culture, connection, comparison, and finally community goal. Itmeizeh and Khalil (2017) also evaluated the communicative activities included in *English for Palestine 7*. The researchers utilized an evaluation checklist to fulfill the study objectives. Results indicated that 75 out of 331 activities were classified as communicative activities. The study also concluded that the textbook activities focused on teaching structures, vocabulary, and forms rather than the social use of language. Furthermore, Jarbou and Abu Moummar (2021) evaluated the reflective thinking skills contained in the eighth-grade English textbook. An evaluation checklist based on reflective thinking skills was prepared. Results showed that observation got the highest percentage, followed by proposing, inferring, detecting contradictions, and reasoning. The study also reported that reflective thinking skills needed to be improved in the textbook. Raba (2017) examined Palestinian teachers' attitudes toward the eighth-grade English textbook. Results of a questionnaire revealed that the participants had moderate attitudes toward the textbook. Shaban (2017) also aimed at assessing fluency activities incorporated in *English for Palestine 8*. Based on an evaluation checklist and a questionnaire, the study reported that fluency activities in such textbooks should be developed.

Some other studies focused on the English textbooks used in Palestinian high schools. Amr (2020) assessed 21 century skills incorporated in the 12th grade textbook. A questionnaire was distributed to 40 Palestinian EFL teachers in the study. The study found that collaboration is highly ranked, followed by critical thinking, communication, problem-solving, creativity, and innovation. The data also concluded that information

and communication technology skills are the least integrated skills within the textbook. It was also reported that the participants had not received the proper training to integrate these skills into the educational process. Additionally, Aqel (2009) identified 60 EFL Palestinian teachers' views on the 11th grade textbook. Results of a questionnaire indicated that the participants' attitudes towards the textbook were moderate, and the textbook should include poems and essays. Awad (2013) also evaluated Palestinian 12th grade textbooks as perceived by teachers. A questionnaire was administered to 26 teachers teaching English in Nablus high schools. The study found that those books were suitable for Palestinian students' culture and religion.

Another part of the studies was concerned with the primary-stage English textbooks in Gaza. For example, Hammad (2014) explored 80 Palestinian EFL teachers' attitudes toward the English textbooks used in the first three grades of the primary stage. Using a questionnaire and a semi-structured interview, findings revealed that the participants had positive attitudes towards the textbooks though they encountered problems when delivering it, such as inadequacy of the time devoted to teaching such textbooks and a large number of unknown vocabularies included in them. Mahmoud (2007) examined 60 Palestinian EFL teachers' opinions on fourth-grade English textbooks. The study employed a questionnaire and concluded that the participants had positive views on such textbooks.

It can be noticed that most previous studies evaluating *English for Palestine series* textbooks examined the incorporation of certain skills in such textbooks. None of the previous studies introduced detailed evaluations of the English textbooks of eighth and ninth grades e.g., content, vocabulary and structures, activities and exercises, and pictures. Furthermore, all studies, except Hammad (2014), did not utilize any qualitative interviews (semi-structured or unstructured interviews) which could introduce in-depth data about the teachers' views on *English for Palestine* textbooks. Thus, the present study conducted a mixed-method research (a closed questionnaire and a semi-structured interview) to identify Gaza EFL teachers' perceptions of *English for Palestine 8* and *English for Palestine 9*.

4. Methodology

4.1 Participants

Participants were 63 teachers teaching English to Gaza eighth and ninth graders in 31 schools that were selected from all governmental schools including eighth and ninth graders in Gaza (56 schools). The researcher employed the stratified systematic random sampling technique when choosing the 63 participants who completed a quantitative questionnaire. Then, for gathering detailed data about Gaza EFL teachers' perceptions of English textbooks for eighth and ninth grades, the researcher conducted focus-group interviews with 18 teachers chosen from the 63 ones. It is worth mentioning that the schools including the study participants were selected based on pupils' gender (males

and females) and the directorates the pupils belong to (East and West of Gaza directorates).

4.2 Instruments

Two instruments were employed in this study i.e., a quantitative questionnaire and a semi-structured interview. A group of instructors earning at least a PhD degree in curricula and instruction of English validated the instruments. The experts' comments on the first versions of the instruments were considered.

4.2.1 A Quantitative Questionnaire

According to Sharp (2012), a quantitative (closed questions) questionnaire is commonly used for getting numerical forms of measurement. Reviewing the literature related to English textbook evaluation (e.g., Hammad, 2014; Miekley, 2005; Orfan, Noori, and Akramy, 2021), the researcher prepared a quantitative questionnaire. The questionnaire's purpose was to measure Gaza EFL teachers' perceptions of the textbooks used for teaching English to Palestinian eighth and ninth graders. Establishing the content validity of the questionnaire (as mentioned above) the researcher determined Cronbach Alpha reliability coefficient of the questionnaire which was 0.88. Table 1 shows the reliability coefficients of the questionnaire categories.

Table 1: Cronbach Alpha Reliability Coefficient of the Questionnaire

Category	Number of Items	Cronbach alpha coefficient
Contents	6	0.76
Vocabulary and Structures	4	0.75
Activities and Exercises	5	0.76
Pictures	4	0.72
Total	19	0.88

4.2.2 A semi-structured Interview

An in-depth interview is commonly used for collecting qualitative data, as it is useful for exploring people's perspectives and thoughts (Sit, 2017). The researcher employed a semi-structured interview to get detailed data about Gaza EFL teachers' perceptions of *English for Palestine 8* and *English for Palestine 9*. Reviewing literature related to English textbooks evaluation (e.g., Hammad, 2014; Miekley, 2005; Orfan, Noori, and Akramy, 2021), the researcher developed the interview items. Each interview lasted 40 minutes, and it was audio-taped.

4.3 Data Collection and Analysis Procedures

The study was carried out in September and October 2022. First, the researcher got a written consent from the administrations of Palestinian Ministry of Education. Second, she distributed a quantitative questionnaire to the instructors teaching English language to eighth and ninth graders in the selected schools. Then, she conducted focus-group

interviews with 18 teachers chosen from the teachers who administered the questionnaire.

The researcher employed SPSS (statistical package for the social sciences) to analyze the questionnaire data. Means, standard deviations, and percentages were calculated to determine the teachers' perceptions of the English textbooks of eighth and ninth graders. The researcher also ran T. Test to identify the differences between eighth-grade teachers and ninth-grade teachers in their views on the textbooks.

Considering the steps mentioned in Lodico, Spaulding, and Voegtle (2006), the researcher transcribed the data, coded it, and organized it into seven categories, including 'Irrelevance of some topics to students' interests', 'Irrelevance of some reading topics to students' content background knowledge', 'Irrelevance of speaking exercises and activities to authentic use of English language', 'Lack of gradation in the writing activities included in the seventh and eighth grades textbooks', 'Lack of consistency between grammar exercises incorporated in the English textbooks of eighth and ninth grades and those included in Ministry of Education exams', 'A gap between theory and practice', and 'Inadequacy of time devoted to English textbooks of grades 8 and 9'. To determine the interview data credibility, the material was read and coded by another researcher, and the consistency between the two researchers was 86%.

5. Results

5.1 Results of First Research Question

5.1.1 Results of the Quantitative Questionnaire

The first research question was "What are Gaza EFL governmental school teachers' perceptions of *English for Palestine 8* and *English for Palestine 9*?" The researcher administered a questionnaire to the study participants. Tables 2 and 3 show means, standard deviations, and percentages of the teachers' responses to the questionnaire. Based on the data statistical analyses, the researcher employed the following rubrics for determining the participants' perceptions: Very high (84% - 100%), High (83.9% - 68%), Moderate (67.9% - 52%), Low (51.9% - 36%), Very low (36% - 20%).

Table 2: Means, Standard Deviations, and Percentages of the Questionnaire Categories

No.	Category	Mean	Standard deviation	%
1	Contents	3.93	0.58	78.6
2	Vocabulary and Structures	4.13	0.53	82.6
3	Activities and Exercises	4.03	0.68	80.5
4	Pictures	4.33	0.51	86.6
Total		4.08	0.48	81.6

Table 2 indicates that the overall frequency of the teachers' responses to the questionnaire items was high, 81,6 %. 'Pictures' got the highest score, 86, 6 %, followed by 'Vocabulary and Structures', 82,6%, 'Activities and exercises', 80,5%, 'Contents', 78,6%. Means, standard deviations, and percentages of all items are shown in Table 3.

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Table 3: Means, Standard Deviations, and Percentages of the Teachers' Responses to the Questionnaire

No.	Contents	Mean	Standard deviation	%
11	The textbook topics are introduced in a coherent manner.	4.15	0.74	83.0
2	The textbook content is suitable to students' English proficiency.	3.65	0.98	73.0
3	The textbook content is arranged from simple to difficult.	4.08	0.92	81.5
4	The textbook content considers students' needs and interests.	3.85	0.77	77.0
5	The textbook content considers the mother-tongue language culture.	4.00	0.85	80.0
6	The textbook content is relevant to the target language culture.	3.85	0.89	77.0
Total		3.93	0.58	78.6
No.	Vocabulary and Structures	Mean	Standard deviation	%
7	Keywords and structural patterns are introduced at an appropriate rate.	4.33	0.83	86.5
8	The meanings and uses of keywords and structural patterns are reinforced in various lessons.	4.25	0.67	85.0
9	Keywords and structural patterns are related to everyday language.	3.90	0.93	78.0
10	The quantity of keywords and structural patterns included in each unit is appropriate.	4.05	0.78	81.0
Total		4.13	0.53	82.6
No.	Activities and Exercises	Mean	Standard deviation	Relative Weight (%)
11	The textbook exercises focus on using keywords and structural patterns in commutative situations.	4.30	0.85	86.0
12	The textbook exercises help students use the main skills of English language i.e., listening, speaking, reading, and writing.	4.40	0.87	88.0
13	The textbook exercises are related to most types of language sub-skills i.e., cognitive and metacognitive skills, micro and macro skills, etc.	3.75	1.01	75.0
14	The textbook includes various types of questions and exercises, such as multiple choice, true or false, completion, and matching questions.	3.85	1.10	77.0
15	The textbook exercises consider all levels of the cognitive domain in Bloom's Taxonomy (knowledge, comprehension, application, analysis, synthesis, and evaluation).	3.83	0.90	76.5
Total		4.03	0.68	80.5
No.	Pictures	Mean	Standard deviation	%
16	The textbook pictures are related to the textbook topics.	4.73	0.55	94.5
17	The textbook pictures are attractive.	4.45	0.75	89.0
18	The textbook pictures can help in activating students' background knowledge.	4.05	0.81	81.0
19	The textbook pictures help students in comprehending the content.	4.10	0.63	82.0
Total degree		4.33	0.51	86.6

As can be shown in Table 3, the first item 'The textbook content is suitable to students' English proficiency' got the lowest score, 73%, which means that the contents of the textbooks are not easy to understand. The interview data introduced a detailed description of the teachers' views on the English textbooks of eighth and ninth grades.

5.1.2 Results of the Semi-structured Interview

Though the questionnaire data indicated that the participants had positive views on the textbooks of eighth and ninth grades, the interview analysis revealed some problematic aspects related to such books. Qualitative results concluded that both *English for Palestine 8* and *English for Palestine 9* contain topics that were irrelevant to students' interests and needs.

"I could notice that most students were not satisfied with many topics in the eighth-grade textbook, such as 'Wild life in danger'." (Participant 1)

"Yes, the majority of ninth graders did not like some lessons like 'Death of the ocean'. What benefit will they get from studying such strange lessons?" (Participant 6)

"If I were a textbook designer, I would add stories to 'English for Palestine 8' and 'English for Palestine 9'. Both textbooks do not include any stories! I will also add topics preferred by pupils like sport, mobile phone applications, and journeys." (Participant 9)

Another complaint expressed by most interviewees in this study was that some reading passages topics were not related to students' content background knowledge. From their perspectives, students should learn language aspects and skills (keywords and structural patterns and listening, speaking, reading, and writing sub-skills) rather than subjects like science or history in English classes.

"I usually encounter a problem when teaching some lessons related to history, such as 'Saladin Ayyubi', 'A day in Istanbul' and 'When Islam comes to Spain'. The students have no previous knowledge about such lessons, and I have to teach them all the historical facts! I should focus on developing English reading sub-skills rather than teaching new historical facts." (Participant 18)

Moreover, some teachers complained that speaking exercises and activities included in the English textbooks of eighth and ninth grades were not related to the authentic use of English.

"Yes, the textbooks include role-play activities, but the expressions themselves are not related to everyday English. Students should learn expressions needed for communicating with others." (Participant 8)

Additionally, most participants in this study reported that writing activities incorporated in the eighth-grade textbook lacked gradation. In the teachers' opinions, there was a noticeable gap between *English for Palestine 7* and *English for Palestine 8* in writing activities.

"According to the seventh-grade teacher's guide, seventh graders are required only to arrange words according to the alphabetical order and write simple phrases. Then, suddenly in the eighth grade, they must write paragraphs, formal and informal letters, and emails! How can I teach them such tasks?" (Participant 7)

"The writing activities incorporated in the eighth-grade English textbook are very difficult. Students have to write compositions though they were not trained to write simple paragraphs or even simple sentences in the seventh grade!" (Participant 17)

A majority of the interviewees were also unsatisfied with the inconsistency between grammar exercises incorporated in the English textbooks of eighth and ninth grades and those included in Ministry of Education exams.

"Ministry of Education exams contain grammar exercises that are not similar to those in the textbooks like 'Do as shown in brackets' and 'Choose the correct answer'. Most of the textbooks exercises are completion exercises." (Participant 15)

Furthermore, most interviewees complained about the inadequacy of time devoted to the English textbooks of eighth and ninth grades employed in Gaza schools. A majority of the interviewees expressed their dissatisfaction with the time plan provided by the Ministry of Education.

"Class periods devoted to reading, listening, speaking, writing, and grammar lessons are not adequate. I need time to train students to use different types of skills, including top-down and bottom-up skills, cognitive and metacognitive skills, and the skills you have just mentioned." (Participant 2)

"For example, how can I teach the present simple and present continuous tenses within only one class period?" (Participant 1)

"I think that the textbook designers focused on quantity at the expense of quality when preparing such textbooks. I wish I could double the number of class periods allocated for teaching each textbook." (Participant 10)

"Some words are difficult to pronounce, I know that eighth graders should learn a word consisting of many syllables, but the students need time to acquire them successfully!" (Participant 18)

A final problem reported in this study was that *English for Palestine* textbooks designers considered neither students' low linguistic proficiency nor poor learning conditions in Gaza, including overcrowded classrooms, lack of equipment, lack of schools, and lack of time devoted to teaching English language skills.

“English textbooks of eighth and ninth grades are not suitable for students’ achievement level in the English language. In a class of 50 students, only 15 students can understand the instructional materials they study. We work under hard conditions, such as overcrowded classrooms, lack of modern teaching aids, etc. Such conditions might contribute to students’ low achievement level in the English language.” (Participant 2)

“Only the students who receive help from their parents can understand such textbooks. I feel as if the designers of such textbooks lived on another planet!” (Participant 8)

To sum up, the interview data supplemented the questionnaire data about Gaza EFL teachers' perceptions of the English textbooks of eighth and ninth grades. The interview analysis showed the participants' complaints about textbooks. Such complaints included irrelevance of some topics to students' interests and needs, irrelevance of some reading topics to students' content background knowledge, irrelevance of speaking exercises and activities to authentic use of English language, lack of gradation in writing activities included in the e eighth grade English textbook, lack of consistency between grammar exercises incorporated in English textbooks of eighth and ninth grades and those included in Ministry of Education exams, and inadequacy of time devoted to the eighth and ninth grades English textbooks.

5.2 Results of Second Research Question

The second research question was "Are there statistically significant differences between eighth-grade teachers and ninth-grade teachers in their perceptions of the English teaching materials they use in Gaza governmental schools?" The study hypothesis (There are no statistically significant differences between eighth-grade teachers and ninth-grade teachers in their perceptions about the English teaching materials they use in Gaza governmental schools) was tested. First, the researcher used the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test to identify the distributional differences between the two samples. Table 4 indicates that p-value for each category is higher than 0.05 (*sig.* > 0.05). This indicates that the data follow a normal distribution.

Table 4: Kolmogorov-Smirnov test results

Category	Z-Value	P-value
Contents	0.68	0.73
Vocabulary and Structures	1.11	0.16
Activities and Exercises	1.17	0.12
Pictures	0.97	0.30
Total	0.86	0.43

Table 5 shows means, standard deviations, and T. Test analysis.

Table 5: Means, Standard Deviations, and T. Test Values

Grade	Mean	STD	T	P-Value
Eighth Grade	4.08	0.52	0.035	0.973
Ninth Grade	4.07	0.43		

To test the hypothesis, a T-test was utilized. Table 5 shows that the p-value is 0.973 which is more than the significance level ($\alpha \leq 0.05$). Thus, it can be concluded that there are no statistically significant differences between the scores means of both groups.

6. Discussion and Implications

The questionnaire data indicated that Gaza EFL teachers had positive views on the English textbooks of eighth and ninth grades. However, the interview data showed some problematic aspects of such textbooks. The interview analysis revealed that both *English for Palestine 8* and *English for Palestine 9* contain topics that were irrelevant to students' interests and needs. According to Al-Busaidi (2018), when class materials speak to students' needs and interests' students' motivation to learn a foreign language will be enhanced. Kelly and Baird (2017) and Parra (2016) also view that FL materials should include topics that are related to students' interests and experiences. Indeed, Palestinian textbook designers need to remove all topics that are irrelevant to students' needs and interests, such as 'Death of the ocean' and 'Wild life in danger', and add new interesting topics related to sport, journeys, and stories.

Another result drawn from this study was that some reading passages topics were not related to students' content background knowledge, the thing which might impede students' comprehension. Ptak and Ginosyan (2014) state that reading texts should provide contexts that can suit learners' background knowledge. Moreover, Russell and Connor (2016) highlight the effects of prior knowledge on text comprehension. Thus, it is recommended for textbook designers in Palestine to substitute some texts (e.g., 'Saladin Ayyubi', 'A day in Istanbul') which are irrelevant to students' prior knowledge for other interesting texts that are connected with other school subjects taught in the mother tongue language. By doing, so students could attain successful interaction with reading texts.

Moreover, Results indicated that speaking exercises and activities included in the eighth and ninth grades English textbooks did not improve the authentic use of English language. In line with this result, Itmeizeh and Khalil (2017) revealed that *English for Palestine 7* activities focused on teaching structures, vocabulary, and forms rather than social use of language. Baratta (2015) advocates the use of dialogues that sound like they come from the real world. Lestari, Fatimah, Sudarwati, and Astuti (2021) also provide that EFL teachers should use authentic utterances to help students recognize how English language is utilized in daily life. Based on that, Palestinian EFL supervisors are strongly recommended to enrich the eighth and ninth grades English textbooks with authentic

spoken materials that could help in developing students' communicative use of English language.

Additionally, the interview data revealed that writing activities incorporated in the eighth-grade English textbook lacked gradation. In the teachers' opinions, there was a noticeable gap between *English for Palestine 7* and *English for Palestine 8* in writing activities. Palestinian EFL textbook designers are advised to reconsider the writing activities included in *English for Palestine 7* and *English for Palestine 8* so as to bridge the gap between the writing activities of both textbooks. In this respect, Career Point (2021) and Sharma (2004) emphasize the principle of gradation in language instructional materials.

Another result was the inadequacy of time devoted to the English textbooks of eighth and ninth grades employed in Gaza schools. All interviewees in this study expressed their dissatisfaction with the time plan provided by Ministry of Education in Palestine. From their perspectives, the main reason for students' poor proficiency in English language was a lack of time for teaching language items (a large number of keywords and structural patterns) and skills (listening, speaking, reading, and writing). Congruent with this result, Hammad (2014) concluded that the number of class periods allocated for teaching *English for Palestine* was inadequate. Accordingly, Ministry of Education in Palestine is strongly recommended to assign extra class periods (seven instead of five class periods a week) for delivering the eighth and ninth grades English textbooks.

Furthermore, most interviewees reported that *English for Palestine* textbooks designers considered neither EFL students' low linguistic proficiency nor poor learning conditions in Gaza, including overcrowded classrooms, lack of equipment, lack of schools, and inadequacy of time devoted to teaching English language skills. Likewise, Alhamami and Ahmad (2018) indicated that Saudi EFL teachers' attitudes toward the commercial textbooks used in English programs were negative because such books did not meet the students' linguistic proficiency. Hammad (2014) also reported that the English textbooks used in the first three grades were perceived by Gaza teachers to be irrelevant to educational environments. Consequently, it is advisable for Gaza EFL textbook designers to examine the students' linguistic proficiency levels as well as educational environments prior to designing EFL instructional materials.

7. Conclusion

Results of the questionnaire employed in this study indicated that Palestinian EFL teachers had positive perceptions about the English textbooks of eighth and ninth grades. However, the interview analysis showed some problematic aspects of the textbooks, such as the irrelevance of some topics to students' interests and needs, irrelevance of some reading topics to students' content background knowledge, irrelevance of speaking exercises and activities to authentic use of English language, lack of gradation in writing activities included in the eighth grade English textbooks, lack of consistency between

grammar exercises incorporated in the English textbooks of eighth and ninth grades and those included in Ministry of Education exams, and inadequacy of time devoted to English textbooks of eighth and ninth grades.

Conflict of Interest Statement

The author declares no conflicts of interest.

About the Author

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Appendix A

Please, read the following statements, and decide how much you agree or disagree with each.

Statement	Strongly Agree	Agree	Uncertain	Disagree	Strongly disagree
a. Contents					
1. The textbook topics are introduced in a coherent manner.					
2. The textbook content is suitable to students' English proficiency.					
3. The textbook content is arranged from simple to difficult.					
4. The textbook content considers students' needs and interests.					
5. The textbook content considers the mother-tongue language culture.					
6. The textbook content is relevant to the target language culture.					
b. Vocabulary and Structures					
7. Key words and structural patterns are introduced at an appropriate rate.					
8. The meanings and uses of key words and structural patterns are reinforced in various lessons.					
9. Key words and structural patterns are related to everyday language.					
10. The quantity of key words and structural patterns included in each unit is appropriate.					
c. Activities and Exercises					
11. The textbook exercises focus on using key words and structural patterns in commutative situations.					
12. The textbook exercises help students use the main skills of English language i.e., listening, speaking, reading, and writing.					
13. The textbook exercises are related to most types of language sub skills i.e., cognitive and metacognitive skills, micro and macro skills, etc.					
14. The textbook includes various types of questions and exercises, such as multiple choice, true or false, completion, and matching questions.					
15. The textbook exercises consider all levels of the cognitive domain in Bloom's Taxonomy (knowledge, comprehension, application, analysis, synthesis, and evaluation).					
d. Pictures					
16. The textbook pictures are related to the textbook topics.					
17. The textbook pictures are attractive.					
18. The textbook pictures can help in activating students' background knowledge.					
19. The textbook pictures help students in comprehending the content.					

Appendix B

1. What strong and weak points do you notice in *English for Palestine 8* and *English for Palestine 9*? Please, give examples.
2. Are the contents of the English textbooks of eighth and ninth grades appropriate? Why/Why not? (e.g., are they relevant to students' interests, culture, and proficiency level, etc.)?
3. Are the exercises included in the English textbooks of eighth and ninth grades effective? Why/Why not? (Do they help students use English language communicatively? Are they related to most types of language sub skills, etc.)
4. Are the vocabulary items and structural patterns included in the English textbooks of eighth and ninth grades useful and easy to acquire? Why/Why not?
5. Are the pictures included in the English textbooks of eighth and ninth grades appealing? How?

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