UAE ENGLISH SKILLS: A TEXTBOOK EVALUATION

A THESIS IN TEACHING ENGLISH TO SPEAKERS OF OTHER LANGUAGES

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ABSTRACT

National English textbooks are considered to be the main element of the English language curriculum at government schools in the UAE. Tens of thousands of students studying at these schools depend on national textbooks for their English language learning. Therefore it is essential to regularly review and evaluate these textbooks to determine their suitability for the country's context and their potential ability to develop students' language competence. One of the newest additions to the national English textbooks used at government schools is the UAE English Skills series of textbooks. This study sheds light on the change that happened in the English curriculum which led to the adoption of the UAE English Skills for grades 7, 8, and 10, and attempts at determining their pedagogical value and effectiveness through conducting an in-depth textbook evaluation. The study also investigates teachers' attitudes towards the adoption of the UAE English Skills textbooks and their perception of their value and suitability to the UAE's context.

The main purpose of the study is to determine the overall pedagogical value and suitability of the UAE English Skills series of textbooks to the UAE's context. It seeks answers to the following questions: What is the pedagogical effectiveness of the new series of textbooks? Are they suitable for the UAE's context? In what ways can they help UAE students improve their English language? What are the reasons for the change that happened in the curriculum? What are teachers' attitudes towards the new series of textbooks and how are they adapting their teaching methods to them? To achieve the purpose of the study, both qualitative and quantitative data are gathered from multiple sources including interviews, surveys, textbook evaluation forms, and in-depth evaluation of samples from the textbooks.

Results indicate that the UAE English Skills for grades 7, 8, and 10, in spite of not being preceded by any kind of needs analysis, has some remarkable features that would assist students in developing their English language skills and improving their general language competence. Results from teachers' surveys and textbook evaluation forms reveal that teachers perceive the textbooks to be appropriate for their students' needs as language learners. However, teachers pointed out that they still need to attend more training sessions and workshops to help them in making the best use of the UAE English Skills textbooks.

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To

The memory of

Walid and Younis

Who believed in me and supported me

Until the last minute of their lives

I remember you

And love you

Every time I breathe

CHAPTER 1

OVERVIEW OF THE STUDY

At the opening ceremony of the 10th TESOL Arabia Conference, H. H. Sheikh Nahyan Bin Mubarak Al Nahyan, the Minister of Higher Education and Scientific Research, emphasized the importance of developing a communicative curriculum that would empower both students and teachers, and the importance of giving students a chance to take charge of their own learning (Al Nahyan, 2005). He explained that schools will not be successful in helping students meet high standards unless teachers bring their own creativity to the classroom. This statement, as one of the main objectives of the Ministry of Education, gives a perspective on the reasons for the series of changes that recently happened to the national English curriculum in the UAE. These changes mainly consisted of replacing the old national textbooks with more up-to-date and presumably more effective textbooks.

In the UAE's educational system, textbooks are considered the main component of the curriculum. They determine the content, the methods, and the procedures for teaching and learning in the classroom. They also provide a systematic syllabus for teachers to follow in teaching a certain subject. However, there are many debates in the field of English language teaching about the actual role of textbooks in the ESL/EFL classroom (Cortazzi & Jin, 1996; Crawford, 2002; Cunningsworth, 1995; McGrath, 2002; Richards, 2001). Many issues related to textbooks' use have emerged in recent years like their practicality, their methodological validity, encouragement of innovation and creativity, authenticity of their materials, and their cultural relevance.

Whether or not one accepts the value of textbooks in the ESL/EFL classroom, teachers in the UAE government schools are obliged to use them. That is why it is essential to establish and apply a variety of relevant and contextually appropriate criteria for evaluation of the national English textbooks that tens of thousands of students across the UAE depend on for the study of the English language.

The purpose of this study is to determine the overall pedagogical value and suitability of the newly adopted English textbooks in the UAE government schools. This can be achieved by examining the changes brought about by the new series of national English textbooks, *UAE English Skills,* which was piloted in the year 2006 in grades

seven, eight, and ten. The introduction of the new textbooks is a continuation of changes implemented by the Ministry of Education to the national English curriculum. It is aimed at developing UAE schools students' competence in English to match the level that is required of them to succeed in higher education institutes inside and outside of the UAE and meet the needs of the job market in the country.

Since its implementation, the *UAE English Skills* series has been met by numerous complaints from supervisors, teachers, and students all over the UAE. In a series of articles published by *Al Bayan* newspaper (Al Medrab, 2006; Attaya, 2006; Jbara, 2006), teachers and supervisors complained that the level of government school students is lower than what the authors of the textbooks had assumed it to be and therefore, it is impossible to use them without requiring the students to take extra English classes. Teachers also pointed out that they did not get enough training and preparation to help them better exploit these textbooks. Another complaint, according to Attaya (2006), revolved around the content of the new textbooks, which was considered to be irrelevant to the students and their society's needs. Teachers complaining in the articles explained that the textbooks contain biographies of famous people from foreign cultures and rarely do they refer to famous characters from the students' local culture. They also claimed that some themes also describe educational systems that are associated with foreign cultures and present terms that do not exist in the UAE's government schools (e.g., detention, student council, prefect).

Anna Phillips, one of the two authors of the textbooks, was quoted in the same newspaper article explaining that research findings show that by the time they join university, students are somehow weak in basic subjects such as math, science, and culture. She pointed out that she and her co-author, Terry Phillips, focused on these research findings when they were choosing the content of the textbooks because they assumed that this is what students need. However, after meeting with several groups of teachers around the UAE, she also admitted that because of the short time the Ministry of Education had given her to complete the series, there were some mistakes in the content, but they did not affect the quality of the textbooks.

The authors also reported to *Al Bayan* newspaper (Attaya, 2006) that in most of the classes they have attended in different areas of the UAE to see how their textbooks

were being applied, it was the teachers' approach to using the new textbooks that made it harder for the students to understand. The question that presents itself here is whether the problem lies in the textbooks themselves, in the methods and approaches used in teaching them, or in both.

<div align="center">Research Questions</div>

Given the recent adoption of the new textbook series, this would be one of its first evaluations. Such evaluation is needed to identify the strengths and weaknesses of *UAE English Skills* and assist teachers in making optimum use of the textbooks' strong points and recognize their shortcomings.

Because of the important role of textbooks in ELT, it is necessary to investigate the impact of the introduction of the *UAE English Skills* on teachers and English language teaching in the United Arab Emirates. My thesis tries to answer the following questions:

(1) What is the pedagogical effectiveness of the new series of textbooks? This question is addressed by examining their suitability to the UAE's context and students' level of competence.

(2) What are the reasons that led the ministry to change the curriculum?

(3) What are teachers' attitudes towards the new series of textbooks?

(4) How are they adapting their teaching methods to them?

With the help of in-depth evaluation, textbook evaluation forms, and questionnaires completed by teachers using the textbooks, this study assesses whether the *UAE English Skills* series is designed in a way that will help develop students' English language skills and competence. It also examines how teachers evaluate the new textbooks and adapt to consequent changes in the curriculum.

<div align="center">The Educational Context of the Study</div>

In the last few years, there has been an emphasis from the UAE's Ministry of Education on the necessity of developing English language teaching in government schools. In order to do this, a series of changes were made to the national English curriculum. A new series of textbooks that started from grade one gradually replaced the older, much criticised national English textbooks. The change came in three stages. The first one was *UAE Parade* which was piloted in the year 2000 and implemented gradually over the last six years from grades one to six. The second stage of change was at the

secondary level with a new textbook, *English for the Emirates,* developed in 2003 by the Higher Colleges of Technology for grade twelve (Smith, 2003). The third and most recent change is the new series of textbooks, *UAE English Skills,* which was implemented at the beginning of 2006 for grades seven, eight, and ten, with a plan to implement it in grades 9, 11, and 12 in the following years.

From my personal experience as a student and teacher in the UAE's government schools, I know that the textbook is the only material used in the English curriculum provided in the UAE. The source of requisite knowledge for correct answers in exams (English and other subjects) is mostly taken literally from the textbook. Students are expected to memorize the content of their English textbooks to pass the final exams, and their competence in English is measured according to their knowledge of that content only. This approach to English language learning has created a huge problem for the majority of high school graduate students who want to continue their higher education. Most of those students have not been able to cope with university programs that require communicative competence in English and accuracy in both productive and receptive skills and have had to go through extensive English language programs before they could join the mainstream university programs. This is particularly important with the generalized move to make English the medium of instruction in higher education as a first step to insuring that graduates are equipped with the necessary skills and qualifications to meet the challenges of the twenty-first century workplace.

To remedy this situation and enhance students' English skills, the Ministry of Education has embarked on a series of textbook changes, the last of which is the commissioning of the new series of textbooks for grades 7, 8, and 10, the *UAE English Skills.* Since the aim of this study is to evaluate the new series of textbooks, it was only conducted in government schools where these textbooks are taught. The educational system in the United Arab Emirates has three cycles: the primary cycle, the preparatory cycle, and the secondary cycle. The primary cycle is from grades one to five, the preparatory cycle is from grades six to nine, and the secondary cycle is from grades ten to twelve. The *UAE English Skills* was piloted on grades 7, 8, and 10, and hence, the present study was conducted in the second and third cycles in government schools in Fujairah, UAE.

Overview of the Chapters and Appendices

Chapter one introduced the purpose of the study and the research questions. It also situated the research in the UAE educational system by providing a general overview of the process of developing and piloting the *UAE English Skills* series of textbooks at the beginning of the 2006-2007 school year. Chapter two provides a review of the literature. It discusses the important role textbooks play in the ESL/EFL classroom and reviews the different approaches of teachers' textbook use and how this affects students' learning. In addition, it explains in detail the process of evaluating ESL/EFL textbooks and learning materials. Finally, chapter two reviews the various processes of modifying and adapting textbooks. Chapter three, methodology, provides a detailed description of the participants, giving the number of the participants, their nationalities, educational level, teaching experience, and teaching load. The second part of chapter three describes the instruments and the procedures followed in collecting data through surveys and the interviews. It also describes the evaluation form and the procedures used in the in-depth evaluation of the three *UAE English Skills'* textbooks. Chapter four presents the findings that were obtained from the instruments used in the study. The data gathered from these sources are analyzed and categorized into four sections: first, the pedagogical effectiveness of the textbook package in the UAE context; second, the change in the curriculum and the development of the *UAE English Skills*; third, the usefulness and value of the *UAE English Skills* as perceived by teachers; and last, teachers' styles of using the *UAE English Skills*. Chapter five summarizes the findings and concludes the study by attempting to draw some implications for teachers, textbook designers, and the Ministry of Education.

There are five main appendices. Appendix A provides additional information about the participants of this study, such as the names of schools that participated in the study and the number of teachers from each school. Appendix B1 presents the teachers' questionnaire followed by the teachers' textbook evaluation form in Appendix B2. Complete results of the textbook evaluation forms and the surveys are given in Appendix C1 and Appendix C2. The evaluation form used in the in-depth evaluation is included in Appendix D, samples of conversations are provided in Appendix E1, and speaking tasks and strategies taken from the textbooks are provided in Appendix E2, followed by an

excerpt of a grammar activity taken from the textbooks in Appendix E3. Appendices F1, F2, and F3 provide the marking scheme for the formal exams for grades 7, 8, and 10, in addition to samples of the tests from the test booklet and the formal tests used by teachers.

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

This chapter includes six sections covering some of the most important issues discussed in the literature dealing with textbooks. The first section addresses the importance of textbooks in the ESL/EFL classroom, and whether they support or hinder language learning. The second section reviews the styles of using textbooks by teachers and how these styles might affect students' learning. The third section examines the process of localizing and adapting ESL/EFL materials and textbooks. The fourth section explains the factors that affect selecting/developing the appropriate textbook by teachers or governments. The fifth section discusses in detail the process of evaluating ESL/EFL textbooks and the importance of involving teachers in the evaluation process. The final section reviews the supplementation and modification of textbooks.

The Role of Textbooks in the ELT Classroom

Teaching materials are an essential component in English Language Teaching (ELT). These include text materials that are designed specially for language learning (e.g., textbooks, worksheets, computer software), authentic materials selected by the classroom teacher from newspapers, TV, or radio, teacher written materials, learner-generated materials, realia, and representations such as drawings, photographs, and posters (McGrath, 2002). No matter what type of materials the teacher uses, they represent the basis of the language practice learners engage in, and the language input they receive in the classroom. According to Richards (2001), teaching materials also play a significant role in language curriculum development because of their extensive use in language programs. For language teachers, materials could be their primary teaching resource or a supplement to their instruction. In the case of inexperienced teachers, materials can be a form of teacher training by providing ideas on how to plan and teach lessons. Materials can also provide learners with a major source of contact with the language apart from the teacher.

The most important and most common forms of English language teaching materials are textbooks and their complementary resources (workbooks, cassettes, CDs, and teacher's manuals). Crossley and Murby (1994) define a textbook as "a standard work on a particular subject designed for classroom use with appropriate vocabulary,

illustrations, student exercises and teacher aids" (p. 100). In most ESL/EFL classes, textbooks are the centre of the curriculum and syllabus. They provide learners with the main, and sometimes the only, form of linguistic input in the classroom. This linguistic input includes various language samples that learners can practice inside and outside of the classroom, as well as cultural and methodological support for the language teachers. In many cases, textbooks determine the content, the methods, and the procedures of language teaching and learning. Richards (2001) suggests that one of the primary advantages of using textbooks is that they provide structure and can serve as a syllabus for a language program. Most textbooks are made up of carefully planned and balanced language content that enables both teachers and learners to follow the syllabus in a systematic way. One advantage of this is that teachers will find it easy to keep track of what they have done in the classroom, and tell others (like a substitute teacher, or the head of the department) where they have reached.

Second, as Cortazzi and Jin (1996) have pointed out, a textbook can serve the role of a teacher, "in the sense that it contains material that is intended to instruct students directly about English-speaking cultures" (p. 199). Third, as McGrath (2002) has indicated, textbooks offer variety and make revision and preparation possible for the learners. In this sense, textbooks can offer support for the learners outside of the classroom by reinforcing the points made by the teacher in the classroom, and giving learners extra linguistic practice for revision and preparation. Hajer, Meestringa, Park, and Oxford (1996) also point out that textbooks that include learning strategies might actually help learners become independent and self-directed. Learning strategies can help learners think about the learning process as it is taking place by making them aware of the linguistic components they encounter in the classroom, and directing their attention to the learning objectives of the activities they work on. They can also assist students in planning for learning, monitoring their production or comprehension, and evaluating learning after an activity is completed. Cunningsworth (1995) sums up the positive roles of textbooks in English language teaching as

- a resource for presentation materials (spoken and written)
- a source of activities for learner practice and communicative interaction

- a reference source for learners on grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation, etc.
- a source of stimulation and ideas for classroom language activities
- a syllabus (where they reflect learning objectives which have already been determined)
- a resource for self-directed learning or self-access work
- a support for less experienced teachers who have yet to gain in confidence. (p. 7)

However, not all teachers and researchers agree with the above mentioned roles of textbooks and have expressed reservations against them. Crawford (2002) demonstrates that some of the many shortcomings of textbooks include making decisions which can only be made by the teacher and/or the student, and failing to "present appropriate and realistic language models" (p. 81). If teachers allow the textbook to make the main instructional decisions for them, their role in the classroom will be marginalized or trivialized. Furthermore, textbooks tend to present inauthentic language (e.g., texts, dialogues, etc.) that is specially written for language learners and does not represent real language use. Toms (2004) supports this view by pointing out that textbooks cover language points in a shallow and "reductionist" way, and they cannot serve the various needs of all language learners. He also argues that textbooks deskill the teacher, taking away his/her creativity and initiative. Richards (2001) also warns against the total dependency of teachers on textbooks and insists that teachers who leave the decision making to the textbook and the teacher's guide are reducing their role in the classroom to that of a "technician whose primary function is to present materials prepared by others" (p. 255. See also Gebhard, 2006).

The negative role of ESL/EFL textbooks in accentuating sexism is another issue that researchers and practitioners have brought up in their discussion of the true value of textbooks in the classroom. In a *TESL-EJ* forum discussion, Keith Folse stated that many ESL materials and textbooks are "guilty" of sexism in three categories: omission (the more frequent appearance of males over females), firstness (putting the male's name first whenever a male and female are mentioned), and assigning certain occupations more often to male characters (Stanley, 2001). Carroll and Kowitz (1994) and Ansary and

Babaii (2003) confirm that many ESL/EFL textbooks still contain stereotyping, gender bias, and sexism. They explain that most of these textbooks do not lack suitable female role models, but the way they are portrayed is extremely passive. Even when authors and publishers attempt to maintain gender fairness, gender imbalance still exists at a subtle level. These biases are not likely to prevent language learning, but they could be really discouraging and de-motivating for female learners. They also limit the learners' imagination to the models they are presented with in these texts. In a study by Mannheim (1994), ESL learners attending intensive language courses in a private language school in London showed great sensitivity to sexism and bias in the materials presented to them, particularly due to the apparent invisibility of women in some occupations and the narrowing of their social and economic roles.

Another point of criticism against textbooks is based on the assumption that good teachers do not need them because they can create their own materials. In a longitudinal study carried out by Lowenberg-Ball and Feiman-Nemser (1988) in which they observed two different teacher education programs in two American universities, teacher educators explicitly taught their pre-service student teachers that being a good teacher means developing their own materials and avoiding the use of textbooks. However, these ideas were difficult to hold on to when those pre-service teachers worked in classrooms where they were forced to use textbooks and they were confronted with the fact that they were novice teachers lacking in experience, skill, and knowledge. They were not trained to handle or adapt to textbooks, and they did not have time to develop their own materials because of demanding workloads.

Many researchers (Crawford, 2002; Cunningsworth, 1995; Fagan, 1980; Richards, 2001, Vellenga, 2004), however, tend to agree that it is better for teachers to be trained on how to get the best out of their textbooks than to be urged to totally discard them and create their own materials. Crawford (2002) points out that teachers realize that the materials they create cannot be perfect. Teacher generated materials are not always tried and tested, and most of the time they are even more flawed than textbooks. The problem, Crawford (2002) points out, is not with the textbooks but with the way they are used by teachers. Depending on the context and the way they are used, textbooks can be either an obstacle or a huge aid to the language learning process. The textbook can be

communicative and learner-centered, but the way the teacher implements it can turn it into a teacher-centered book. In a study that investigated the impact of course design on business students' outcomes, Wingfield and Black (2005) reported that students perceived their learning to be more meaningful and motivating when teachers adopted an active and experimental method of teaching, regardless of whether the textbook itself was designed for active or passive learning.

Furthermore, Freeman, Belli, Porter, Floden, Shmidt, and Schwille (1983) demonstrate that teachers have their own distinct styles when using textbooks. In their study of the different styles of textbook use by mathematics teachers, they found that the amount of knowledge students receive from the teacher and their achievement in standardized tests is affected by the teacher's style of using the textbook. Students whose teachers chose to skip some chapters of the textbook to focus on helping their students master general math skills were at a disadvantage in their ability to review and learn content covered in standardized tests compared to their peers whose teachers covered all the chapters of the textbook. This supports Crawford's (2002) argument that the problem might not be in the textbooks themselves but in how teachers tend to use them.

Sosniak and Stodolsky (1993) explain that there are a variety of factors, like beliefs about instructional plans and activities that can actually affect the way teachers use textbooks. Teachers can be textbook-bound, following every activity in the textbook closely and in the exact order of presentation. This situation can result from certain variables such as teachers' lack of experience and time, "educational trends," and the policies of the local board of education (Fagan 1980, p. 28). In some countries, the government schools' syllabus is already set and teachers have no choice but to cover all the subjects in their textbooks. This, of course, has its disadvantages in the sense that it reduces both the level of creativity in teaching and the range of response to individual students' needs and problems. A more balanced use of textbooks, in Cunningsworth's (1995) view, is when teachers select materials from a range of subjects, or supplement their textbook with a variety of materials that will aid learning. McGrath (2002) supports this view by stating that teachers must use their "judgments" (p. 11) to decide what parts of the textbook to use, how to use them, and how to supplement them with materials that respond to learners' needs. To achieve this decision making, collaboration between

classroom teachers and textbook developers is needed to "empower" teachers to modify their textbooks as "classroom situations demand" (Duffy, Rochler, & Putnam 1997, p. 364). This can be accomplished through training courses where teachers are educated on the best ways to supplement or modify the content of the textbooks they teach. Textbook developers can also train teachers to evaluate textbooks and use the evaluation reports to improve the next editions of the textbooks.

<div align="center">Localizing ESL/EFL Textbooks</div>

The connection between language and culture can be examined from two opposite angles: on the one hand, language and culture are viewed as inseparable and closely associated together. On the other hand, language can be seen as culturally-neutral, a tool for communication that may be used with anyone and anywhere in the world. This connection has been a concern for foreign language educators and researchers for decades, and a source for debates between those who support incorporating culture of the target language in foreign language teaching and those who are against it. In this sense, language and culture are inseparable, and attempts to separate them in the teaching of a second or foreign language will produce a language that is inaccurate and incomplete (Genc & Baka, 2005). In recent years, linguists and language teachers have become increasingly aware of the difficulty of learning a second or a foreign language without addressing the culture of the people using that language. According to Hinkel (1999) and Moran (2002), learners need to learn about culture in order to be able to express themselves appropriately in the target language. They explain that second and foreign language learners often display inappropriate language behaviors that they are not even aware of, which in turn might lead to socio-pragmatic failure, breakdown in communication, and the stereotyping of nonnative speakers. These problems, Thanasoulas (2001) indicates, can be avoided by integrating the target language's culture in language teaching. He points out that language learners who are exposed to the target culture learn how people encode messages in the target language, and the meaning they have for those messages. They also learn conditions under which various messages may or may not be sent or interpreted. Culture, therefore, is considered as the foundation of communication in the target language.

Additionally, Kramsch (1995) observes that in a world full of political and social problems, language teaching has the role of stressing cross-cultural understanding and empathy towards members of the target language. For EFL learners who live in a monolingual and monocultural environment, there is a danger of them becoming culture-bound individuals who tend to make premature judgments about other cultures. Culture classes in language learning can have a humanizing and motivating effect on the language learner and the learning process through helping learners observe the similarities and differences among various cultural groups. Thenasoulas (2001) adds that teaching the target culture helps to avoid stereotypes and develop an understanding that all people exhibit culturally-conditioned behaviors, and that social variables (e.g., age, sex, social class) influence the way people speak or behave.

Some researchers, however, approach the teaching of culture with some kind of reservation. Since the English language is the most studied language around the world, it has naturally gained the status of an international language, or a lingua franca (Seidlhofer, 2005). This has led educators, such as Smith (1976) and Alptekin (2002), to favor an intercultural communication over a native-like competence. Alptekin (2002) insists that it is irrelevant to teach the American or the British culture to foreign language learners when most of their future interactions in English are intended for instrumental reasons (professional contacts, academic studies, and commercial pursuits). Moreover, Al-Issa (2006) suggests that the UK and the USA use English language teaching as a multinational industry by being the main provider of English language materials, methodology, and expertise. They also promote the teaching of their culture with the language as a way to increase their subtle domination over less developed countries. Pennycook (1994) also notes that ELT has become a way to achieve political and economic goals by securing relationships with the Third World Countries. He states that English language teaching these days may be less about spreading the language than about spreading certain forms of culture and knowledge.

Because most English teaching and learning materials and textbooks come from English-speaking countries, EFL students feel alienated from the target culture since it does not reflect their own culture or values. McKay (2004) points out that textbooks teaching only about the target culture can contribute to students' feeling of inferiority and

"discontent about their own culture" (p. 11). These textbooks can also show some patterns of behavior that may offend the students. The solution, in Le's (2005) opinion, is to localize these textbooks and make them relevant to students' lives and needs. This way, they will be motivated and show more interest in the classroom. Relevant materials about familiar contexts encourage students to be more interested in the lesson and allow the teacher to perform more effectively. In addition, localized materials match language instruction with students' needs and personal preferences and empower them to express their individuality and make decisions about what they need to learn (Dat, 2003). Another benefit of localized materials is mentioned by Miller (1995), who explains that these materials allow learners to focus their attention on using the language rather than on struggling with strange contexts. Baker (2001) agrees with this view by stating that it's cognitively less demanding for students to talk about familiar issues instead of talking about something culturally or academically unfamiliar.

The fact that English has become an international language frees it from being linked to the culture of the countries that speak it as their first language. Today, the majority of English language speakers are no longer monolingual native speakers who live in the native English speaking countries. According to Kachru (1999), the majority of those speakers are bilinguals or multilinguals living in the outer and expanding circles of countries using English as an official language. Communication in English, therefore, is mostly done between non-native speakers of the language. Derbel and Richards (2007) support this view by stating that the reality of English language classrooms in today's world is one of multilingualism and multiculturism. They explain that most English learners today learn the language without ever having to engage, outside of the classroom, in direct communication with native English speakers. Thus, one of the purposes of English as an international language, as McKay (2004) points out, is to "describe one's own culture and concerns to others" (p. 14), and to share one's beliefs, conflicts, struggles, and difficulties with other individuals, regardless of which culture they come from (Tseng, 2002).

It is best, in Le's (2005) view, to create a balance between foreign and local cultures when localizing textbooks, and to explain and analyze the cultural differences that could appear in foreign texts. Explaining cultural differences is useful because it

gives teachers a chance to use English to analyze the differences between cultures. This will stimulate the students' curiosity and encourage them to ask questions and interact in the target language. Tseng (2002) also indicates that language classrooms must encourage students to recognize their own culture and use it to reflect on the beliefs and customs of other cultures outside their unique and individual culture. Le (2005) adds that another way of adapting textbooks and materials is by replacing unfamiliar contexts with familiar ones, and encouraging students to do the text adaptation.

The culture and language issues discussed in this section are often considered when selecting language textbooks or learning materials for a group of language learners. Depending on the goals and objectives of the language program, and the needs of the learners, the selection process varies from one context to another. The process of selecting national English textbooks in the Gulf area will be discussed in the next section.

Selecting the Appropriate Textbook

The selection of textbooks in use is often not the teacher's responsibility. In countries like the UAE, and because of the crucial role curricula play in constructing the community of the future (Amalsaleh & Sajjadi, 2006), the Ministry of Education decides on a single textbook to be used in government schools nationwide, and supervises the selection of textbooks in local private schools. Orr (2005) explains that because of the strong link between the English language and western societies and behaviors, Middle Eastern countries tend to assign setting the parameters of English language instruction to the broader community, like the Ministry of Education. Orr also clarifies that a number of factors are taken into account when choosing a unified language textbook, like the values of the local community and culture, the perceived status of English within the community, how the language will be used, and the availability of qualified English teachers. In addition to this, the Ministry of Education in these countries is always negotiating with the community and professional educators as they seek to develop the best English language curriculum for learners within the country. For these reasons, the Ministry of Education thinks that a unified curriculum and a unified textbook is much better because it has gone through a lot of planning and study from both community members and professionals.

Research about unified curriculum shows that it works better with a relatively small country (e.g., the UAE) than with a country like the USA or Canada, where every district has its own distinct culture and heritage. Researchers, such as Bailey (1992), Lewis (1996), Hofman (2007), and Raffe (2007), argue that while a unified curriculum has a number of disadvantages (e.g., it may not be tailored to the individual needs of specific students across the country, and the issue of who should make the decisions regarding curriculum goals and implication) it also has certain advantages. A unified curriculum connects students in all the schools of the country through ideas and issues that are equally important to them, thus, creating a nation of people who think alike. This is important since having the same educational background can facilitate future plans for change in the country. A unified curriculum also establishes a unified educational front and makes the management of school districts easier. Once the government sets the educational goals for the whole country, it will be easier for it to manage financial issues and implement future change in the curriculum.

Once the decision has been made to use one textbook throughout the schools in a country, the question that remains is how to select it and what factors to consider while selecting it.

Context Analysis and Survey of Learners Needs

Several considerations need to be taken into account before developing or choosing a new textbook if it is to succeed in achieving its objectives. First, a context analysis and/or survey of needs should be carried out to be fully aware of the learner, teacher, and institutional factors that need to be considered. A textbook that is not in line with the needs and expectations of the community– especially those of learners and teachers– and concepts of language education "may just gather dust on a shelf" (Dubin & Olshtain, 1986, p. 3). Context analysis is also a very important pre-evaluation step, although this importance is not always acknowledged in discussions of materials evaluation and selection (McGrath, 2002). The following sections address these considerations.

Learners Needs

Needs analysis is the "logical starting point" for the development of language programs that are responsive to learners and learning needs (Finney, 2002, p. 7).

Learners, as Pellegrino (2004) explains, come to the classroom with "existing knowledge structures and schemas that include preconceptions about how the world works" (p. 28). This initial understanding must be engaged in order for learners to grasp the new concepts and information taught. Needs analysis, therefore, helps in identifying the gap in learners' knowledge and paves the way for teachers and textbook designers to make the right decisions based on the information gathered (Grabowski, 2004). Furthermore, Dubin and Olshtain (1986) demonstrate that the importance of carrying out needs analysis is obvious in countries where colleges and universities transfer a large number of secondary school graduates to special preparatory and remedial English courses because they are not competent enough to study at college level. This situation shows a huge gap between the achievements of the English instructional program and actual society needs.

Since student population is the first significant factor in the classroom, gathering enough information about them can help designers and teachers make informed and responsive decisions. McDonough and Shaw (1993) and Cunningsworth (1995) mention the following learner factors that should be explored: age range, proficiency level in the target language, first language, academic and educational level, socio-cultural background, reasons for studying the target language, attitudes to learning, previous learning experience, language-learning aptitude, general expectations, preferred learning style, sex distribution, and interests. These factors are important to determine cultural, political, and personal characteristics of learners, and to find out what prior academic experiences and skills they have.

Teacher and Institutional Factors

There are also teacher and institution factors to be considered. McGrath (2002) and Dubin and Olshtain (1986) suggest the following teacher factors: language competence (as target language users and as speakers of the learners' first language), familiarity with the target language and the learners' culture, methodological competence and awareness (e.g., ability to adapt textbooks and prepare supplementary materials), experience of teaching the kind of learner for whom the materials are being selected, time available for preparation, beliefs about teaching and learning, and preferred teaching style.

McGrath (2002) points out that institution factors include: 1. level within the educational system (e.g., primary, preparatory, secondary); 2. public sectors (state) versus private; 3. role of the target language (e.g., English-medium versus English as curriculum subject); 4. Time available for the study of the target language (per week/per academic year); 5. class size; 6. physical environment (e.g., classroom size, flexibility of seating); 7. additional resources available (e.g., cassette recorder, OHP); 8. aims of the programme; 9. syllabus; 10. form of evaluation; 11. decision-making mechanisms and freedom given to teachers" (p. 21).

In addition to the above mentioned factors, it is essential for the success of any language program to identify learners' needs in relation to the target language. Needs analysis includes gathering information about what learners already know and what they still need to know, learning about contextual constraints, and exploring the context in which the English language program will be introduced (Alwan, 2006). The first step in conducting needs analysis is deciding what the purpose is or purposes are. Richards (2001) suggests the following purposes for needs analysis: a) finding out what language skills a learner needs to perform a particular role; b) determining if an existing course adequately addresses the needs of potential students; c) identifying a gap between what students are capable of doing and what they need to be able to do; and d) collecting information about a particular problem learners are experiencing.

Needs analysis can be conducted by several tools and methods, such as tests, questionnaires, interviews, recalling previous performance, consulting employers, teachers, and involving others (Nation, 2000), and it can be carried out before, during, or after a language programme (Alwan, 2006). People involved in needs analysis are not only analysts, but also the target group (students), the audience (teachers, administrators, supervisors), and the resource group (e.g., parents, financial sponsors, future employers).

This section outlined the procedures of needs analysis as a first step in a systematic approach to evaluation for materials selection. This involved considering the relevant contextual factors and gathering information about the individuals that will be affected by the selection. What follows is a review of evaluation schemes and methods used in analyzing and determining the value of language learning materials, and their suitability to the previously mentioned contextual factors.

Evaluating ESL/EFL Materials

An important step before conducting textbook evaluation is textbook analysis, which is sometimes confused as being another term for in-depth evaluation. Textbook analysis is, in fact, quite different from in-depth evaluation. While analysis seeks to discover what is there in the textbook through a process of objective and verifiable description, in-depth evaluation looks at materials more selectively and involves making judgments and assigning value through discovering whether what we are looking for is there in the textbook (Savenye, 2004). Textbook analysis looks at materials from all angles thus helping the analyst reach a general understanding of the philosophy underlying them. In-depth evaluation, on the other hand, aims at determining whether or not the curriculum goals have been met (Finney, 2002), and understanding what theories and assumptions lie "beneath the surface" and what effects can be anticipated (McGrath 2002, p. 23). The process of analysis and in-depth evaluation are, however, rather similar and complementary. McGrath (2002) mentions three levels of textbook analysis: 1) what is there (publication date, intended users, type of materials, etc.); 2) what is required of users (tasks, what the learner has to do, what cognitive operations will be required, etc.); and 3) what is implied (selection and sequencing of context and tasks, distribution of information). A two-phase approach to in-depth evaluation is proposed by Breen and Candlin (1988) with a series of detailed questions in each phase. Phase one, which seeks to evaluate the usefulness of the materials, sheds light on the following: a) the aims and content of the material; b) what they require learners to do; c) what they require teachers to do; and d) their function as a classroom resource. Phase two focuses on: a) learner needs and interests; b) learner approaches to language learning; and c) the teaching-learning approach in the teacher's own classroom.

To insure that data from textbook analysis and evaluation are reliable and consistent, one has to insure that it's accompanied by ethnographic research about how teachers use textbooks in actual classrooms (Hajer et al., 1996). According to Barker and Matveeva (2006), evaluation should address issues like learners' needs, learning styles and preferences, teachers' attitudes, and how the materials support or contradict with their own beliefs about teaching and learning. A number of comparative evaluation studies of textbooks and teaching materials (e.g., DeVoss, Jasken, & Hayden (2002)),

though valuable, focus on the content of textbooks without looking over the situation in which they are used. These context factors include teacher preparation and readiness, the overall goal of the course, the classroom environment, and the existing classroom teaching practice (Barker & Matveeva, 2006) and have a huge effect on the extent to which textbooks and materials can aid the learning process. Textbooks might provide the framework, as Finney (2002) explains, but learning ultimately depends on the interaction between teachers and learners in the classroom, and on the "teaching approaches, activities, materials and procedures employed by the teacher" (p. 76). Thus, a comprehensive textbook and materials evaluation study should seek to assess both the textbook and the context in which it is used. It should also involve teachers in evaluating and taking a critical look at the materials they are using.

Teachers are directly involved in students' learning, and their insights about the evaluated materials are valuable. For this reason, it's important for them not to view textbooks as a finished product, but to constantly evaluate them as the needs of their students (and the context in which they teach) change. Teachers, as Alwan (2006) indicates, usually assume that once new textbooks or packages of prescribed teaching materials are adopted in an educational system, their only concern is how to literally apply them to the classroom. El-Okda (2005) has another view on this issue. He states that the top-down model that Arab countries follow in curriculum development is ineffective "in bringing about sustainable educational reform". He proposes a frame-work for an on-going curriculum development that includes the teachers in all of its stages, and links the teachers' involvement in curriculum development to their professional development and expertise. This involvement essentially includes evaluating the textbook in use and deciding how to adapt it, supplement it, or even omit some of its content. To make such decisions, McGrath (2002) points out that teachers must be aware of their students' needs and their own contextual constraints. Cortazzi and Jin (1999) add that teachers can only be creative in their teaching if they "develop skills in evaluating and adapting" the materials they use (p. 201).

Another reason for textbook evaluation by teachers is offered by Sheldon (1988) who suggests that it provides teachers and educators with a sense of familiarity with the textbook's content, which in turn will help them in identifying its strengths and

weaknesses. This will further assist them in making the best possible use of their textbook's strong points and trying to overcome its deficiencies. Textbook evaluation is also, as Cunningsworth (1995) points out, useful in teachers' professional development since it helps them gain insights into the nature of the materials they are depending on for language instruction.

Group evaluation of textbooks is one way to involve teachers in on-going, in-use materials evaluation. McGrath (2002) defines group evaluation as the process of assessing a textbook or a set of materials under consideration by three or more experienced teachers. This has obvious advantages to the outcome of the evaluation. Because of the shared interest of all teachers involved, it's more likely that the decisions and judgments they make will be based on consensus, and a thorough examination of the strengths and weaknesses of the textbook from a variety of perspectives. Moreover, Farr, Tulley, and Powell (1987) state that group evaluation can be highly valid if group members follow an appropriate evaluation procedure. They explain that members should provide written examples (e.g., page numbers, single examples, brief outlines, etc.) of the features they like and dislike in the textbook. In a study conducted by Downey-Skochdopole and French (1997), twenty pre-service elementary science teachers were asked to work as two teams to analyze and evaluate four science textbooks they were going to be teaching the following year. The two teams had to develop their own criteria for analysis and evaluation by reflecting on what was important in teaching elementary science. Downey-Skochdopole and French report in their findings that the group evaluation experience gave the teachers a chance to restructure their conceptual understanding of teaching science by providing meaningful alternatives for understanding and useful application in the classroom. The knowledge they generated was based on reflective decisions and judgments that helped them adapt textbook materials to suit their teaching situations.

Downey-Skochdopole and French's study clearly illustrates how valuable teachers' involvement in textbook and materials' evaluation is, especially when they work collaboratively. Hijab (2006) confirms this view by stating that teachers have to be a central part of curriculum and materials evaluation because only they can expand "the relevance of the curriculum to include the richness and diversity of the students they

actually teach" (p. 51). Approaches and methods of materials evaluation that teachers can use in evaluating their textbooks are described in the following section.

Textbook Evaluation Schemes

Three basic approaches to textbook evaluation can be distinguished in the literature: the impressionistic method, the in-depth method, and the checklist method. Cunningsworth (1995) describes the impressionistic method as obtaining a general impression of the material by skimming through the pages to look at topics, organization, layout, and visuals. This method is appropriate when looking at new materials that may be considered for adoption later. However, if the purpose of the evaluation is to gather enough details to ensure a good match between the textbook's content and the course objectives, in-depth evaluation is more effective. This method is "more penetrating in its approach" and closely examines how specific items are dealt with in the textbook (Cunningsworth, 1995, p. 2).

The third method, the checklist method, according to McGrath (2002), has some advantages over the impressionistic method and the in-depth method. It is systematic and ensures the consideration of all the important elements in the evaluation process. It is cost effective because it can allow a lot of information to be gathered in a short period of time. It is explicit and offers "a common frame-work for decision-making" (p. 27). It is also easier to compare the recorded information because of the convenient format of a checklist. Experts, including Sheldon (1988), Cunningsworth (1995), and Richards (2001), promote a very detailed inspection of a textbook's language content. Their approach led to the production of extensive evaluation checklists that are based on generalizable criteria that can be used by both teachers and students to evaluate the textbook they are using.

Cunningsworth (1995) suggests that there are three types of textbook evaluation: predictive or pre-use evaluation which is the most difficult type of evaluation since there is no actual experience of using the book and is designed to evaluate the future performance of a textbook, in-use evaluation to examine textbooks that are currently used, and post-use evaluation that is usually used to decide if a textbook needs to be replaced or revised. Cunningsworth also proposes the following criteria for evaluating textbooks: (1) they should correspond to learners' needs; (2) they should reflect the uses

(present or future) that learners make of the language; (3) they should take account of students' needs as learners and facilitate their learning process; and (4) they should have a clear role as a support for learning. Sheldon (1988), on the other hand, states that while most of the evaluation checklists can be used as a helpful starting point for ELT practitioners in many situations, there is no general list of criteria that can be applied to every teaching or learning situation without a certain amount of modification. Regardless of what method is used, Nation (2001) points out that it's necessary to decide on a suitable focus for the evaluation before actually conducting it. He explains that both focus and meaning of the evaluation depend heavily on who is doing the evaluating (the teacher, the learners, the owner of the school, the course designer), and the sources of information used to carry out the evaluation.

This study is concerned with in-use evaluation which is an essential part of on-going curriculum development. In-use evaluation revisits the decisions made at the time of selection and determines whether the textbooks are standing up to the test of using them. McGrath (2002) states that the dimensions of the textbook that needs adaptation may not be apparent until the book is tried out in the classroom. Thus, in-use evaluation can help in determining what parts of the textbook teachers can use without adaptation and what parts need modification or supplementation. It can also assist in deciding if the unchanged parts of the textbook are efficient for learning, and support these decisions with evidence gathered from using them in teaching. After the stage of in-use evaluation, comes textbook modification and supplementation, which will be reviewed in the next section.

Modification and Supplementation of Textbooks

Because of the uniqueness of every learning/teaching situation, finding a comprehensive textbook that does not need modification is generally impossible. There is a limit to what textbooks and teaching materials can be expected to do for learning, and teachers have the responsibility of deciding where they need to step in and back up the textbooks they use. According to McGrath (2002), teachers, even those who do not have a choice in selecting the textbooks they teach, do decide "consciously or instinctively" (p. 63) how much of the textbook will be used and how much will be modified. Yang and Cheung (2003) indicate that for a variety of reasons (e.g., the syllabus is too long and

detailed, students' abilities are low, teachers have a heavy schedule of extracurricular activities, etc.) teachers may choose to teach only the essential tasks in the textbooks and develop the rest of the activities themselves based on their students' needs. This is the first purpose for modifying textbooks and learning materials. Another purpose is to compensate for any intrinsic deficiencies in the materials, such as "linguistic inaccuracies, out-of-dateness, lack of authenticity," and lack of variety (McGrath 2002, p.64).

The ability to modify or adapt textbooks, as Richards (2001) points out, is an essential skill for teachers to develop. Teachers can increase the effectiveness of textbooks through the process of personalizing and individualizing them for a specific group of learners. Richards also states that modification should only be applied after teachers have become familiar with the textbooks they use. Until the textbook is tried in the classroom and with a particular group of students, the aspects of it that need modification might not be apparent. Cunningsworth (1995) supports this argument by stating that teachers need to be aware of their students' level (what they find difficult or easy) before attempting to modify textbooks. This way they can make them linguistically challenging without being too difficult or too user-friendly.

Modifying textbooks and materials involves one or more of the following: 1) modifying content because it does not suit the target learners; 2) adding or deleting content; 3) reorganizing content; 4) addressing omissions (e.g., adding vocabulary or grammar activities that are missing in a unit); and 5) modifying or extending tasks (Richards, 2001). These changes are based on one or more of the following principles: 1) localization (recognizing the need for contextual relevance); 2) personalisation (recognizing learners' interests, their academic, educational, and professional needs); 3) individualisation (addressing the learning styles of individuals); 4) modernisation (changing any instances of language usage that seem out of date); and 5) simplification (making things easier and accessible for learners). Simplification involves reducing the length of texts, shortening sentences, omitting and replacing difficult words, and omission of non-essential details (McGrath, 2002). The above mentioned adaptation techniques, as well as supplementing textbooks with published or teacher prepared materials, can be used successfully even in test-driven classrooms. By adapting and

modifying materials, teachers can change certain activities to be more motivating and relevant to the learners. Modification in this sense can promote meaning and authenticity in the classroom, and create an interactive, student-centred approach to learning that would eventually motivate students and improve their learning.

In summary, the literature reviewed in this chapter shows that textbooks play a central role in English language teaching and that, depending on the context in which they are used and the way teachers use them, they can either be an obstacle or a great aid to language learning. It also explains that the best way to integrate culture in language textbooks is through creating a balance between foreign and local cultures when localizing textbooks. Another issue that is discussed is the textbook selection process. The literature reveals that in countries which adopt a unified curriculum, the selection of textbooks is the responsibility of the government, or more specifically, the Ministry of Education. Several factors are usually taken into consideration before selecting textbooks, such as learners, teachers, and institutional characteristics. Addressing these factors is important to ensure the success of the adopted textbook. The literature also shows that evaluation is an essential part of ongoing curriculum development and that teachers can (and must) play a central role in it by evaluating and taking a critical look at the textbooks they are using. A number of the studies included in the literature review discuss in detail the process of evaluating and adapting ESL/EFL materials and textbooks, and the importance of teachers' involvement in this process as textbook and materials evaluators. Finally, the literature reviews adaptation and supplementation of textbooks as an important step after the evaluation process. It explains that because of the uniqueness of every language situation, finding a textbook that doesn't need modification is impossible, and that teachers should develop the skills of modifying and adapting their textbooks to suit the needs of their students.

Little or no research was found on the evaluation and adaptation of EFL textbooks and materials in the United Arab Emirates. Given the recent adoption of the new textbook series, *UAE English Skills,* which is evaluated in this study; this would be one of its first evaluations. Such evaluation is needed to identify the strengths and weaknesses of *UAE English Skills* and assist teachers in making the best use of the textbooks' strong points and recognizing their shortcomings. This study investigates the pedagogical effectiveness

of the new series of textbooks and their suitability for the UAE's context. It will address teachers' styles of using the textbooks and try to involve them as evaluators. It also explores the reasons for the change that happened in the curriculum and how teachers perceive this change. Another issue that will be investigated is whether or not contextual factors, such as learners' and teachers' needs, were considered before selecting the textbooks.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this research is to determine the overall pedagogical value and suitability of the *UAE English Skills* textbooks in the UAE context, and their impact on teachers and English language teaching in the UAE. It seeks to answer the following questions:

1. What are the reasons for the change that happened in the curriculum?
2. What are teachers' attitudes towards the new series of textbooks?
3. How are they adapting their teaching methods to them?
4. What is the pedagogical effectiveness of the new series of textbooks? Are they suitable for the UAE's context? In what ways can they help UAE students improve their English language?

For the sake of triangulation, both quantitative and qualitative data were extracted from multiple resources. The first source was a survey (see Appendix B1) and a textbook evaluation form (see Appendix B2) filled out by 100 English language teachers teaching the *UAE English Skills* series of textbooks in different schools in the Emirate of Fujairah, UAE. The second source of data were interviews that were conducted with Terry Phillips (one of the two authors of the textbooks), Mariam Bayshak (the head of the adaptation team), and Makeya Al-Najjar (a member of the adaptation team). The purpose of the interviews was to reach an understanding of the change that happened in the curriculum and led to the process of developing the new series of textbooks currently used. Finally, an in-depth evaluation of samples from grades 7, 8, and 10 textbooks was conducted. This was achieved with the help of an in-depth evaluation form that was adapted from Cunningsworth (1995) (see Appendix D). I have chosen in-depth evaluation to decide the pedagogical value of the textbooks and whether or not they were suitable for the UAE context. This required me to determine what theories and assumptions the textbooks were based on, and look at their content in order to find out if they match the aims and objectives stated by the authors. For this reason, in-depth evaluation seemed to be the most appropriate method.

The Participants

The subjects of the research were divided into two main groups:

Group One

This study relied partially on the active participation of 100 English language teachers (both males and females) using the *UAE English Skills* textbook series for grades 7, 8, and 10. The teachers involved represented a range of characteristics and teaching experience. There were 47 females and 53 male teachers from different schools in the UAE's east coast. (See Appendix A for details about the number of teachers from each school). The teachers were only limited to the east coast because it was difficult for me to reach other cities in the west coast during my working hours as a teacher. It was more convenient for me to choose nearby schools where I could get in touch with the teachers whenever I needed to. The number of teachers teaching grades 7 and 8 textbooks was 65, and the number of those teaching grade 10 textbook was 35. I grouped grades 7 and 8 together because these two grades are usually placed in the same school (preparatory school). Grade 10, on the other hand, is placed in secondary schools. The English language supervisors in the Fujairah Educational Zone provided me with a list of all the teachers teaching the *UAE English Skills'* textbooks in the schools of Fujairah (189 teachers) and they assisted me in approaching them. I sent the questionnaire to all the teachers provided in the lists and got back only 110 of them. However, ten of those questionnaires were excluded because they were incomplete. 31% of the teachers were UAE nationals, while 69% were from other Arab countries. The background information about the participants is summarized below in Table 1.

Table 1. Background information about participants

	Teaching Load (hours/week)		Teaching Experience			Educational Level		
	12	18	Less than 2 yrs	2-5 yrs	More than 5 yrs	Diploma	BA	MA
No. Teachers	15	85	5	21	74	5	92	3
Total	100		100			100		

Group Two

One of the two authors of the *UAE English Skills* series, Terry Phillips, and two members of the adaptation team, Dr. Mariam Bayshak and Makeya Al-Najjar, constituted the subjects of the second group of this study's participants. Terry Phillips is the author of a number of textbooks, such as *New Business Objectives, Skills in English, Effective English for the Office,* and *Business Opportunities.* Dr. Mariam Bayshak is the head of

the adaptation team for the UAE English Skills series. She also teaches linguistics courses in the Department of English at the United Arab Emirates University in Al-Ain. Makeya Al-Najjar is a member of the adaptation team and has a long experience of working at the Ministry of Education. Along with a group of students and professors from Sharjah Women's College, she helped in developing the grade 12 English textbook currently used by government schools' students in the UAE. Both Dr. Bayshak and Makeya Al-Najjar have worked on the adaptation of a number of textbooks including *English for the Emirates* and the *UAE Parade* series. The adaptation team's job consists of reviewing all the components of the curricula, and deciding whether changes should be made or not. Textbooks are evaluated by the team based on their suitability to the UAE students, their promotion of academic growth, and their relevance to the UAE culture.

Instruments

Survey

To insure the reliability and consistency of data from the in-depth evaluation, a 22 item survey about teachers' style of using the textbooks and a textbook evaluation form were the two main data collection tools for this study (see Appendix B1 and B2). The survey was divided into four main sections. In section A, teachers were asked to provide some background information, such as gender, nationality, education level, years of experience, and teaching load. Section B focused on information about the teacher's book. Teachers were asked to tick the appropriate answers into five questions about their perceptions of the importance of a teacher's book and how they use it. Section C of the survey sought to collect information about teachers' use of the textbook. In the first part of this section, there were ten close-ended and short open-ended questions about how much classroom time was devoted to teaching from the textbooks, whether or not teachers tried to modify the textbooks, and what kind of modification they have attempted. The questions also focused on finding out what sections of the textbooks teachers (and their students) liked or disliked and whether or not teachers needed more training on using the textbooks.

The second part of section C included eleven scale statements related to teachers' feelings and attitudes towards the content of the textbooks and their experience in using

them. Teachers were asked to tick the answer that would express the extent to which they agree or disagree with each statement. The scale used had five response options, which were "strongly disagree," "disagree," "agree," "strongly agree," and "not sure" (see Appendix B1). I included a "not sure" option because I did not want to force teachers into making a statement that contradicts with their true attitudes and feelings. Section D of the survey asked teachers who would like to be contacted by me if I needed more information for the research to provide additional information about themselves, such as their names, emails, or telephone numbers.

There was also a 37 item textbook evaluation form attached to the survey. The literature review about textbooks and materials evaluation strongly suggests involving teachers in evaluating the materials they use. Based on this, and on my own belief in the value of teachers' insights about the evaluated materials, I decided to include a teachers' evaluation form with the survey. The textbook evaluation form focused on teachers' opinions about the content, layout, organization, and language skills and activities included in the textbook. It aimed at providing a detailed picture of what the teachers perceive to be the strong and the weak points of the *UAE English Skills* textbooks. The evaluation form was adapted from several sources (Cunningsworth 1995; McGrath 2002; Richards 2001; Sheldon 1988). It was divided into seven sections, which were practical considerations, layout and design, activities, skills, language type, content, and overall opinion. In each section, teachers were given statements about the textbook (37 in all), and they were asked to choose the answer that best expresses their opinion. The scale used had four response options, which were "strongly disagree," "disagree," "agree," and "strongly agree." I did not include a "not sure" or "neutral" option here because, based on their usage of the textbooks, I assumed that teachers were familiar enough with them to provide an objective and definite evaluation. For convenience, when analysing data from questionnaires and textbook evaluation forms, the options "strongly agree" and "agree" were grouped together, and "strongly disagree" and "disagree" were also grouped together.

The survey and the textbook evaluation form were first piloted on six female English teachers using the textbook in the school I work in, Fujairah School for Basic Education. Piloting the survey was an important step before actually administering it on

the subjects of the study. The pilot stage helped reveal some problems with the criteria. For example, I referred to text-supplied tests in two questions of the survey, but the teachers on which the survey was piloted pointed out that there were actually no reliable text-supplied tests accompanying the textbook. There was a test booklet that included sample tests, but it was available for students to photocopy at bookshops and, thus, could no longer be used for testing. Besides, the format of the tests included differ greatly from the format of the formal tests that students are required to prepare for. Consequently, I had to take out the two questions after the pilot stage. They also commented on the length of the survey, saying that it was too long when combined with the evaluation form. They suggested that I ask teachers to take their time in filling out both the survey and the evaluation form and come back a few days later to collect their responses from them. Another suggestion made by them was to translate both the survey and the evaluation form into Arabic because, they thought, the language might be difficult for some teachers. However, I decided not to translate them because English teachers were expected to have enough English language proficiency to understand the items in both the survey and the evaluation form. Instead, I provided teachers with my contact details so that they can contact me if they needed me to clarify any of the items in the survey and the evaluation form.

A total of 100 surveys and textbook evaluation forms were administered at two stages during the second semester of the 2006-2007 school year. First, 27 surveys were administered to female teachers from seven different schools in Fujairah in the middle of March, 2007. I administered these surveys myself and answered teachers' questions about some of the items they couldn't understand. I also told them that this survey was part of a research study that hopefully would help improve the English curriculum and that their honest responses would be really appreciated. Some teachers were reluctant to participate in the survey thinking it was an evaluation of their style of using the textbooks. I explained to them that the information they provided would remain confidential and that it was strictly for research purposes. Some of them were convinced, but a number of them still refused to participate. The teachers who actually participated took about half an hour to complete both the surveys and the textbook evaluation forms. I asked them to take as long as they needed to answer the questions, and even offered to

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collect them from them on another day. However, they preferred to fill them out at the same session. Because of my heavy schedule as a teacher, it took me two weeks to administer the 27 surveys.

Second, 73 surveys were administered by a colleague, Fatmah Al-Hammoudi, and the English language supervisors at Fujairah Educational Zone. I could not administer these surveys myself because they were for male teachers, and females are not allowed by some of the schools' administrations to enter the schools. The solution was to ask the supervisors of English to administer them at the males' schools, which they did during the months of April and May, 2007. Fatmah Al-Hammoudi distributed the surveys at the female schools in the faraway districts of Dibba, Tuwayyain, and Masafi. It was difficult for me to reach these districts during my working hours, and Fatmah volunteered to do so because she used to meet with teachers from these schools once a week in a training course. To insure that they administer the surveys in the same way that I did, I had a meeting with both Fatmah and the supervisors who offered to help and I explained my procedure to them. I also went through all the items of the survey and the textbook evaluation form with them to make sure that they fully understand them.

Interviews

The interview process was completed in two phases. In phase one, the author, Terry Phillips, was interviewed. Questions regarding theory behind the textbooks, their objectives, and problems faced after they were taught in schools were addressed. In phase two, the two members from the adaptation team, Dr. Mariam Bayshak and Makeya AL-Najjar, were interviewed. Their answers provided insight into the process of adapting *UAE English Skills* to suit the students in the UAE. They also provided information on how the change in the curriculum happened, when it started, and how it was planned. Because of their heavy schedules and, in Mr. Phillips's case, distance, the author and the two members of the adaptation team were interviewed online. I found online interviews to be more useful and convenient because I had complete written answers to my questions that were saved in my email account for me to refer to anytime I needed to. It was also easier to communicate online and I could email the interviewed person with more questions at a later time if I needed to.

In-depth Evaluation

The in-depth evaluation of samples from grades 7, 8, and 10 textbooks was achieved using an in-depth evaluation form adapted from Cunningsworth (1995) (see Appendix D). The evaluation form was divided into five main sections that were consistent with the sections in the teachers' textbook evaluation form (see Appendix B2). The five sections were design and methodology, activities, skills, language type, and subject and content. Under each section heading, there were a number of questions that would help in guiding the in-depth evaluation process. According to McGrath (2002), in-depth evaluation looks at selections or samples of activities and texts from the textbook and assigns value to them through finding out if they match the course objectives and respond to learners' needs. The "Culture and Civilization" theme, which was theme two in the grade 10 textbook, theme four in the grade 7 textbook, and theme five in the grade 8 textbook, was selected as a sample for the evaluation. This choice was not randomly made and was based on my colleagues' observation that their students were engaged by this particular unit more than any other unit in the book. I also used several recent studies (e.g., Gunn (2003), Brown (2000), Kobayashi (2003), Litz (2005), Guariento and Morley (2001), and Hinkel (2006)) to support the findings of the in-depth evaluation.

Data Analysis

The information obtained from both quantitative data from the survey and the textbook evaluation form and qualitative data from interviews and in-depth evaluation were collected and analyzed. To analyze data collected from the survey and textbook evaluation form, results were demonstrated in pie charts, bar charts, and table formats. The data gathered from interviews and in-depth evaluation required more detailed analysis. The data from these three sources are analyzed in the next chapter. The complete results of the survey and textbook evaluation form completed by 100 English language teachers using the textbooks from different schools in Fujairah are given in Appendixes C1 and C2.

CHAPTER 4

DATA ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS

In order to examine the pedagogical effectiveness and suitability of the *UAE English Skills* series of textbooks to the UAE context, four sources of data are used. The first is the questionnaires and the second is the textbook evaluation form. The third source of data is the interviews with one of the authors of the textbooks and two members of the adaptation team. The fourth source of data, which is used to support the two previous ones, is the in-depth evaluation of samples from grades 7, 8, and 10 textbooks. The data gathered from these sources are all analyzed and categorized into four sections: the pedagogical effectiveness of the textbook package in the UAE context, the change in the curriculum and the development of *UAE English Skills*, the usefulness and value of the *UAE English Skills* as perceived by teachers, and teachers' styles of using the *UAE English Skills*.

The Pedagogical Effectiveness of the Textbook Package in the UAE Context

What is the pedagogical effectiveness of the *UAE English Skills* textbooks? Are they suitable for the UAE's context? In what ways can they help UAE students improve their English language? To answer these three questions, data were collected from the surveys, the in-depth evaluation of samples from grades 7, 8, and 10 textbooks, the teachers' textbook evaluation forms, and interviews with the author and the two members of the adaptation team.

Overall Organization of the Teaching Package

Themes

The *UAE English Skills* package consists of six components: a student's book, a workbook, a teacher's book, a test booklet, cassettes, and a website. The student's book of the three grades is divided into themes which are essentially the same. There are ten themes in the grade 7 student's book, eight themes in the grade 8 student's book, and six themes in the grade 10 student's book. According to the authors of the textbooks, the structure of these themes is based on the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* organization of human knowledge, and aims at teaching students useful, transferable content, vocabulary, and skills that will eventually assist them in their further education. The distribution of themes in the student's books of the three grades is illustrated in Table 2.

Table 2. The distribution of themes in grades 7, 8, and 10 student's books

	Grade Seven	Grade Eight	Grade Ten
Themes	Starter A: Education Starter B: Daily Life Theme 1: Work and Business Theme 2: Science and Nature Theme 3: The Physical World Theme 4: Culture and Civilization Theme 5: They Made Our World Theme 6: Art and Literature Theme 7: Sports and Leisure Theme 8: Nutrition and Health	Theme 1: Education Theme 2: Daily Life Theme 3: Work and Business Theme 4: Science and Nature Theme 5: Culture and Civilization Theme 6: They Made Our World Theme 7: Sports and Leisure Theme 8: Nutrition and Health	Theme 1: The World Around us Theme 2: Culture and Civilization Theme 3: They Made Our World Theme 4: Art and Literature Theme 5: Sport and Leisure Theme 6: Nutrition and Health

It is interesting to note here that the grade 10 book, unlike grade 7 and 8, starts with a relatively unfamiliar theme, "The World Around Us," which revolves around general geographical information. This would be the first time for grade 10 students to go deeply into geographical topics in English, since the previous textbooks did not have many lessons about countries and geography. It would have been better to start with a more familiar theme, such as "They Made Our World" or "Sports and Leisure," which contain some topics that students have encountered in previous textbooks. Starting with an unfamiliar theme might result in generating a negative attitude towards the textbooks and label them as being at a much higher level than that of the students. Indeed, this could be the reason why grade 10 teachers and supervisors were complaining about the difficulty of the textbooks at the beginning of the 2006 school year (Attaya, 2006).

Within each of the above mentioned themes, the focus is on three skills areas: listening and speaking, reading and writing, and vocabulary and grammar. In the grades 7 and 8 student's books, each theme includes two lessons on each skill, except for starter A and B in the grade 7 student's book, which include only one lesson for each skill. On the other hand, the grade 10 student's book includes four lessons on each skill for each of the six themes. It should be noted that although the themes recur in every textbook, the topics are quite different. For example, the topics for the theme "Culture and Civilization" in the three grades are demonstrated in Table 3.

Table 3. The distribution of topics from the *Culture and Civilization's* theme in the three grades

Skill	Grade 7	Grade 8	Grade 10
L	People and age groups in different cultures	Important life events	Festivals in different cultures
S		Biographies	Celebrations in different cultures
R	What people from different cultures can and can not do at a certain age	Life expectancy in different Historical periods	Traditional events
W			Writing about a national festival

At the end of each student's book, there are thematic and alphabetical word lists that cover all the vocabulary students are required to learn in the book.

The organization of the textbooks was thought to be effective by the majority of the teachers participating in this study. When responding to statement 4, "The textbook is organized effectively," in the teachers' textbook evaluation form (see Appendix B2), 26% of the participants highly agreed, 65% of them agreed, and only 9% disagreed. However, it is interesting to note that three quarters of the participants (72%) revealed that they thought the syllabus was too long to cover in two semesters. In their responses to statement (g) of question C11 in the survey (see Appendix B1), "The time allotted for covering all the units of the textbook is sufficient," only 26% answered with agreement (22% answered with "Agree," and 4% answered with "Highly Agree"), while 72% disagreed (see Figure 1). Indeed, when interviewing Dr. Bayshak, the head of the adaptation team, she confirmed that the most frequent complaint she received from teachers using the textbooks was related to the length of the syllabus.

Figure 1. Teachers' attitudes towards the length of the syllabus
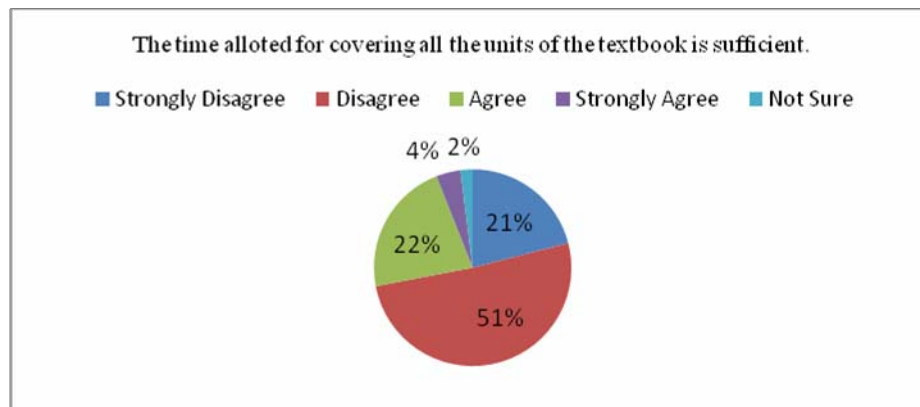
Workbook

Grades 7 and 8 workbooks include one lesson for every four lessons in the student's book. The activities in this lesson seek to strengthen the skill work and vocabulary presented in the student's book. The level of the activities in the workbook is slightly higher than what students' have been exposed to in the student's book. Students are asked to complete conversations, write paragraphs, rewrite or complete sentences they read in their student's book, scan texts and complete relevant tables, and practice grammar. These activities are less controlled than those in the student's book and this, the authors claim, is a key language learning skill because students have to make decisions about what to say or write.

In addition to these activities, the grade 10 workbook offers students the opportunity to work on a project at the end of each theme. For four classes, students are supposed to work in groups and go through different tasks to complete the project. In the first class, students are supposed to be divided into groups, listen to different texts, and take notes. In the second class, students in each group transfer the knowledge they gained from listening and taking notes in the previous class through asking and answering questions. In the third class, students work together to choose a relevant topic and write about it in the fourth class. By working on this project, students put to use all the skills and strategies they have learnt throughout the theme. At the end of the grade 10 workbook, there are extra reading materials that coordinate with the reading activities in the student's book.

The layout and design of both the student's book and the workbook was believed to be appropriate and clear (see Appendix B2, statement 4) by 89% of the participants. Under the agreement column of responses to statement 5 of the textbook evaluation form, "The layout and design is appropriate and clear," 67% of the teachers answered with "Agree," and 22% answered with "Highly Agree." Indeed, the textbooks' colour, font, size, and thickness are suitable, and the presentation of information is clear and concise. Dr. Bayshak stated in the interview that it was one of the adaptation team's duties to make sure that the material is "attractive, printed on high quality paper, and has the right layout." In addition, the textbook contains an appropriate amount of visuals like photographs, tables, charts, and maps. These visuals are attractive and used as an integral

part of the teaching material. Students are asked to use visuals to complete tables, label diagrams, and guess the meaning of vocabulary items.

Teacher's Book and Website

The third component of the textbook package is the teacher's book which is organized and user-friendly. It features useful and detailed instructions for each activity, teaching suggestions and instructional input, tape scripts, language and culture notes, answer keys, and classroom management tips. It also provides suggestions for adapting activities to meet students' individual needs. More teaching tips and lesson plans are provided in the website created for teachers, http://www.skillsinenglish.com/, which is still under construction with a promise of more features to enhance the teaching of the course package.

Regarding the teacher's book, teachers' responses to statements 3 and 10 in the teachers' textbook evaluation form (see Appendix B2) indicate that they benefit from using it. Statistical results of statement 3, "Teacher's edition is comprehensive, organized, and easy to use," showed that the majority (87%) of the participants thought that the teacher's book was indeed organized and user-friendly, while only 13% believed that it was not. Furthermore, teachers' awareness of the usefulness of the teacher's book is conveyed in their response to statement 10, "The teacher's book contains guidance about how the textbook can be used to the greatest advantage." Ninety percent of the participants acknowledged the usefulness of the teacher's book, while only 10% thought the opposite (see Figure 2 for more detailed statistics.).

Figure 2. Teachers' evaluation of the *UAE English Skill's* teacher's book
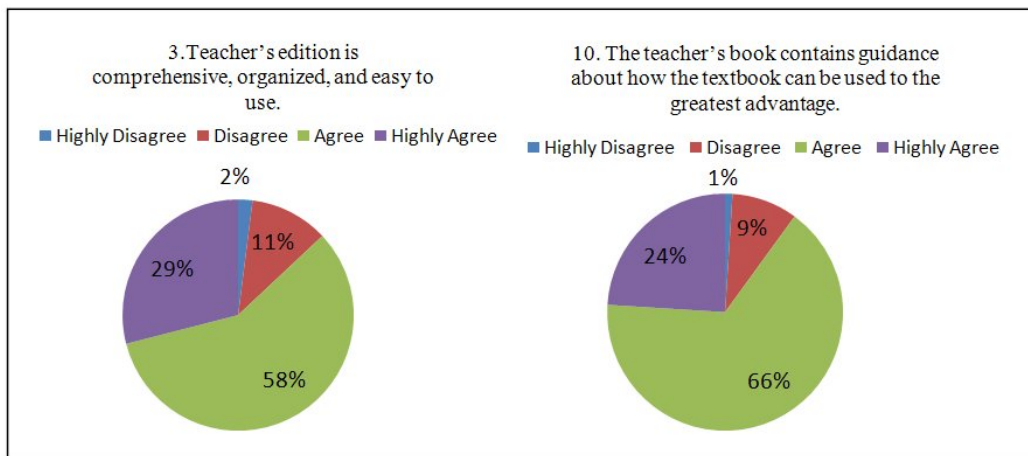
The additional lesson plans and tips provided in the website were obviously considered useful by the participating teachers. Data analysis of statement (j), "The website provided with the textbook, and the ready-made lesson plans are very useful," in question C11 of the survey (see Appendix B1) indicated that more than half of the teachers (62%) perceived the website to be useful, while only 21% thought it was not.

Audiocassettes and Test booklets

Another component of the package is the audiocassettes which include relatively natural recordings of listening activities, conversations, lectures, excerpts from radio programs, and pronunciation and phonology practice. The original audiocassettes are available in all the educational zones in the UAE, and every teacher is offered a copy rather than the original tape. This could be problematic because copies tend not to be as clear as the original. Finally, the test booklet includes tests for each theme of the textbook. The authors suggest in the teacher's book introduction that these tests be administered immediately after completing the relevant theme to evaluate students' learning and observe areas of weakness before moving on to the following theme.

However, teachers, at least the ones participating in this study, tend not to use the test booklets except for the purpose of revision. This is supported by teachers' responses to statement 9, "An adequate set of evaluation quizzes or testing suggestions is included," in the teachers' textbook evaluation form where almost half of the participants' responses were under the disagreement column (40% disagreed, and 3% highly disagreed) (see Figure 3). One reason for this is that teachers have to follow the test format decided by the Ministry of Education, and it is quite different from the one suggested in the test booklet (see Appendix F for a sample of the formal test and samples of tests from the test booklet). Another reason is that the booklet was almost immediately available for students to photocopy in most bookshops and thus was not suitable to be used for testing.

Figure 3. Teachers' evaluation of the test booklet
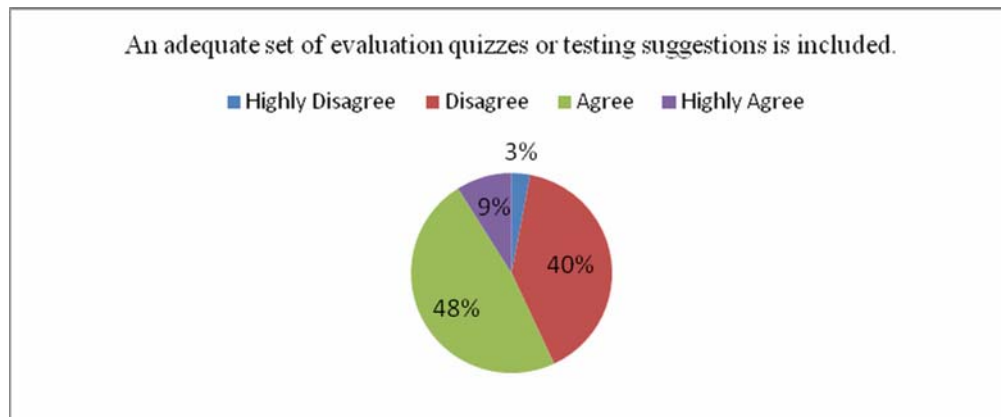
In summary, results from the in-depth evaluation, questionnaires, teachers' textbook evaluation forms, and interviews indicate that the textbook package is organized effectively and that the layout and design is clear and appropriate. The topics and activities in both the student's book and the workbook are distributed in a way that would provide students with useful and transferable content to help them with their further education. The teacher's book and the website include teaching tips and lesson plans that are detailed, and user-friendly. The audio-cassettes include relatively natural recordings of lectures, radio programs, phonology practice, etc. However, teachers are offered only a copy of the original tape and this may cause problems with the quality and clarity of the sound. Finally, the test booklet is mainly used for revision purposes because the formal test format is different from the tests provided in the booklet, and more importantly, because the test booklet is available for photocopying in most local bookshops.

The Textbooks' Approach to Teaching and Learning

The learning objectives of *UAE English Skills* are clear and concise and they can be found on the back cover of all the course books, as well as in the introduction of both the student's book and the teacher's book. There is also a one page summary of objectives for each theme in the teacher's book. Unfortunately, this is not the case with the student's book where only the overall objectives of the course are summarized in a one page introduction at the beginning of the textbook. These learning objectives revolve around building skills that students need to understand and produce short talks and texts in English on a range of topics, and broaden their understanding of basic sentence

patterns. Students are also expected to learn and use a range of relevant vocabulary. Moreover, the grade 10 textbook states two other objectives: doing reading research and writing assignments and projects in English.

A closer look at the content and activities distributed throughout the three textbooks reveals that the content does meet the objectives of developing students' language skills and meta-linguistic knowledge. In addition to building the four skills, the textbooks include a focus on sounds and letters, language functions, grammatical structures, lexical development, and learning styles and strategies. Particular emphasis is placed on developing students' performance skills with the goal of creating a balance between their receptive and productive skills. The authors clarify in the introduction of the teacher's book that many of the UAE government schools' students have some competence in English but few or no of the specific performance skills that they will need to further study in English. Therefore, it is important to make them aware of these skills and assist them in developing them. Furthermore, the grade 10 textbook teaches the students reading and writing strategies that would gradually help them conduct research and write assignments and projects in English. These strategies include knowing the structure of paragraphs, predicting the content of texts from topic sentences, transferring information through taking notes and recording facts in tables, writing different drafts of a paragraph, and active reading of a text. According to Hajer et al. (1996), textbooks that focus on learning strategies have a great potential for helping learners become independent and self-directed.

Regarding each individual theme, the sequencing and presentation of the material is demonstrative of the teach-test-teach approach. The first lesson of each skills area is an informal test lesson. Students are expected to get most items right in this test, and if they do not, the teacher is expected to help them improve. Lesson two is a revision and practice lesson. Students are expected to practice and build on the language that was presented in lesson one. After that, students are given a final informal test in which they are expected to apply the language points they spent time developing. This approach, explain the authors, is the most suitable to meet the needs of the target students who are false beginners that have a great deal of passive knowledge, especially of vocabulary, but do not know how to put it to use. The test-teach-test approach helps those students in

understanding the relevance of what they have learnt and how this knowledge can help them use the language in a better way.

More on the authors' views on language and methodology can be inferred from the culture, language, and methodology notes that are scattered throughout the teacher's book. The authors take account of the rules of students' first language, Arabic, and the difficulties they might face because of differences between it and English. They also encourage students to explore the similarities and differences between rhetorical structures in their first language and English. Furthermore, these notes urge teachers to focus on different learning styles, and draw their attention to the importance of adapting some activities to suit the individual needs of their students. In addition, the notes emphasize the importance of teacher's feedback to students and gives tips on when it is better to give content or mechanical feedback. The methodology notes also refer to past methods like CLT and suggest some alternative teaching techniques that are associated with them. While some might see this as a disadvantage, Gunn (2003) argues that it is important for teachers to know about these methods because they did make an impact on language teaching in a variety of ways. She explains that knowledge of methods expands a teachers' repertoire of teaching techniques, serves as a base for reflection, and helps in raising their awareness of what they do in the classroom. Explaining theories behind activities, giving morphology and phonology tips, providing alternative teaching methods, and explaining linguistic terms are some of the other features of these notes.

An analysis of statement 11 in the teacher's evaluation form, "The material's objectives are obvious to both the teacher and the student," revealed that 76% of the participants thought that the objectives were obvious to both the teacher and the student, while only 24% thought the opposite. Despite the fact that the objectives of each theme are not stated in the student's book, the relatively low percentage of teachers who disagreed might indicate that teachers think it is important for students to be aware of the objectives of each theme. In fact, authors need to consider that students will not be able to fully take charge of their learning until they understand what route they are expected to take while learning. According to Nunan (1995), there is often a mismatch between what teachers teach and what learners learn in a language classroom. He explains that while the teacher is teaching one thing, the learners are often focusing on something else and

this creates a mismatch between the pedagogical agenda of the teacher and the learner. To avoid this mismatch, Nunan suggests making learners aware of the goals and the content of the curriculum, learning program, or pedagogical materials. It is also important to consider the fact that there are a number of home schooled students in the UAE (According to the Fujairah Educational Zone, there are more than 745 students who are currently being homeschooled in the emirate of Fujairah alone) who need to know what they are expected to achieve from every theme they study.

On the other hand, results indicated that three quarters of the participants (76%) felt that the authors' views on language and methodology are comparable to theirs, while 24% thought that there were differences. In the responses to statement 2 in the teacher's evaluation form, "The authors' views on language and methodology are comparable to mine," 62% of the teachers answered with "Agree," 14% with "Highly Agree," 23% with "Disagree," and 1% with "Highly Disagree" (see Figure 4). This indicates that the majority of teachers participating in the study accept the methodology of the textbooks and do not think that it is unfamiliar or inconvenient for them.

Figure 4. Teachers' attitudes toward the textbooks' approach and methodology
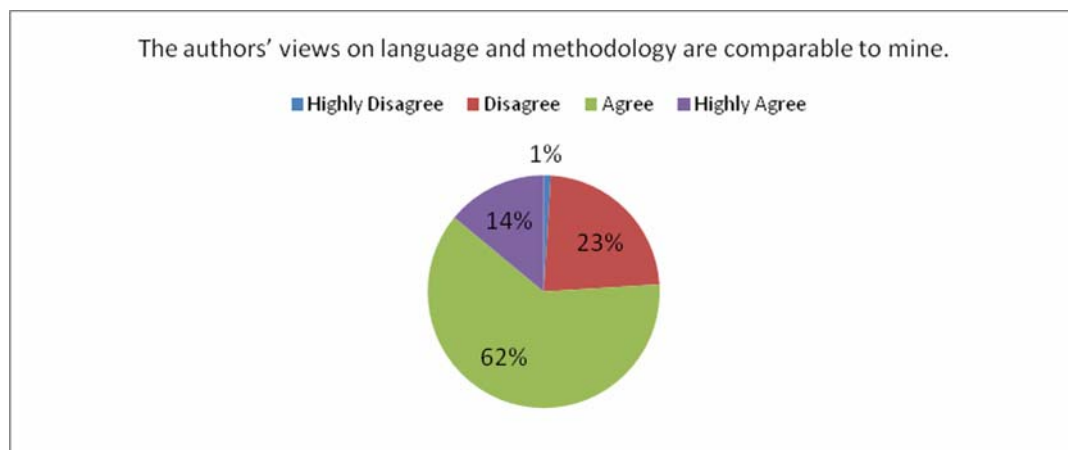
Overall, data analysis from the in-depth evaluation reveals that the learning objectives of the textbooks are stated in a clear and concise manner. The content of the textbooks matches the objectives of developing students' language skills and meta-linguistic knowledge. Moreover, the approach of the textbook is the teach-test-teach approach which helps students understand the relevance of the language they learn and how to put this language to use. Results from the questionnaires and teacher's textbook evaluation forms show that the majority of the participants thought that the objectives are

obvious to both the teacher and the student and that the authors' view on language and methodology is almost the same as theirs.

Activities and Tasks

Theorists such as Lev Vygotsky and Michael Long had strongly emphasized the importance of social interaction in promoting language learning (Brown, 2000). Learners need to engage in some sort of cognitive restructuring of language material in order for information to be retained in memory and get associated with information that is already there. Slavin (1995) also advocates the necessity of elaboration among learners for mental processing to take place. He explains that the most effective means of elaboration is recalling the material and explaining it to someone else, while the listener corrects errors and helps the recaller in remembering the material. Peer review and feedback, according to Kobayashi (2003), is another important interactive activity that leads to a great deal of learning. He explains that learners develop their "linguistic and socio-cultural knowledge through observation of and participation in language-mediated interaction with the assistance of more experienced [learners]" (p. 338). However, Litz (2005) warns against activities that merely put the words "in pairs" or "in groups" in front of what is actually an individual activity without giving learners a genuine and meaningful reason for interaction. He suggests that the best activities are those that "encourage the negotiation of meaning … promote positive interdependence, and facilitate individual accountability through cooperative learning strategies" (p. 21).

Through examining the "Culture and Civilization" theme in the three *UAE English Skills* textbooks, I found a variety of individual, pair, and group activities. Grade 7 and 8's "Culture and Civilization" themes mostly include individual activities, such as listen and point, match, circle the names in the text, complete the text using a preposition, and find mistakes in the text and correct them. These activities are aimed at building students' autonomy and fostering specific learning styles. For example, there are a number of activities that ask students to complete tasks individually, and then use the skill check boxes (or sometimes dictionaries) to check if their answers are correct. These kinds of activities teach students to self-monitor their work and revise it. The skills check boxes that are distributed throughout the book are also of great value in self study mode because they provide key information which students need to focus on while

studying. There are also a small number of activities that should be done in pairs, like choosing one photograph out of four, describing it, and asking the partner to identify it, completing tables in pairs, and forming questions about pictures and asking and answering in pairs.

While grade 7's theme does not include any group activities, grade 8's theme has only one. The activity is designed for a group of four students and consists of completing information in a table and then explaining the information to other members of the group. Grade 10's theme, on the other hand, has a more balanced set of individual, pair, and group activities. Examples of individual activities include asking students to take notes while listening to a text, write missing letters, and listen to and repeat words. Examples of pair work activities include practicing conversations, peer review, and explaining the material to a partner. Group work activities include discussing and answering questions and working on the theme project.

The pair and group activities in the "Culture and Civilization" theme are mostly interactive and use some of the ideas of cooperative learning, like the jigsaw method (Johnson, Johnson, & Holubec, 1994). The steps of this method are similar to the end of theme project in grade 10's workbook. First, students work individually to write questions and answers about a topic they encountered in the theme. After that, the class gets divided into three groups, listens to other information on the same topic, and then breaks the information into sections, where each of the three groups works on a different section. Then, and after discussing the topic in their groups, students work in groups of three, where each group has a person from group 1, a person from group 2, and a person from group 3. These groups share information about their sections and write down notes about the sections of the other groups. Finally, students return to their original groups and discuss the three different sections of the topic as a whole, before choosing a section and writing a short article about it. This is very useful for language learners because it involves negotiation of meaning and explanation of new materials that other group members do not know. Also, students working in the same group would have to bring their language up to the level of their group members and use conversation skills to express themselves. On the other hand, other group members will get the chance to listen

to the same information expressed in different ways by different group members which also, as Slavin (1995) states, greatly aids language learning.

Another example of an excellent use of pair work activities is found in grade 8's theme. The activity asks partners to each choose one of two texts, read it and complete a table, then work in pairs with each student telling their partner information about the text they have read, while the partner writes down notes and then writes a paragraph about their partner's text. The value of this activity lies in the fact that students have to listen to their partner talking to get information about the text, because they know that they will eventually write a paragraph about it. The other person has information that the student needs and this gives students the opportunity to really communicate in the target language and ask and answer questions to get information. In other words, they are given a chance to negotiate meaning and help each other to reach their goal. Moreover, students are each assigned a role in these activities, which is a good thing because it specifies the nature of participation that is expected from each student. This will ensure that both will have the same amount of work to do in order to complete the task.

However, there are other activities that are not as communicative and meaningful as the activity described above. Examples of these activities are the ones that ask students to work in pairs and discuss what they can see in pictures. Students do not need a partner to complete this activity and can work on it individually. Another example is activity C on p. 92 of the grade 7 student book. This activity requires students to ask their partners questions about their country. They should begin the questions with the modal "can" and they must get at least one negative answer and write it down. This is an excellent grammar activity but it would have been better if it was not about countries. Almost all the students in the UAE's government schools are from the UAE. When one of the students asks questions about the other person's country, he or she would already know what the answer is. Thus, the need for communication would not exist. Fortunately, the majority of the other activities are meaningful, incorporate individual, pair, and group work in an effective way, and allow students to negotiate meaning and communicate in English.

The activities in the textbooks are also very sensitive to the different learning styles of students. The authors explain, in the introduction of the teacher's book, that

students might have been struggling with previous English courses they studied because they were "text-heavy materials" and assumed that most students are read-write learners. They further explain that target learners might be visual learners who need pictures and colours, or aural learners, who need sounds and repetition. They may also be kinaesthetic learners who need to move and touch things to learn. The activities in *UAE English Skills* include ways of learning that would satisfy the different learning styles of the target learners. Table 4 includes examples of activities from the "Culture and Civilization" theme in the three textbooks that can accommodate the different learning styles of students.

Table 4. Activities that assist the different learning styles of learners.

Target learner	Aural	Visual	Read/Write	Kinaesthetic	Deductive	Inductive
Activity	- Listen/ give information. - Listen/ write. - Ask / answer. - Practice conversations. - Give a short talk about a famous person.	- Listen/ point to the picture. - Look at the photographs/ answer. - Choose a picture/ describe it. -Name each person in the pictures.	- Read/ answer. - Look at the topic sentence from the text. - Read/ complete tables. - Complete sentences. - Scan the text and answer.	- Listen/ do. - Circle the names. - Box the nouns - Work in groups - Find people who chose the same topic/ check your answers.	- Read the Skills Check /number the sentences in order. Explain your answer. - Read the Skills Check /check your work.	-Crosswords - Complete the last word. What might come next? - Find pairs of words in the red list. Explain the connection

The textbooks also contain a wide variety of role-play activities and information-gap exercises with focus on both fluency and accuracy. There is also a balance in the distribution between controlled and free activities. There are several activities that require controlled responses from students and focus on accuracy, such as matching, numbering, ordering, filling in the blanks, and drilling. In addition, open-ended questions that encourage students to express themselves, relate the materials to their personal lives, and share their thoughts in English are also well integrated in the lessons. This balance between the two kinds of activities is encouraged by recent studies on the role of cognition in L2 learning. According to Hinkel (2006), L2 pedagogy has started to recognize the value of both fluency and accuracy, and bottom-up and top-down language skills. She explains that recent research findings encourage the use of explicit and form-focused instruction together with exposure to meaningful input, and that without any of

those two, the development of syntactic and lexical accuracy in a second language would not be achieved.

Another important issue here is task authenticity. Guariento and Morley (2001) explain that authenticity does not lie only in the originality of text, but has to do also with tasks that students are required to do. They suggest four factors that determine the authenticity of tasks: 1) using the language for a real purpose; 2) relating to the tasks of the real world; 3) exploiting the potential authenticity of the learning situation; and 4) engaging students in the task. As mentioned before, almost half of the activities in the *UAE English Skills* textbooks focus on meaning and communication. Students are usually given a purpose for the activities they do. For example, the purpose of activities B, C, and D on p.69 of grade 8's textbook is to prepare students to give a talk about a famous person in their culture. Students are first asked in activity B to hear a talk about a famous person in Western culture, take notes in a table, make sentences about the person, and then give a short talk about him/her. Then, in activity C, students are asked to look at a table with information about another famous person, make sentences, and give a short talk about him/her. Finally, in activity D, students are asked to do some research and collect information about a famous person in their culture, take notes in a table, make sentences, give a talk about the person in pairs, and write down notes about their partner's person. While the purpose of this activity is not directly given to students, teachers are asked in the teacher book to tell students what the purpose of the activity is. Since one of the objectives of the book is to prepare students for further study in English, this kind of activity also relates to tasks that students will be required to do when studying at higher education institutes. Taking notes of lectures they hear, giving short talks, and doing research are some of the activities that they would eventually encounter at universities, and preparing students for them is another factor of task authenticity.

The third factor of task authenticity, exploiting the potential authenticity of the learning situation, can be achieved by asking students to discuss, evaluate, and give their teacher feedback on the usefulness of the tasks they do, whether in the classroom or as homework (Guariento & Morley, 2001). While there are no tasks that ask students to do so in the book, some of the methodology notes in the teacher's book recommend that teachers dedicate some class time to discuss with the students the usefulness and

appropriateness of the activities in the textbook and the teaching aids that the teacher uses. This task, if done in the target language, would give students the chance to communicate in a meaningful way with their teacher and their peers. However, the fact that this is not a required activity that is placed in the textbook, but merely a methodology note that teachers might choose not to follow, might mean that a large number of students (and teachers) would not benefit from it.

The fourth factor, students' engagement in the tasks, cannot be determined by analysing the tasks and activities in the textbook. Every group of students have different interests and might be drawn to different kinds of techniques. While some of them might prefer to work individually, others might be more active when working in groups. Classroom observations followed by individual interviews with students might be the best way to determine this factor. It is interesting to note that these kinds of "authentic" tasks appear more in grades 8 and 10's textbook than in grade 7's textbook. Other authentic and simple tasks like games (remembering items from a picture, finding the odd word out of a series, etc.) and conducting simple surveys in the classroom to obtain information are included to replace those activities.

Results from the teacher's textbook evaluation forms comply with the results from the in-depth evaluation. They show that the majority of the teachers participating in this study believe that the activities of the textbooks are communicative and meaningful, and incorporate both individual and pair work. They also believe that there is a balance in the distribution of free and controlled activities (see Table 5).

Table 5. Teachers' evaluation of the textbooks' activities

	Statement	Highly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Highly Agree
12.	The textbook provides a balance of activities. (There is an even distribution of free vs. controlled exercises and tasks that focus on both fluent and accurate production).	1%	15%	70%	14%
13.	The activities encourage sufficient communicative and meaningful practice.	0%	15%	61%	24%
14.	The activities incorporate individual, pair, and group work.	0%	5%	68%	27%

Responses to statement 14, "The activities incorporate individual, pair, and group work," suggest that the majority of teachers using the textbooks may think that there is a balance in the distribution of the activities. To be more precise, 95% of the teachers

answered with agreement, while only 5% disagreed. However, it was mentioned earlier that while grade 10's textbook has a balance of individual, pair, and group activities, grade 7 and 8's textbooks include a larger number of individual activities in comparison with pair and group activities. Teachers also believe that the textbooks' activities are communicative and meaningful. When answering statement 13, "The activities encourage sufficient communicative and meaningful practice," 61% of the participants responded with "Agree" and 24% with "Highly Agree," while only 15% of the participants responded with "Disagree."

Overall, the activities reviewed in this section are communicative, meaningful, and focus on both fluency and accuracy. They also incorporate individual, pair, and group work, and are sensitive to the different learning styles of the students.

Skills

As mentioned before, the *UAE English Skills* is a skills-based syllabus that includes a balanced practice of both receptive (listening and reading) and productive skills (speaking and writing). Since the textbooks are designed for learners who will need to use English in academic and technical situations, the focus of teaching and learning is on particular L2 skills that would serve to achieve this purpose. These skills address both bottom-up and top-down abilities, thus achieving "a balance between the linguistic and the schematic aspects of learners' language development" (Hinkel, 2006, p. 111).

The four skills in the *UAE English Skills* are integrated together and are almost never taught in isolation. To produce a speech or an essay, students have to do some research through reading or listening to resources. This way, their production of written or spoken English will be based on information that they have spent time researching. This expresses one of the benefits of teaching the four skills in an integrated manner. Another advantage is suggested by Hinkel (2006), who states that in meaningful communication, people use a range of language skills simultaneously and never in isolation. Indeed, when (for example) people engage in a conversation, they have to be able to speak and understand what the other person is saying at the same time. Thus, a realistic approach to teaching the four skills has to address more than one skill simultaneously.

Another important issue in teaching the four skills is raised by Celce-Murcia, Dornyei, and Thurrell (1997) who advocate a direct approach to teaching specific micro-skills, strategies, and processes involved in real-life communication. They explain that learners have to be aware of these linguistic components because, for learning to take place in an efficient way, learners must "pay attention to the learning objective and must then practice the objective so that it changes from part of a controlled process to part of an automatic process" (p.145). Strategies are also important because for learners to process and retrieve language information, they must be trained on the use of language learning strategies that can help them "transform comprehensible input [what the teacher provides] into comprehensible intake [what the student actually takes in and stores in a manner that allows for retrieval]" (Nyikos & Oxford, 1993, p. 12). This is important to EFL learners because the amount of information that they get in the classroom is enormous and they should be instructed on the use of different language learning strategies in performing the tasks and processing the new input that they get.

The fact that the vocabulary and grammar elements are closely integrated with the skills in the textbooks and then further given extra attention in each theme of the book is another positive feature of the textbooks. Both the progression of the skills work and grammar and vocabulary elements become more demanding and complex within each theme and as the course progresses.

The majority of teachers participating in this study stated that the textbooks do indeed provide an appropriate balance of the four skills and focus on skills that students need to practice. In their responses to statement 18 of the teacher's textbook evaluation form, "The materials include a focus on the skills that my students need to practice," 24% of the teachers responded with "Highly Agree," 65% responded with "Agree," 10% responded with "Disagree," and only 1% of the participants responded with "Highly Disagree." Moreover, in their responses to statement 19, "The materials provide an appropriate balance of the four language skills," 93% of the participants expressed their agreement, while only 7% disagreed (see Figure 5).

Figure 5. Teachers' evaluation of the textbooks' treatment of the four language skills

The materials provide an appropriate balance of the four language skills.

■ Highly Disagree   ■ Disagree   ■ Agree   ■ Highly Agree

2% 5%

41%

52%
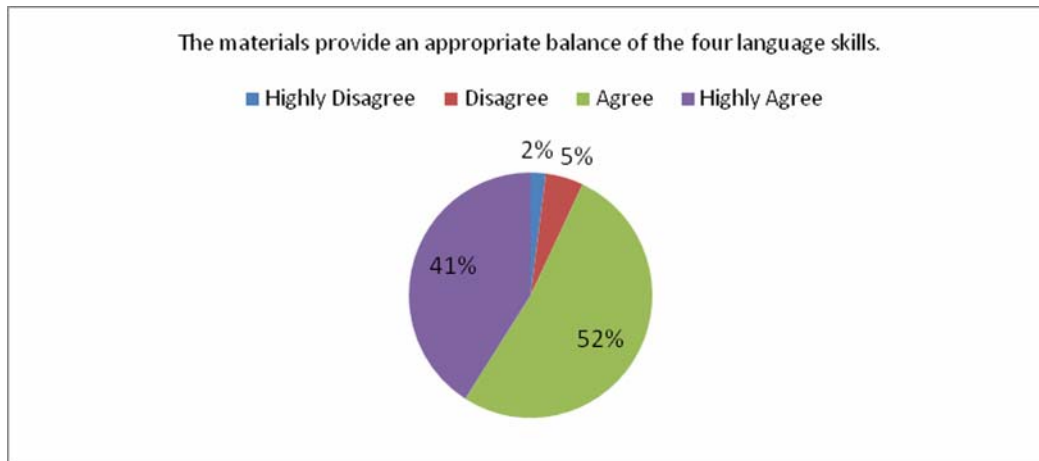
The textbooks' focus on linguistic components, strategies, and sub-skills is also confirmed by the participants of this study. Ninety-four percent of the participants expressed their agreement with statement 20, "The textbook pays attention to sub-skills (listening for gist, note-taking, skimming for information)," while only 6% disagreed.

In summary, the four language skills are integrated together and are almost never taught in isolation in the *UAE English Skills'* textbooks. The focus of the skills work is on particular L2 skills that would assist learners in academic and technical situations. The skills address both bottom-up and top-down abilities, and vocabulary and grammar are integrated with the skills in the textbooks. The following section is an analysis of how *UAE English Skills* deals with and presents the receptive skills of listening and reading and the productive skills of speaking and writing.

Receptive Skills: Listening and Reading

Top-down processing requires learners to activate their knowledge-based schemata, such as pragmatic knowledge, cultural background, topic familiarity, and discourse clues (Hinkel, 2006). On the other hand, bottom-up processing involves word recognition, spelling and phonological processing, and other distinctive cognitive sub-skills (Litz, 2005). According to Gebhard (2006), these two processes combined will enable students to extract the communicative value of the text they listen to or read and results in some degree of comprehension. Furthermore, Ediger (2001) states that reading skills cannot be simply transferred to a second language, especially with readers whose

L1 orthographies are different from the L2 orthography. Thus, it is important for learners to build and practice bottom-up skills before moving on to top-down and strategic reading skills.

Both top-down and bottom-up processing skills and strategies are used to teach receptive skills in the *UAE English Skills* textbooks. They are also used to build up and practice sub-skills, such as skimming and scanning, guessing and making predictions, listening and reading for details, sentence patterns, discourse markers, using visuals and figures in texts to aid comprehension, inferring meaning from context, etc. The textbooks also encourage students to interact with the text they read through pointing out that reading is like a conversation between the writer and the reader, and that whenever a writer asks a question, the reader should think of the answer. Students are also encouraged to stop after a certain point of reading the text and predict what will follow. This is a very valuable reading strategy in Kroll's (1993) view. She explains that this strategy enables students to articulate their own understanding of the author's presentation. If their prediction is correct, then they are showing that they are reading like a writer. If their prediction is incorrect, then they will go back to the text and re-evaluate their synthesis. Kroll points out that reading as a writer will also help students as writers to understand what readers will be doing with the texts they write.

Finally, the authors of the textbooks describe the reading and listening texts in the textbooks as "simulated authentic." There are various listening and reading texts that are used in the textbooks to cover a diverse area of linguistic input. These include restaurant menus, excerpts from magazines and newspapers, academic texts, excerpts from radio programs, summaries of classic novels and plays, biographies, entries from encyclopaedias, and conversations. The authors explain that they are texts that students might actually encounter in their daily lives or might have to read for their studies.

The listening texts use several native and non-native English accents, especially in conversations. However, the focus of phonological and pronunciation exercises is on the British English accent. Although some of the listening texts are spoken rather fast, the authors explain that this speed prepares students for the natural speed of speech they will encounter in the real world. The activities based on the reading and listening texts are real world activities. The authors demonstrate that these activities are things a person might

really do while or after reading texts. For this reason, post listening and reading comprehension activities (e.g., multiple choice questions) were not included. Such activities, the authors explain, do not exist in the real world and should not hold much value in the classroom. Another receptive skill students are taught is to read or listen for a purpose. Students are often asked to read or listen to the same text twice or several times, and they are given a different task or a "purpose" for each subsequent hearing or reading. Teaching students to listen and read for a purpose meets with the textbooks' objective of preparing students for further study in English. Students, in their university level studies, will need to decide on a purpose before starting to read a text, and decide what points to focus on when listening to a lecture or any other source of knowledge.

One glaring problem in the textbooks is the apparent lack of literature (stories and poetry). Instead of including fiction in the reading and listening texts, the textbooks summarize major works by Shakespeare and Dickens in one page texts and talk about literature in some lessons. These summaries, of course, do not compensate for the value and joy of reading the real texts. Reid (1993) and Ghosn (2002) both advocate the necessity of including literature in textbooks. Reid (1993) explains that literature teaches culture, provides students with a rich linguistic storage, encourages extensive reading, and provides a basis for student conversation, group work, and problem solving activities. Ghosn (2002) adds that literature provides a motivating and meaningful context for language learning. It can also provide an excellent medium for a top-down approach to language teaching and foster vocabulary development because it presents natural language or "language at its finest" (p. 173).

Interestingly, more than half of the participants agreed that the textbooks lack a focus on literature. Their responses clearly indicated that stories and poems need to be added to the textbooks. In their responses to statement (h), "The textbooks need stories and poems in addition to the academic texts available in them," in the survey (see Appendix B1), 56% of the teachers agreed, 7% responded with "not sure," and 37% disagreed (see Figure 6).

Figure 6. Teachers' attitudes towards the lack of literature in the textbooks

The textbooks need stories and poems in addition to the academic texts available in them.

■ Strongly Disagree ■ Disagree ■ Agree ■ Strongly Agree ■ Not Sure

7% 10%
16%
27%
40%
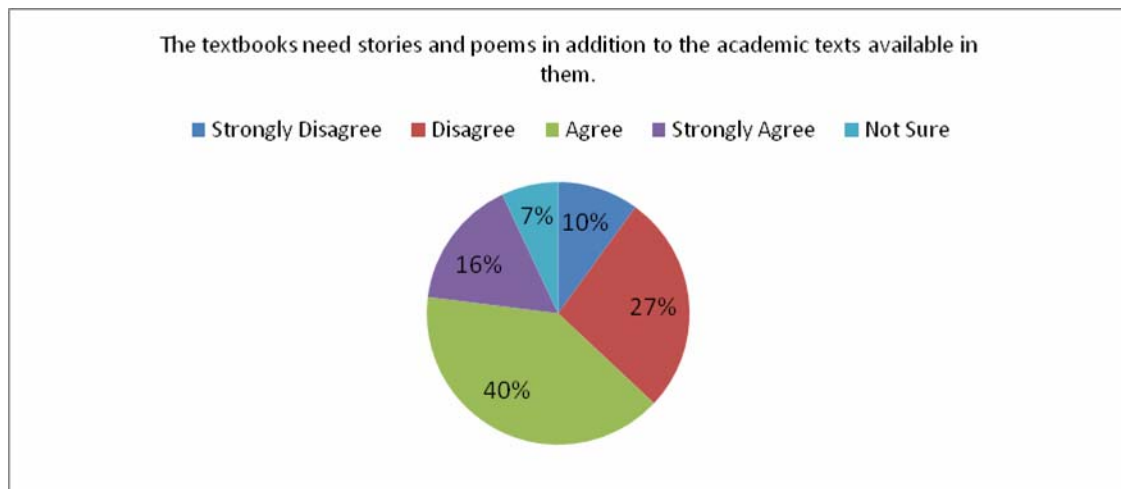
In summary, top-down and bottom-up processing skills are used to teach reading and listening in the *UAE English Skills* textbooks. The reading and listening texts cover a diverse area of linguistic input and the activities based on them are real world activities that encourage learners to interact with the text and think as a writer and not only as a reader. However, the reading and listening texts lack the element of literature and focus only on academic topics.

Productive Skills: Speaking

One of the strong points of *UAE English Skills*, and an aspect that distinguishes it from previous English textbooks taught at UAE's government schools, is the focus on developing students' speaking skills. Speaking lessons in the textbooks include activities and tasks that focus on both fluency and accuracy, and provide students with numerous chances for meaningful oral communication. Students get to practice speaking through information gap activities, listening to and reading conversations, role playing, talking about themselves, researching topics and reporting facts, and asking and answering questions. The textbooks also focus on pronunciation and introduce students to phonology through explaining relevant terms, such as intonation, stress, and syllables.

Specific conversation strategies and strategies to help students cope with unpredictability in spoken discourse are also included, and taught explicitly through the skills check boxes in the speaking sections. These strategies include practicing speech acts, phrases used in talking about research, starting and closing conversations, asking for

help, phrases for telling a story, describing a person and talking about their jobs, requesting clarification, and turn taking. These strategies are referred to and revised several times throughout the lessons of the textbooks. For example, students are given conversations where some of the statements are impolite or irrelevant, and they have to correct them or adjust them to suit what the other person is talking about. In addition, students are often asked to complete conversations using the strategies they have learnt in previous lessons (see Appendix E2 for examples of these tasks).

This direct approach to teaching speaking skills and strategies is very effective, according to Sayer (2005), because it fosters students' awareness of conversational rules, and teaches them what strategies to use, and what "pitfalls" to avoid (p.15). Hinkel (2006) also emphasizes the importance of explicitly teaching students speaking strategies by pointing out that this will eventually increase students' sensitivity to the underlying process of conversations and provide them with a more systematic way of learning conversation skills. However, some of the conversation models used in the textbooks are very artificial and differ considerably from authentic conversations (see Appendix E1 for samples of these conversations). Authentic conversations, as Gilmore (2004) explains, have many features that are not included in textbook conversations, such as false starts, repetitions, pausing, overlapping, and the use of hesitation devices. Most of the conversations used in the *UAE English Skills* textbook are neat and tidy, without performance errors or pauses. The answers are often cold and do not offer opportunities for developing the conversation as is usually the case in real life communication. As was mentioned previously, the textbooks offer strategies and techniques for handling conversations in the real world, and it is very unfortunate that these strategies are accompanied by such artificial models of communicating.

Regarding pronunciation, the textbooks aim for intelligibility rather than an ideal, native-like accent. Savignon (2002) demonstrates that reference to terms such as "native" and "native-like" in evaluating communicative competence is no longer appropriate because, these days, non- native speakers of English outnumber native speakers by at least two to one, turning English into an international language. Additionally, Hinkel (2006) insists that language teaching today has moved from targeting native-like pronunciation to targeting intelligibility, which is the "degree to which the listener

understands the speaker's utterance" (p. 115). To achieve this, she points out, teaching spoken language has to deal with stress, segmental clarity, timing, pauses, and prosody. *UAE English Skills* provides students with pronunciation and intonation practice integrated with other speaking skills. The textbooks offer students discrete phonemes and then phonemes in contrast with the aim of helping them with accuracy, and then check students' ability to say or discriminate them. The skills check boxes also point out common sound-sight relationships. The authors of the textbooks seek to raise students' awareness, through the tasks in the textbooks and the notes in the teachers' book that improving their pronunciation and intonation skills will consequently help them avoid many communication problems. This gives students the sense that they are studying pronunciation to serve a broader communicative purpose.

Overall, the *UAE English Skills* textbooks follow a direct approach in addressing speaking and conversation skills and strategies. These strategies aim at helping students deal with unpredictability in spoken discourse. However, the conversation models used in the textbooks are artificial and differ considerably from authentic conversations. As for pronunciation, the textbooks aim for intelligibility rather than a native-like accent.

Productive Skills: Writing

The writing sections in *UAE English Skills* integrate both bottom-up and top-down writing skills in the teaching of L2 writing. Students are provided with writing activities that aim at improving their mechanical writing skills (e.g., spelling, pronunciation), and compositional tasks that range between personal expressive paragraphs and short controlled academic essays. The pre-writing activities give students relevant vocabulary that they can use in their writing and encourage them to discover what they want to communicate through reading and pair or group discussions. Other activities focus on sentence patterns and improving students' grammar and vocabulary. Students are taught how to use pronouns, adjectives, and fixed phrases in their writing. They are also provided with activities that require them to reorder words and discover grammatical mistakes in sentences and correct them.

Terry Phillips, the author of the textbooks, explained in the interview that the principle behind the *UAE English Skills* series is that "long, complicated sentences start out as simple, easy sentences, mostly SVO in structure," He states that it is important for

students to acquire a "natural feel" for the SVO structure, because this will help them find the core part of the sentence, even when there are subordinate clauses and clause-embedding. He also explains that integrating grammar and vocabulary in teaching writing builds up students' linguistic repertoire, which is an essential factor of achieving proficiency in writing (Hinkel, 2006). Such views are in line with Olshtain (2001) who stresses the importance of focusing on grammar and the mechanics of writing. She argues that while it is important to pay attention to content and organization, it is also important to present a text which does not "suffer from illegible handwriting, numerous spelling errors, faulty punctuation, or inaccurate structure, any of which may render the message unintelligible" (p. 207).

Regarding the composition tasks, most of them are academic and prepare students for the kind of assignments they are likely to encounter in their further studies or jobs. These tasks require students to do some kind of research through reading texts that usually accompany the assignments. The textbooks succeed to a certain degree in the integration of reading and writing skills while teaching composition writing. Students are often required to analyse and discover the rhetorical organization and structure of the reading texts provided in the writing sections. They are also provided sometimes with texts that have either grammatical or rhetorical errors which they have to correct. Reid (1993) indicates that this method is rather effective when combining reading and writing in composition classes. She explains that when students read and analyze texts for successful communication patterns, it helps them plan their own writing and build up schema about the format of English writing.

It can be said that *UAE English Skills* follows to a certain degree the process approach in writing. It teaches students some effective strategies to use when planning to write, like making a list of needed information, writing questions that would help in gathering information, writing an outline of an essay or a "writing plan," writing notes about each section of the essay when gathering information, and writing questions for a survey or an interview. However, multiple drafts and peer review are only introduced and given attention in the grade 10 textbook. Grade 10 students are often encouraged to write a first draft, do a peer review, and then write a second draft and show it to the teacher.

They are not explicitly taught about peer reviewing and the value of multiple drafts, but the peer review is guided by a set of questions that helps in revising the written text.

It is unfortunate that grade 7 and 8 students do not get to experience those two aspects of process writing. Having been taught writing in a product-oriented approach in previous years, it would have been a very welcomed change for students to feel that their work is not being graded based on just one draft, and that writing is a process that does not stop when handing in the written piece to the teacher. Moreover, the concept of thinking of an audience when writing is something that the writing sections in all the three textbooks lack. Students have to perceive their written texts as readings and consider their audience when they write. As indicated by Kroll (1993), writing activities should train students to cast themselves as readers of the developing text to be able to anticipate the readers' needs and write what they want the reader to take out from the text. This strategy also helps the writer in revising and rewriting the different drafts of the text, and avoiding "writer-based prose" (p. 74), a type of writing whose meaning is understood only by the writer.

In summary, the writing tasks in the textbooks aim at improving both students' mechanical writing skills and composition writing. There are also activities that focus on sentence patterns and improving students' grammatical structures. Composition tasks are mostly academic and are similar to tasks that students are likely to encounter in their further studies. The textbooks also follow the process approach to a certain degree and integrate reading and writing skills in the teaching of composition writing.

Language Type

As mentioned before, the *UAE English Skills* series integrates the teaching of grammar and vocabulary with the teaching of the four skills. Although the textbooks are clearly skills-based, the authors explain that there are also "underlying grammar and vocabulary syllabuses." Their selection of lexical items and grammatical and functional structure was based on structures and lexical items usually found in academic and technical situations. This complies with the objective of the textbooks to prepare students for higher academic studies in English. Regarding vocabulary, the authors insist that research shows that the key to good language learning is the acquisition of a broad, useful, and transferable vocabulary.

When learning vocabulary, students should not just learn about meaning, but also about form in speech and writing, and about collocation and usage. This belief led the authors to focus on vocabulary learning by integrating it with the teaching of each section in each theme of the textbooks. Indeed, each theme of the *UAE English Skills* textbooks is built around a key lexical set, which students use repeatedly as they work through the theme. The aim, according to the authors, is to help students gain confidence in using this set of lexical items, so that by the end of each theme, they will be able to use the relevant lexical set in both its written and spoken forms. To achieve this, students are first taught to hear the lexical items in isolation and in context in the listening section of the theme. Then, they practice producing the same set of words in speech, in isolation and in context, in the speaking section. Next, students encounter the set of words in a variety of reading texts before finally using them in their writing. This distribution of vocabulary items throughout the themes provides the conditions that Nation (2001) describes as being essential in vocabulary acquisition. These conditions are: 1. noticing, or giving attention to the language item; 2. retrieval, or recalling the meaning of a previously met word; and 3. generative or creative use through using the previously met word in a way that is different from the previous meeting. Apparently, the multiple encounters of lexical items and the different ways in which students are required to use them can be very motivating. According to Beck, McKeown, and Kucan (2002), in order for students to be motivated and enthusiastic to learn new vocabulary, they need to keep using words as if they "own" them. They "need to develop an interest and awareness in words beyond vocabulary school assignments in order to adequately build their vocabulary repertoires" (p. 13).

The textbooks also distinguish between receptive and productive vocabulary. Receptive vocabulary is included in both the reading and listening texts where students are asked to decipher the meaning of vocabulary items from context. Conversely, productive vocabulary is introduced through vocabulary activities and fixed phrases that are focused on in the skills checks boxes. In addition, the textbooks include a focus on orthography, collocation, synonymy, antonym, hyponymy, super-ordination, and semantic relationships between words. Moreover, both alphabetical and thematic wordlists are included at the back of the student's book. These wordlists cover all the

vocabulary items students are required to learn through the textbooks. More comprehensive vocabulary lists are provided in the *UAE English Skills* website.

In terms of the presentation of grammatical structures and functions, *UAE English Skills* takes a syntactic approach. The authors claim that the textbooks contain all the grammar that students need to succeed in their further English studies. They explained that grammar is contextualized in the listening and reading texts and then explicitly stated before students are required to produce written or spoken texts. Students first comprehend language structures by getting exposed to them in listening and reading texts. Then, they encounter and practice examples of the grammar and try to discover the rule or pattern. Next, they can check their understanding from the skills check boxes where the rule or concept is explained and summarized. After that, students practice using the language structure orally and in written form before being informally tested on it. For more explicit instruction, a grammar section is included at the end of each theme. Furthermore, grammatical items are introduced and taught in small enough units for easy learning. They are also related to and contrasted with grammatical items that students have already learnt.

Regarding the language used in the reading and listening texts, the authors claim that it is simulated authentic. This means that the authors used authentic texts that have been modified to suit the level of the students. Some people might argue that many features of the authentic texts will be lost if they were modified to suit the level of the students. However, according to Guariento and Morley (2001), using authentic texts with lower level students may prevent them from responding in meaningful ways and lead them to feel frustrated, confused, and demotivated. However, in the case of more advanced students, partial comprehension of the text is an alternative to text modification. Guariento and Morley explain that partial comprehension is something that occurs in real life, and as long as students are developing effective strategies of extracting information they need from the texts, total understanding is not important. The authors of *UAE English Skills* recognize this, and the texts they included in the grade 10 textbook are more authentic and less modified than the ones in the grades 7 and 8 textbooks.

Analysis of data from questionnaires and teachers' textbook evaluation forms supports the findings of the in-depth evaluation (see Table 6).

Table 6. Teachers' evaluation of the textbooks' language

	Statement	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
6	An adequate vocabulary list or glossary is included	6%	17%	55%	22%
15	The grammar points and vocabulary items are introduced in motivating and realistic contexts.	1%	20%	71%	8%
26	The grammar points are presented with brief and easy examples and explanations.	1%	23%	55%	21%
24	The language used is at the right level for me and my students' current English ability.	6%	15%	68%	11%

Teachers' responses to statement 6, "An adequate vocabulary list or glossary is included," shows their satisfaction with the vocabulary lists provided in the textbooks. More specifically, more than three quarters (77%) of the teachers showed their agreement, while 23% of them disagreed. Besides, 76% of the teachers participating in this study believed that grammar points are presented with brief and easy examples and explanations, while 24% thought the opposite. An analysis of teachers' responses to statement 15 in the textbook's evaluation form, "The grammar points and vocabulary items are introduced in motivating and realistic contexts," reveal that the majority (79%) of the teachers participating in the study were quite satisfied with the textbooks' coverage and treatment of these linguistic items. The same percentage of teachers (79%) also thought, in their responses to statement 24 of the textbook's evaluation form (see Appendix B2), that the language of the textbooks was at the right level both for them and their students. This finding contradicts the complaints that were published in *Al Bayan Newspaper* at the beginning of the 2006 school year (Attaya, 2006), where teachers insisted that the language of the textbooks was much higher than their students' level. The article mentions that these complaints came mainly from grade 10 teachers, which might be explained, as it was previously mentioned, by the fact that the authors have placed a fairly difficult theme, "The World Around Us," at the beginning of the textbook.

In summary, the textbooks integrate the teaching of grammar and vocabulary with the teaching of the four skills. In regard to vocabulary, the textbooks focus on both meaning and form in speech and writing. They also address collocation, usage, and semantic relationship between words. Each theme is built around a key lexical set, which students use repeatedly as they work through the theme. Both semantic and alphabetical

wordlists are included at the back of the textbooks. As for grammar, it is contextualized in listening and reading texts and then explicitly stated before students are required to produce written or spoken texts.

Subject and Content

The literature review discussed in some detail the debate in the ELT field about whether or not textbooks should teach the target culture. Many researchers have insisted that language is culturally bound and the teaching of language and culture cannot be separated. Others have argued that it is better and more useful to teach the local culture since students are likely to use English in their own countries and might never directly communicate with native speakers of English. *UAE English Skills* covers a wide range of interesting academic and general knowledge topics such as sports, health, culture and traditions, famous inventors, etc. The textbooks also present students with topics about different cultures in the world, and do not focus on one particular culture. The authors explain this by stating that *UAE English Skills* is not designed to support or promote one particular culture, or criticise any other cultures. Controversial or offensive topics in various cultures are avoided and, they indicate, if any institution wants to teach these topics, they can find or produce their own additional materials.

The textbook also avoids stereotypes, gender, and racial and ethnic biases and maintains a language that is gender-neutral all through the textbooks' themes. Social relationships and characters are portrayed in a realistic way and in realistic situations that demonstrate language students could actually use when faced with similar situations. The language and culture notes in the teacher's book also do a great job of explaining how certain things are done in the target culture. This includes explaining gestures, phrases, abbreviations, what is considered as appropriate or inappropriate behaviour, etc. Teachers are always encouraged to convey this knowledge to the students to raise their awareness of the target culture, and are often asked to draw their students' attention to the similarities or differences between their culture and the target culture.

The majority of teachers participating in this study thought that the topics included in the textbooks were realistic, interesting, motivating, and relevant to their students' needs. Detailed statistics of their responses to statements 29, 30, 31, and 32 from the teachers' textbook evaluation forms are provided in Table 7.

Table 7. Teachers' opinions about the subject and content of the textbooks

	Statement	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
29	The subject and content of the textbook is relevant to my students' needs as English language learners.	3%	19%	68%	10%
30	The subject and content of the textbook is generally realistic.	0%	12%	67%	21%
31	The subject and content of the textbook is interesting, challenging, and motivating.	1%	13%	65%	21%
32	There is sufficient variety in the subject and content of the textbook.	0%	9%	69%	22%

It is interesting to note that yet again, teachers' responses to the statements above contradict the previously published complaints that the topics of the textbooks are not related to the students' lives and the UAE society (Attaya, 2006). As illustrated in Table 7, data analysis of statement 29 revealed that 78% of the teachers participating in this study thought that the content is relevant to their students' needs. Teachers' initial dissatisfaction with the content of the textbooks is obviously and gradually changing as they use them.

Overall analysis of this section showed that the *UAE English Skills* series of textbooks, despite some shortcomings, has many remarkable features that would indeed help in developing students' language skills and overall language proficiency. The textbooks are organized in an attractive and logical manner that ensures the inclusion of all the skills and other important linguistic items, such as grammar and vocabulary. The activities and exercises are authentic, incorporate individual, pair, and group work, and take into consideration the different learning styles of students. In addition, receptive and productive skills are presented through a variety of effective teaching and learning strategies that integrate both bottom-up and top-down processes. Finally, the content of the textbooks is realistic, motivating, challenging and interesting.

The Change in the Curriculum and the Development of *UAE English Skills*

What were the reasons for the change that happened in the curriculum? How was this change planned for? What was involved in the process of developing and adapting the *UAE English Skills* series to suit the UAE context? To answer these three questions, data were collected from interviews with Terry Phillips, one of the two authors of the

textbooks, and two members of the adaptation team, Dr. Mariam Bayshak and Makeya Al-Najjar. Interview questions focused on the process of developing and localizing the materials used in the textbooks, the theoretical basis on which the textbooks were created, dealing with complaints about the pilot edition of the textbooks, criteria used in the adaptation process, and future plans regarding the textbooks.

The Change in the Curriculum

Regarding the change in the curriculum, its aims, and how it was planned for, the data from the interviews reveal that the Ministry of Education decided to replace the old textbooks with the *UAE English Skills* series in order to empower learners and provide them with effective life-lasting skills. Makeyah Al-Najjar stated that with a country that is as rapidly developing as the UAE, students are faced with many challenges regarding their current academic lives and future careers. The Ministry of Education aimed at making a change that would enable students to face these challenges through empowering them with creative and critical thinking skills. The objective is to change the previous test-oriented approach to teaching English in government schools and replace it with an approach that would build students' skills and develop their way of thinking. This would also, as Makeya pointed out, help eventually in decreasing the gap between students' level of English language when graduating from secondary school and the level required of them to succeed in higher education.

When asked about the process of choosing *UAE English Skills*, Makeya explained that the Ministry of Education had formed a review committee to review and evaluate a selection of international textbooks that were being considered for adoption. The review committee selected *Skills in English* which was later turned into the *UAE English Skills* series of textbooks. This decision, she stated, was not based on any kind of needs analysis. She pointed out that the previous Minister of Education had insisted on replacing the old English textbooks as soon as possible, and thus, the change in the curriculum had to be initiated in less than a year. "There was no time to conduct a needs analysis," she remarked, "but it is the adaptation team's job to make sure that the textbooks match the learners' and society's needs."

The Adaptation of UAE English Skills

The adaptation team's job, as described by Dr. Maryam Bayshak, is to "review all

the components of the curricula." She explained the process of the adaptation in detail, stating that all the members of the adaptation team start by reading the material prior to committee meetings. Then, they list their observations concerning the content of the material, its suitability to the age and level of the students, and the culture and beliefs of the society. After that, the committee reviews the content at the meetings to make sure that it: 1) integrates and makes connections with other subjects; 2) promotes academic growth through the stages of reading and writing development; and 3) provides opportunities for self-selected activities. Other aspects of the material that are reviewed include the attractiveness and quality of the layout and design, whether the illustrations, maps, graphs, and charts are up-to-date, and the balance in treatment of social issues, religion, ethnicity, and gender. Finally, the committee reviews the teacher's book to see if it includes suggestions for the extension of learning and integration across the curriculum.

Given their experience and qualifications, and based on the description provided by Dr. Bayshak, it appears that the adaptation team indeed did its best to ensure that the textbooks are suitable and meet the needs of the learners and the society. However, without concrete statistics of the actual needs of learners, teachers, and educational and society institutions, there seems to be no actual basis for the review and adaptation of the textbooks. As stated by several researchers (Dubin & Olshtain, 1986; Grabowski, 2004; Pellegrino, 2004), needs analysis helps in identifying the gap in learners' knowledge and paves the way for teachers and textbook designers to make the right decisions based on information gathered. The dilemma of not conducting any kind of needs analysis prior to the development of the textbooks is obvious when reading teachers' complaints at the beginning of the 2006 school year that the textbooks were either higher or lower than the students' level (Attaya, 2006).

Terry Phillips, one of the two authors of the textbooks, indicated in the interview that some of the "mistakes" of the *UAE English Skills* series were related to the students' and teachers' abilities. He stated that they (the authors) have visited several schools and met with a number of teachers and students, and they now "have a much better picture of the situation and will work on rectifying these mistakes in the following edition published in 2008. It is noteworthy that conducting a needs analysis would have given the authors a

much clearer idea of what the learners and the society needs and enabled them to avoid any problems related to the students' abilities and design a course that would better accommodate those needs.

Complaints about UAE English Skills

In regard to the reason behind piloting the textbooks on grades 7, 8, and 10, while grade 9 students were left studying the *English for the Emirates* textbook. The answer was provided by Phillips, who said that the original plan was to introduce the course at the beginning of each stage, in other words grades 7 and 10. Then, grades 8 and 11 would follow the next year, and grades 9 and 12 in the third year. The Ministry of Education then decided that it would not be fair for grade 8 students to miss out, so a late decision was made to include this grade in the initial implementation. When asked if this last minute decision has caused any problems, he confirmed that some mistakes where made because of the shortness of time. "We only had three months from signing the contract to delivering the first three grades," he commented, "but the mistakes were mostly typographical ones." This statement was further emphasized by Dr. Bayshak who stated that the textbooks' mistakes are very minor and that any complaints mentioned in the newspapers are individual complaints and should not be generalized. However, the problem here is not only the minor mistakes that existed because of the shortness of time. A bigger problem is the fact that a lot of the skills and strategies taught to grade 8 and 10 students depend on what they are supposed to have already learnt in grade 7. For example, ten out of twenty grammar rules presented on page 20 of the grade 8 student's book are a revision of grammar rules from grade 7 (see Appendix E3). However, since grade 8 students have never studied the grade 7 textbook, all these grammar rules are new to them and it would take them a lot of time to learn them.

Future Plans

Regarding the authors' and the adaptation team's future plans regarding the textbooks, Phillips commented that there is an ongoing programme of lesson observations and teacher training. He said that hundreds of lessons have already been observed all over the UAE in the last eighteen months, and the information gathered from these observations will help improve the future editions of the *UAE English Skills* textbooks.

Dr. Bayshak stated that the adaptation team will be reviewing the grade 9 and 11 textbooks and any other future editions that will follow.

In summary, interviews with Terry Phillips, Dr. Maryam Bayshak and Makeya Al-Najjar reveal that the change in the curriculum and the adoption of the new textbooks was initiated and done in less than a year. There was no needs analysis involved in the process of choosing the right textbook, but the adaptation team were doing their best to make sure that the textbooks align with the needs of the learners and the society.

The Usefulness and Value of *UAE English Skills* as Perceived by Teachers

What are teachers' attitudes towards using the *UAE English Skills* textbooks and their perceptions of their effectiveness and value? To answer this question, data were collected from the survey and teachers' textbook evaluation form. As for the survey, there were four close-ended questions and four close-ended statements designed to explore teachers' reactions and attitudes towards the theory underlying the textbooks' content and design. In addition, the teachers' textbook evaluation form was designed to investigate the extent to which teachers perceive the textbooks to be effective and suitable to the UAE context.

The significance of including teachers as evaluators in this study stems from research findings on how the knowledge they gain from the process of evaluation assist them in making the right decisions about using the textbooks they teach. According to a number of researchers (Cortazzi & Jin, 1999; Cunningsworth, 1995; Sheldon, 1988), getting involved in textbook evaluation can provide teachers with insight into the nature of the language materials they teach, which will in turn help them be more creative in using and adapting the textbooks to be suitable for their students. Through the teacher's textbook evaluation forms, teachers participating in this study were able to review and evaluate several aspects of the *UAE English Skills* textbooks. The second section of this chapter discusses the data collected from teachers' textbook evaluation forms. Results indicate that most of the teachers believed the textbooks to be effectively organized, have a clear and appropriate layout and design, and state the course objectives in a clear way, at least for the teachers. However, a large number of teachers pointed out that the time allotted for covering all the themes of the textbooks is not enough.

Regarding the teacher's book, the majority of teachers thought that it is organized, user-friendly, and includes guidelines that are very practical and helpful. The authors' views on language and methodology are similar to those of almost two-thirds of the participants. In addition, teachers affirm that the textbooks' activities incorporate individual, pair, and group work, and encourage sufficient communicative and meaningful practice. They also believed that the textbooks focus on skills that their students need to practice and pay attention to sub-skills. In regard to language type and content, two thirds of the participants agreed that the textbooks include adequate vocabulary lists and present both grammar and vocabulary items in motivating and realistic contexts. They also agree that the subjects and topics included in the textbooks are varied, interesting, challenging, and motivating. However, results also indicate that the majority of the teachers thought the textbooks focus only on academic texts and lack the elements of fiction and poetry. They also complained that the provided tests are not adequate, clearly because they do not match the test format provided by the Ministry of Education.

The close-ended statements in question C11, which are demonstrated in Table 6 below, focus more on teachers' attitudes and feelings towards using the textbooks. They explore, in general, whether or not teachers felt that the textbooks had improved their teaching. Statement (c), "The textbooks' English is somehow difficult for me," is similar to statement 24 in the teacher's textbook evaluation form, "The language used is at the right level for me and my students' current English ability." The purpose of these two statements was to find out if teachers perceived the language of the textbooks to be difficult for both them and their students. Results from the two statements are consistent. The majority of teachers (86%) showed their disagreement with statement (c), while 79% of the participants answered with agreement to statement 24. In fact, the teachers reacted in a positive way to the level of the textbooks' language. In response to statement (f), "I have learnt a lot of new English from the textbook," 76% of the teachers confirmed that they had indeed learnt a lot about the English language from the textbooks, while 19% of them denied that. Furthermore, results from statements (d) and (e) indicate that an overwhelming majority of the teachers participating in this study enjoyed teaching the textbooks and thought that the topics included in them are interesting. Moreover, when

responding to statement (k), "My teaching has improved as a result of teaching this textbook," 75% of the participants expressed their agreement (65% agreed and 9% strongly agreed) (see Table 8.)

Table 8. Teachers' attitudes towards using the textbooks

	Statement	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Not sure
c.	The textbook's English is somehow difficult for me.	36%	50%	11%	1%	2%
d.	I enjoy teaching this textbook.	1%	3%	55%	37%	4%
e.	This textbook contains interesting topics.	0	5%	56%	39%	0
f.	I have learnt a lot of new English from this textbook.	5%	14%	58%	18%	5%
k.	My teaching has improved as a result of teaching this textbook.	6%	12%	65%	9%	8%

There were no major differences found between males' and females' responses. For example, when responding to statement (d), 94% of the males and 90% of the females agreed that they enjoy teaching the textbooks. Moreover, 98% of the males and 92% of the females responded with agreement to statement (e), "This textbook contains interesting topics," while only 2% of the males and 8% of the females disagreed. This similarity was consistent throughout the data and as a result the remaining analysis does not provide a distinction based on gender.

Question C5 in the survey, "What section(s) of the textbook do you like teaching most?" was meant to investigate the extent to which teachers were getting used to teaching the different sections of the textbooks, particularly the oral skills' sections that were not focused on in the previous textbooks. I assumed that teachers would prefer to teach writing, reading, and grammar since they were used to them from their experience of teaching the previous textbooks. However, results indicated that listening, reading, and speaking were the top three sections teachers enjoyed teaching, whereas writing was the section they least enjoyed (see Figure 7).

Figure 7. Sections of the textbooks teachers enjoyed teaching the most
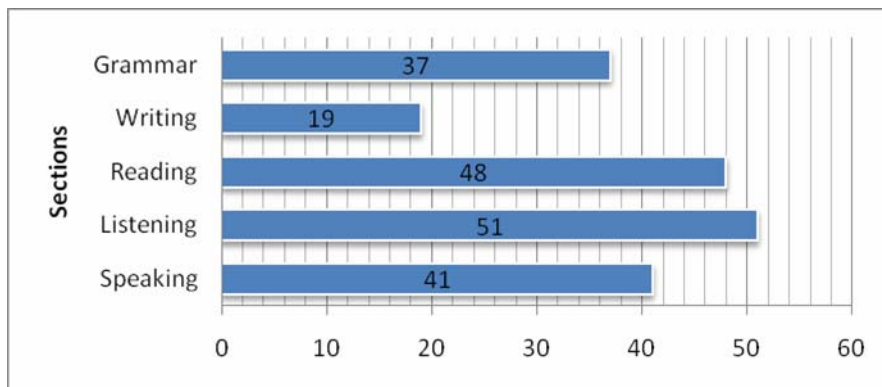
It is noteworthy that most of the reasons explaining the teachers' choice of the sections in the above mentioned question were directly related to their students, or to the extent their students enjoyed the relevant section. Most teachers indicated that they enjoyed teaching listening and speaking because they are interesting and new to the students, and they "create a nice atmosphere in the classroom." One teacher wrote, "The textbook contains various multi-purpose listening tasks that are presented in a new and authentic way which motivates my students to participate." Another teacher remarked that she enjoys teaching the speaking section because the activities included in it encourage her students to interact and help them in using the language productively. In addition, one teacher thought that writing and grammar were too difficult for her students and usually take a lot of time to complete. She commented that she likes teaching the other skills because "they go on smoothly in the classroom." Finally, a large number of teachers pointed out that these three skills (listening, reading, and speaking) were the most problematic for their students and they needed to focus on them to improve their language proficiency. On the other hand, a small number of teachers provided reasons that were related to them and their teaching. For instance, one of them wrote, "I am fascinated by the new approach of teaching writing. I am always looking forward to teaching writing classes and trying out the activities with my students." Another teacher wrote, "Listening is presented in a very good way in this textbook and it was neglected before. This is a new experience for me and I am enjoying it."

Data analysis of question C6, "What section(s) of the textbook did you notice your students enjoying the most?" revealed that teachers' preferences regarding the skills in the textbooks matched their assumptions of their students' preferences. The top three

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skills chosen by teachers in this question were also listening, reading, and speaking, whereas writing was reported to be the skill least enjoyed by students (see Figure 8).

Figure 8. Sections of the textbooks students enjoyed the most
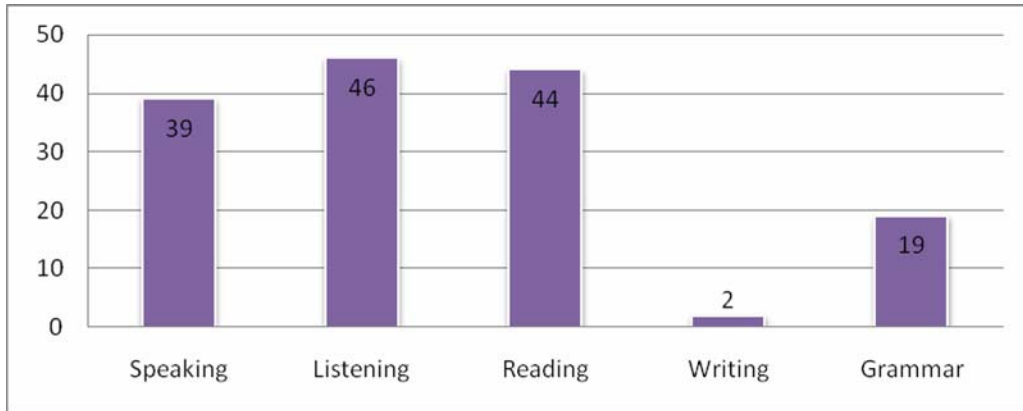
What is interesting to note here is that the results of questions C5 and C6 somehow contradict with the results from question C7. Despite choosing listening and speaking as two of the most enjoyable sections of the textbooks for both teachers and students, teachers did not perceive them as important for their students' success in the term exams. Their responses to question C7 of the survey, "What specific section(s) of the textbook did you find most necessary for your students' success on the term exams?" revealed some interesting results. Grammar, writing, and reading were chosen as the three most important skills for students' success in the term exams, while listening and speaking were perceived to be the least important (see Figure 9).

Figure 9. Skills that teachers view as important for students' success in the term exam
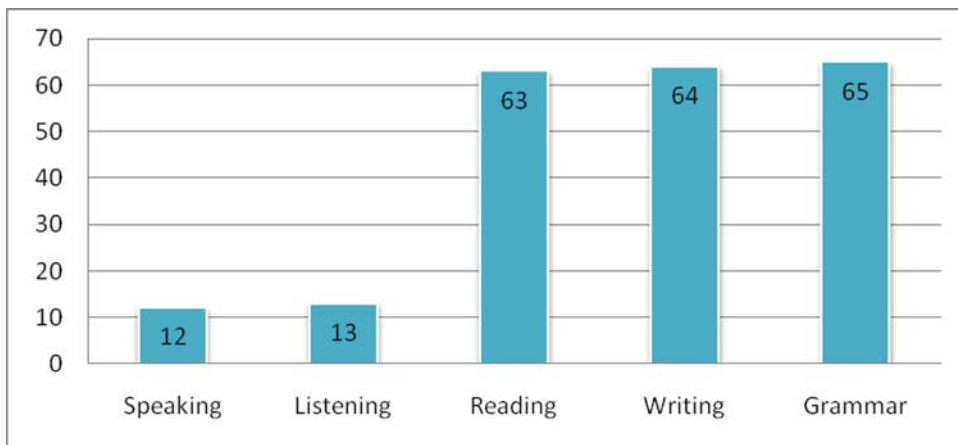
This finding was consistent with results from question C4 in the survey (see Appendix B1), where some teachers confirmed that they often skipped listening and

speaking lessons as a way of modifying the textbooks to better suit their students. This attitude towards the oral skills does not necessarily imply that teachers perceived them to be less valuable or necessary for language learning. Their assertion that they enjoyed teaching them and their assumption that their students also enjoyed them indicates that they might perceive these skills to be highly motivating for students and equally important. However, since students are only evaluated on reading, writing, vocabulary, and grammar in the term exams, both teachers and students find it more fruitful to focus on these skills. The fact that the testing system in the Ministry of Education was not modified to suit the *UAE English Skills* approach to language learning and teaching creates a dilemma for teachers. On one hand, the textbooks focus on each skill equally and demand that teachers spend the same amount of time teaching each one of them. On the other hand, the testing system forces teachers to focus more on preparing their students for the term exams and give less attention to listening and speaking. Unless the Ministry of Education changes the assessment methods to match the objectives of the new English curriculum and the newly adopted textbooks, students will not experience the full benefit of learning the oral skills.

Finally, I wanted to find out teachers' overall evaluation of the textbook and how they generally felt about using them. Questions 34-37 in the teacher's textbook evaluation form (see Appendix B2) served to achieve this purpose. Statistical results of data gathered from these questions revealed that 91% of the teachers regarded the textbooks as appropriate for the language learning aims of their students, while only 9% did not. Additionally, 68% of the teachers thought that the textbooks are suitable for a medium-large number of students in classes of government schools, whereas 32% thought that they are not. Reasons for the relatively large number of teachers disagreeing with this statement can be related to teachers' complaints about the length of the syllabus, and the difficulty of focusing on improving the skills of individual students while at the same time trying to cover all the materials in the textbooks. Results from statement 36, "The textbook raises my students' interest in further English language study," indicated that 78% of the teachers thought that the textbooks are motivating and can raise their students' interest in studying English. When asked if they would choose to teach the

UAE English Skills textbooks again, 89% of the teachers stated that they would, while only 11% asserted that they would not.

Overall, data indicate that teachers enjoyed teaching these textbooks and thought that they included interesting topics. The sections of the textbooks they most enjoyed teaching were listening, reading, and speaking, while the section they least enjoyed was writing. Interestingly enough, writing, grammar, and reading were considered to be the most necessary skills for students' success in the term exams, while listening and speaking were considered the least important. Results also revealed that teachers believed that the language used in the textbook is at the right level for both them and their students. Furthermore, the teachers' overall evaluation of the textbooks showed that the teachers regarded the textbook as motivating and appropriate for the language learning aims of their students. Finally, the majority of the teachers confirmed that they would choose to teach these textbooks again.

Teachers' Styles of Using *UAE English Skills*

How are teachers adapting their methods of teaching to suit the *UAE English Skills* textbook? To answer this question, data were collected from the survey in which there were close-ended and open-ended questions about teachers' styles of using the textbooks. Teachers were asked to select appropriate answers related to their usage of the teacher's book, modifications they have attempted while teaching the textbooks, and whether they thought they need more training to use the textbooks. Moreover, there were eleven close-ended statements designed to investigate teachers' feelings and attitudes towards *UAE English Skills*. Three of those statements were intended to explore teachers' styles and experiences in using the textbooks.

Because *UAE English Skills* is a new textbook which includes methods and theories that might be new to the teachers, it was important to investigate if teachers referred to the teacher's book for assistance. Question B1, "Do you use the *UAE English Skills'* teacher's book?" was meant to measure if teachers had an idea, through reading the teacher's book, about the techniques and teaching methods suggested by the authors of the textbooks. Reading guidelines, tips, and lesson plans included in the textbooks expose teachers to a variety of teaching techniques other than the ones they are used to in

their classrooms. Results showed that 100% of the teachers involved in this study used the teacher's book. To get more specific data, question B2 asked teachers about the frequency of their usage of the teacher's book (see Appendix B1). Statistical results of this question revealed that the majority of the teachers depended on the teacher's book to various degrees. 22% of the teachers answered that they totally depend on the teacher's book and closely follow its directions, 47% of them indicated that they read the lesson tips and directions, and sometimes plan their lessons based on them, whereas 26% refer to it from time to time when finding difficulty in teaching an activity, and 5% of the teachers rarely follow the teacher's book, but like to read it to get an idea of how to teach the lesson (see Figure 10).

Figure 10. The frequency in which teachers use the teacher's book
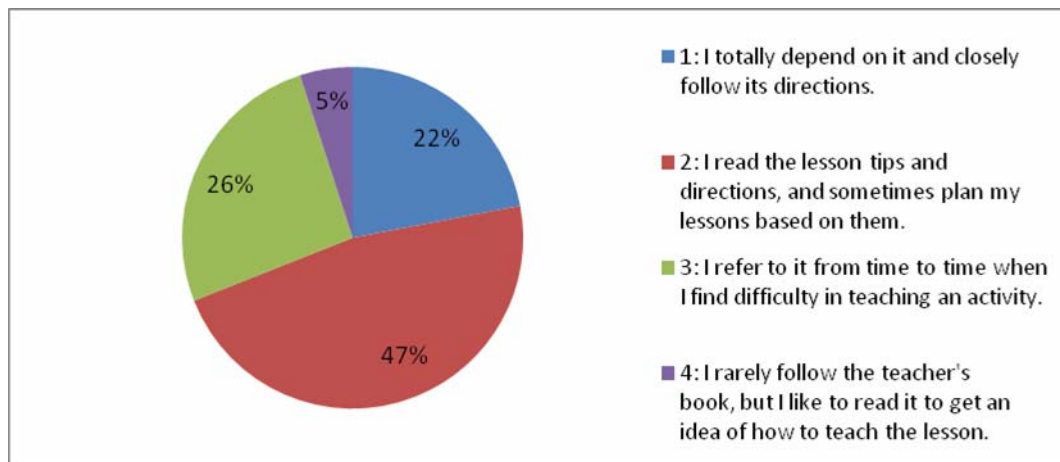
The introduction in the teacher's book contains general information about the textbook package and the course as a whole. Through reading the introduction, teachers would have an idea about the *UAE English Skills* objectives, target audience, approach, methodology, and would also find some guidelines for using the textbooks. For this reason, I believe that it is essential for teachers to read the introduction as a first step before actually teaching the textbooks. Teachers' responses to questions B3, "Did you read the introduction in the teacher's book?", and B4, "Do you think it is important to read the introduction? Explain why or why not," revealed some valuable insights about whether or not teachers regard reading the introduction and understanding the textbooks' approach and methodology as important. When asked if they read the introduction in the teacher's book, the majority of teachers (86%) answered in the affirmative. An even

bigger percentage of teachers (94%) regarded reading the introduction as important (see Appendix C1), while only 6% thought that it was not. One teacher who was in favour of reading the introduction explained that it paves the way to understanding the content of the textbook and gives an idea of what to expect when dealing with the lessons. Another teacher indicated that it is important to understand the author's approach and the introduction is the easiest and most direct way to do so. On the other hand, teachers who thought that it was not important to read the introduction stated that they can get an idea about the textbook from the lessons themselves. One of the teachers commented that the introduction included information about how to teach skills which the teacher already knows.

Question C2, "How much classroom time do you devote to teaching from the textbook?" was intended to investigate how dependent teachers are on the textbooks when planning their lessons. As results indicate, more than half of the teachers participating in this study either totally depend on the textbooks in their classes or spend most of the time teaching from them. This is understandable considering that it was their first time teaching the textbooks and they were still getting used to the format of the lessons and the types of the activities. Another reason could be the fact that 26% of the teachers participating in this study had less than five years of teaching experience (see Figures 11 and 12). Besides, the syllabus in government schools forces most teachers to cover all the subjects in their textbooks in order to prepare students for the term exams.

Figure 11. Classroom time spent on teaching from the textbook
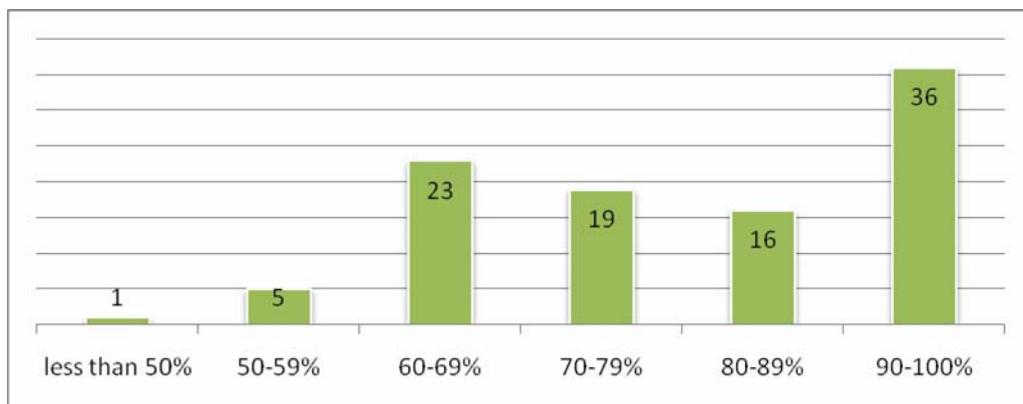
Figure 12. Teachers' experience and time spent on teaching from the textbook
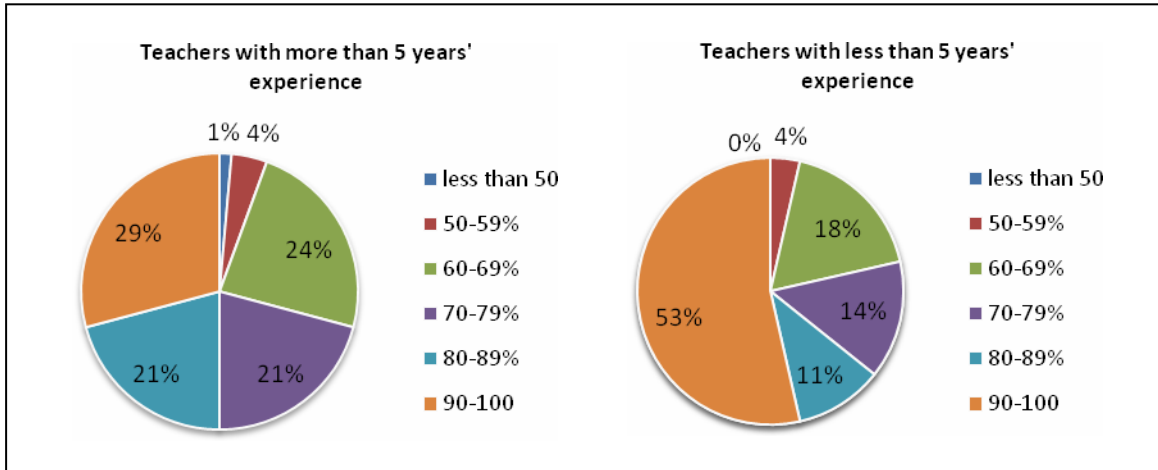
McGrath (2002) points out that no textbook is perfect in meeting the learning needs of a specific group of students, and that it is the teacher's responsibility to decide how to modify textbooks or supplement them with materials that respond to learners' needs. In this sense, modification can promote meaning and authenticity in the classroom, and motivate students and improve their learning. Questions C3 and C4 in the survey tried to explore the type of modifications teachers made to the *UAE English Skills'* textbooks. In response to question C3, "Have you tried to modify the textbook you're using?" 59% of the participants answered with "yes," while 41% answered with "no." Reasons for the modification for those who answered with yes included the enrichment of the materials and simplification for lower-level students, decreasing the complicacy of some of the activities, and skipping some activities that do not suit the UAE's society. Question C4 required participants who modified the textbooks to select the type(s) of modification they made. Results showed that the most frequent type of modification is simplifying the content and providing more revision sheets, followed by using the OHP and having more quizzes and tests. A small percentage of teachers indicated that they give extra tutorials, provide summaries of important content, skip some listening and speaking lessons, and reduce the amount of required readings. Figure 13 illustrates the types of modifications teachers made to the *UAE English Skills* textbooks.

Figure 13. The type of modifications teachers make to the textbooks
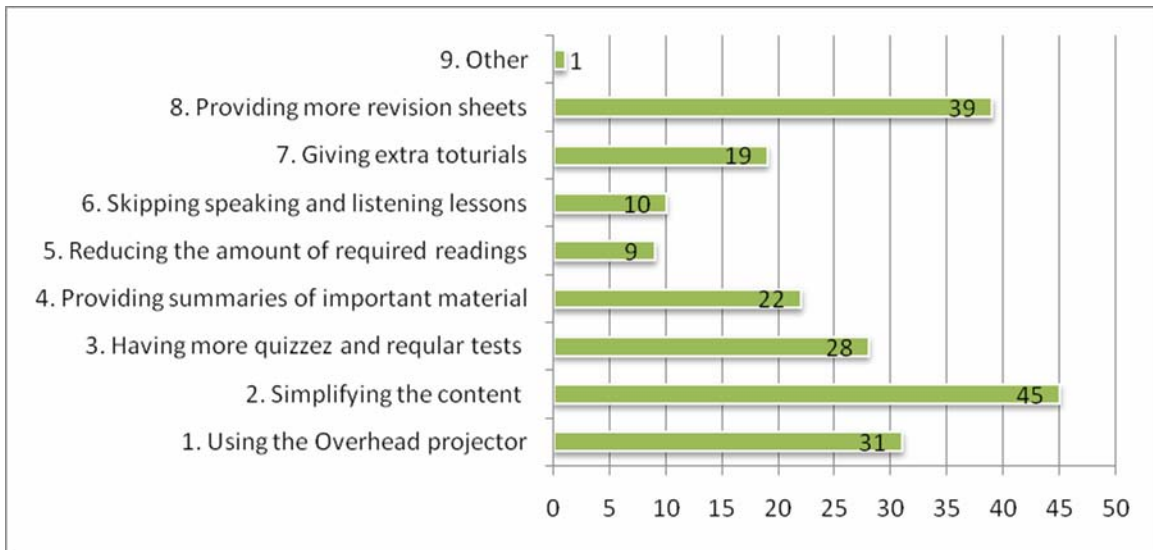
Terry Phillips stated in the interview that there was an ongoing program of teacher training to assist teachers in using the textbooks and understanding the theory behind it. Because I have attended almost all the training sessions offered for teachers using the textbooks, I know that they provide valuable training in phonology, dealing with different learning styles, grammar and vocabulary teaching, etc. There were also two orientation sessions for teachers in the year 2005 in which teachers were provided with copies of the textbooks and given a general idea about the objectives of the course, its approach, content, and the format of lessons and activities. Based on this, I thought it was important to investigate whether or not the teachers participating in this study had some training in using the textbooks, which was the purpose of question C9, "Did you attend training sessions or workshops to help you use the textbook?" 92% of the participants confirmed that they had attended training sessions, while only 8% stated that they had not. In addition, in responding to question C10, "After using the textbook, do you think you need more training and preparation to help you deal with teaching the textbook?" 55% of the participants agreed that they need more training, whereas 45% disagreed.

Teachers who were in favor of training explained that they would not benefit from only one or two training sessions. Training, they thought, should be an ongoing process that raises teachers' awareness of up-to-date theories of teaching and learning. For instance, one teacher commented that she finds difficulty in phonology, and training

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sessions can help her improve her teaching in this area. Another teacher remarked, "I still need more training in teaching the activities of the textbook. I really hate what I am doing, but sometimes I find myself skipping activities because of their difficulty." However, a large number of teachers pointed out that training sessions should focus more on practical implementation of the textbooks and less on theories. "All the workshops I have attended included lectures and theories," one teacher complained, "I want to see the trainers demonstrating a whole lesson in front of us. That is what we really need." Conversely, teachers who were against training stated that the main problem they are facing with the textbooks is that the syllabus is too long to cover throughout the academic year. This problem, they explained, could not be solved with training sessions.

Two of the close-ended statements in question C11 focused on teachers' styles and experiences in using *UAE English Skills* (see Table 9). Because teachers differ in their attitudes towards changes in the curriculum, depending on their own preparation and experience, I wanted to investigate in a general way whether or not teachers were willing to make changes in their teaching styles to better suit the approach of the textbooks. In other words, I wanted to find out if teachers were flexible to change and were feeling positively towards it.

Table 9. Teachers' readiness to change their teaching styles to suit the textbooks' approach

	Statement	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Not sure
a.	The textbook has given me the opportunity to work with colleagues teaching other subjects in my school.	1%	17%	58%	12%	12%
b.	This textbook has led me to make changes in my teaching.	2%	2%	56%	34%	6%

Teachers' responses to the close-ended statements revealed some very positive results. Because the UAE English Skills content includes texts about mathematics, science, geography, and history, English teachers have the opportunity of referring to and working with teachers of these subjects to teach the content of the textbook in a better way. In their response to statement (a), "The textbook has given me the opportunity to work with colleagues teaching other subjects in my school," 70% of the teachers agreed, and 12% answered with "not sure," while 18% disagreed. This finding indicates that

teachers were responding positively to the approach of the textbook and were willing to apply the tips and techniques suggested by the authors in the teacher's book. Results from statement (b), "This textbook has led me to make changes in my teaching," confirm the previous finding. Indeed, almost all of the participants (90%) agreed with the statement, while only 4% disagreed and 6% answered with "not sure."

In general, results indicated that the majority of teachers participating in this study depend, to some degree, on the teacher's book to guide them on how to use the *UAE English Skills* textbooks and believe that it is important to know the authors' approach and methodology through reading the introduction to the textbooks. In addition, more than half of the participants reported that they spend 80% to 100% of the class time teaching from the textbooks. However, a large number of teachers pointed out that they modify the content of the textbooks to better suit their students. Moreover, results showed that more than half of the teachers (52%) thought that they needed more training in using the textbooks, but demanded that training focus more on practical implementation of the textbooks. Finally, responses to close-ended statements showed that most teachers have made changes in their teaching because of using the textbooks.

The next chapter summarizes the findings of the study and lists some of its limitations. It also provides implications for textbook designers, teachers, and the Ministry of Education.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

Summary of Findings

Conclusions about the four categories, which are the pedagogical effectiveness of the textbook package in the UAE context, the change in the curriculum and the development of *UAE English Skills*, the usefulness and value of *UAE English Skills* as perceived by teachers, and teachers' styles of using *UAE English Skills* are discussed in this chapter. In the beginning, an objective summary of the study's finding is provided. Then, limitations of the study and directions for future research are included. Finally, implications for teachers and textbook designers are pointed out.

The main aim of this study was to determine the overall pedagogical value and suitability of the *UAE English Skills* series of textbooks to the UAE context. The first purpose was to examine if the textbooks were designed in a way that will help develop students' English language skills and general language competence. Results from the surveys, interviews, in-depth evaluation, and teachers' textbook evaluation forms indicate that the *UAE English Skills* textbooks for grades 7, 8, and 10 have many remarkable characteristics that would assist students in developing their English language skills and improve their general language competence. The whole textbook package is well conceived and contains additional materials that are useful to both teachers and students. The textbooks are also designed and organized in a clear, coherent, and effective way with each theme divided into multiple sections that focus on each of the four language skills, in addition to grammar and vocabulary. Ninety-one percent of the teachers responding to the survey confirmed this finding and asserted that the textbooks are indeed organized in a logical and effective way.

The main objective of the textbooks is to build students' skills so that they can understand spoken English, speak in English in class, conduct research, and write assignments and projects in English. This objective matches the Ministry of Education's aim to decrease the gap between students' level in English when graduating from secondary school and the language level required of them to succeed in higher education institutes. This objective is also realized in the kind of materials and activities provided in the textbooks. Throughout the textbooks, students are taught strategies and techniques

that will eventually help them communicate in English in academic settings, conduct research, and write assignments and projects in English. Students are also taught to revise their work and monitor their progress, read and write for a purpose, and conduct short talks in English. In addition, *UAE English Skills* successfully integrates the four language skills in an approach that focuses on developing both bottom-up and top-down processes and creates a balance between productive and receptive skills. As for the treatment of vocabulary items and grammatical structures and functions, 79% of the teachers thought that vocabulary and grammar are introduced in motivating and realistic contexts, and that grammatical structures are taught in small enough units for easy learning.

With respect to subject and content, 80% of the teachers participating in this study agreed that the content of the textbooks is interesting, challenging, and motivating. They also asserted that there is sufficient variety in topics and that the subjects are generally realistic. The textbooks include topics about different cultures and often encourage students to explore the differences or similarities between those cultures and their own culture. Moreover, the textbooks succeed in avoiding stereotypes, gender, racial, and ethnic biases, and controversial topics that might be offending for students.

Despite its strengths, *UAE English Skills* still has some deficiencies. The inconsistency between the formal test format of the Ministry of Education and the kind of assessment and testing the textbooks suggest and provide can be considered the biggest problem. Moreover, the textbook requires teachers to evaluate their students on listening and speaking skills while the evaluation system in the Ministry of Education still focuses on evaluating students mainly on their abilities in reading, writing, grammar, and vocabulary. In addition, some of the conversation models provided in the textbooks are artificial and differ considerably from authentic conversations. Furthermore, some of the activities do not encourage meaningful practice or support realistic dialogues. Other problems centred on the lack of literature in the content of the textbooks and the imbalance between individual, pair, and group activities in the grades 7 and 8 textbooks.

As for the change that happened in the curriculum and how teachers perceive and respond to this change, data indicate that the Ministry of Education decided to replace the previous textbooks with *UAE English Skills* to empower students with the necessary skills that would help them succeed in their higher education studies and eventually their

careers. However, this change was planned for and initiated in a very short period without conducting needs analysis or taking into consideration the factors related to students, teachers, and educational institutions. The problems resulting from this were highlighted in the complaints from teachers and supervisors that the grade 7 textbook was below the students' level, while the grade 10 textbook was a lot higher. In response to teachers' complaints that the content of the textbook is irrelevant to students' and society's needs, Dr. Bayshak asserted that these are individual complaints and can not be generalized, and that the adaptation team reviews all the material in the textbook to make sure that it suits the UAE's culture. This finding was supported by 78% of the teachers participating in this study who agreed that the subject and content of the textbooks are relevant to their students' needs as English language learners. As for the reason of piloting the textbooks to grades 7, 8, and 10, while grade 9 students were left studying the previous textbooks, Phillips stated that this was a late decision made by the Ministry of Education so that grade 8 students would not miss out on the new textbooks. This late decision also led to making some mistakes in the textbooks which, Phillips assured, were minor ones. In addition, 79% of the teachers confirmed that the textbooks' language was at the right level for both them and their students. This statement contradicted the complaints published in newspapers at the beginning of the 2006 school year that the textbooks' language was difficult for students who would need extra English courses if they were to cope and succeed in studying the textbooks. Reasons for the change in teachers' attitudes can be related to the fact that the complaints were published immediately after the implementation of the textbooks, while this study was conducted six months after. Teachers were getting more used to teaching the textbooks and more aware of their level. Further results indicated that teachers enjoyed teaching the textbooks and thought that they were helping them improve their teaching techniques.

Finally, teachers' styles of using the UAE English Skills textbooks were also investigated. Most teachers' responses showed that they depend on the teacher's book to guide them on how to use the *UAE English Skills'* textbooks and believe that it is important to know the authors' approach and methodology through reading the introduction to the textbooks. In addition, a large number of teachers stated that they spend 80% to 100% of the class time teaching from the textbooks. However, many of

them pointed out that they modify the content of the textbooks to better suit their students. Moreover, results showed that more than half of the teachers (52%) thought that they needed more training in using the textbooks, but demanded that training focus more on practical implementation of the textbooks. This finding supported teachers' complaints that they needed more training to help them in teaching the textbooks.

Limitations of This Study and Directions for Further Research

The generalizability of findings to all UAE public school teachers is limited because it might not represent the opinions and attitudes of all the English language teachers in the UAE government schools who taught the *UAE English Skills* textbooks in the 2006-2007 school year. The number of teachers involved was only 100, and they were all from the Fujairah Educational Zone. However, those teachers' opinions and evaluation of the textbooks gives us insight into how English teachers in the UAE are coping with the change in the curriculum and the adoption of the new series of textbooks. In order to obtain a more comprehensive understanding of teachers' attitudes and perception of the value of the *UAE English Skills* series, larger scale studies that would include different participants from different government schools in the UAE are needed. Also, similar studies that would include students in evaluating the textbooks and would explore their attitudes towards the change in the curriculum would be very valuable. It would be really interesting to look at the textbooks from the students' perspectives and investigate if they perceive the approach and presentation of the materials to be useful for their English language learning.

Another limitation is related to the survey and the teacher's textbook evaluation form. Even after editing the survey and the evaluation form, they still were rather lengthy and difficult to administer. While a large number of teachers were very cooperative, others refused to take the time and answer all the questions included, stating that the survey was very long and that they did not have time to fill them out. However, the survey and the teacher's textbook evaluation form could be modified and used in future research by taking out some questions and adding more close-ended statements.

In addition, looking at the level of students' engagement in the activities of the textbooks and examining their progress as they go through the themes is something that

could not be accomplished in this study. Classroom observations, tests, and interviews with students and teachers are needed to achieve this purpose. Future studies that would focus on this aspect of using the textbook would be very valuable because they could look at real classroom problems while using the textbooks and find out what caused them and how they can be solved. Furthermore, this study evaluated the potential of *UAE English Skills* in assisting students to build up their language skills and develop their general language competence. However, conducting a study that would examine students' progress and the degree to which they actually benefited from the textbooks would help in determining if the textbooks match the students' abilities and do offer them the most appropriate assistance in developing their language. Also, the fact that the textbooks are relatively new to teachers makes it difficult to evaluate them. It would be interesting to find out how teachers evaluate the textbook after a few years of using them. It would also be extremely interesting to compare the results obtained from this study based on the teachers' gender, educational level, and nationality. This might provide valuable insight on teachers' attitudes towards the textbooks and their styles of using them based on their different backgrounds and experience.

Implications of the Study

Implications for Textbook Designers

Teachers are directly involved in students' learning, and their insights about the textbooks they teach are valuable. Therefore, textbook designers must take the time to listen to their complaints and the problems they face when dealing with some aspects of the textbook. The textbook publishing company has already created an online forum in the website accompanying the textbooks to link teachers using the textbooks from all over the UAE so that they could share teaching tips, lesson plans, and teacher-made tests. Teachers are encouraged, in the forum, to write about the difficulties they are facing with teaching the textbooks (e.g., how to cope with the length of the syllabus) and recommend ways in which they believe the textbooks can be improved. This is a very valuable resource for the authors of the textbooks because it contains feedback directly from the teachers as they are teaching *UAE English Skills*. The authors should take into

consideration the difficulties that teachers are facing while teaching the textbooks and the suggestions they make when preparing future editions of the textbooks.

Second, textbook designers should work with the Ministry of Education to develop teacher training programs that are based on some kind of needs analysis for teachers. A large number of teachers participating in this study expressed their frustration at the training programs they had attended, stating that most of them were merely lectures while what they really needed was training on the practical implementation of the textbooks. Conducting a needs analysis for teachers using the textbooks would give the textbook designers an idea of the problems teachers are facing and enable them to plan the training programs in a more appropriate way. Moreover, training programs should focus on raising teachers' awareness of the importance of the aural skills in building up students' English language competence. There should be training sessions and workshops where teachers can learn how to evaluate listening and speaking and develop their own rubrics to validate their evaluation.

Third, the findings of this study reveal that teachers perceive listening and speaking as the least important skills for their students' success in language learning. The reason for this is that the formal test format of the Ministry of Education focuses on the results of the written tests and neglects the evaluation of the aural skills. Therefore, textbook designers should work with the Ministry of Education to develop a new testing system that would match the approach of *UAE English Skills* and balance between the four language skills in the evaluation of students' language ability. This would perhaps change teachers' and students' views of the aural skills as the least important for their success in language learning.

Fourth, peer review and multiple drafts in writing should be introduced to students at grades 7 and 8. I believe that it is never too early to teach students that writing is a process and that they should revise what they write and get feedback from more than one person before producing the final draft of their work.

Fifth, some of the conversation models in the *UAE English Skills* textbooks proved to be artificial and to lack many features of authentic conversations like hesitation, false starts, overlapping, repetition, and pausing. This might confuse students when they finally use their English language whether with native or non-native speakers

because most of what they have been exposed to in school was neat and clean conversation models without any performance errors. Textbook designers should work on improving these models and bring them closer to real-world conversations.

Implications for Teachers

As Finney (2002) points out, textbooks might provide the framework, but learning ultimately depends on the interaction between teachers and learners in the classroom and on the teaching approaches, activities, materials, and procedures employed by the teacher. For that reason, I believe that this study provides implications for teachers. Teachers could play an active role in raising their students' awareness of the importance of the aural skills in building up their general English language competence. Skipping listening and speaking lessons and activities and placing more importance on reading, writing, grammar, and vocabulary might give students the wrong impression that aural skills are less important than other skills. Teachers should also evaluate their students on their listening and speaking abilities, even if the formal test format does not include listening and speaking sections.

Since textbook evaluation is an important part of teachers' professional development (Cunningsworth, 1995), teachers should make an effort to evaluate the textbooks they teach during and after the end of each school year. Textbook evaluation helps teachers gain insight into the nature of the textbooks they are using and depending on for language instruction. This will eventually lead them to make sound decisions about modifying the textbooks to better suit their students' needs. The findings of textbook evaluations could be shared with supervisors who can convey teachers' feedback to the Ministry of Education and textbook designers.

Implications for the Ministry of Education

The findings of this study suggest that some of the problems that teachers initially had with the *UAE English Skills* was the difference between the textbooks' level and the students' level. This would have been easily avoided if there was some kind of needs analysis that was conducted prior to the adoption of *UAE English Skills*. The Ministry of Education should also use needs analysis as a first step before making any changes in future editions of the textbooks.

Needs analysis identifies the gap in students' knowledge and paves the way for textbook designers to make the right decisions about the level of the textbooks based on the information gathered.

The inconsistency between the formal test format of the Ministry of Education and the kind of assessment and testing the textbook suggested and provided was another problem that this study revealed. The Ministry of Education should realize that changing one aspect of the curriculum (the textbooks) is not enough and that reviewing and improving other aspects, such as the assessment and testing system, is essential to guarantee the success of the curriculum and the achievement of the Ministry's goals. One way to do this is to provide teachers with guidelines and rubrics to assist them in evaluating the aural skills of their students. Stating, in the marking scheme, that speaking and listening should be assigned 30 marks of the total grade is not enough. There should be detailed specifications for the evaluation of listening and speaking with samples of questions that could be included in the tests.

Final Thought

This study has attempted to determine the overall pedagogical value of the *UAE English Skills* series of textbooks and their suitability to the UAE context. It presented insights into the change that happened in the curriculum and led to the adoption of this series of textbooks, and highlighted teachers' attitudes and perception of the value of *UAE English Skills*. This study was conducted six months after the complaints of teachers and supervisors were published in newspapers, and it was interesting to note how teachers' attitudes and opinions have positively changed as they got more used to the textbooks and attended more training sessions and workshops. I think that one of the important contributions of the results of this study is offering some answers to teachers' questions about the approach and content of the *UAE English Skills* textbooks and providing the textbook designers with feedback from teachers currently using the textbooks. This feedback could be very valuable for modifications made to the future editions of the *UAE English Skills* textbooks.

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Group One Participants' Schools

School Name	Gender	Number of teachers
Fujairah School for Basic Education	Females	5
Um Al Alaa For Basic Education	Females	5
Um Al Mumneen Secondary School	Females	3
Ohalaa School For Basic Education	Females	2
Juwaireya Bint Al Hareth School For Basic Education	Females	2
Murbah School For Basic and Secondary Education	Females	6
Dibba Al Fujairah Secondary School	Females	6
Al Tuwayyain School For Basic and Secondary Education	Females	6
Al Seeji School For Basic and Secondary Education	Females	5
Safeyya Bint Huyai For Basic Education	Females	4
Zubaida Bint Jaafar School For Basic Education	Females	3
Abu Jandal School For Basic Education	Males	4
Saif Al Dawla School For Basic Education	Males	5
Mohammad Bin Hamad Al Sharqi Secondary School	Males	6
Zaid Bin Al Khattab School For Basic Education	Males	4
Saif Bin Hamad Al Sharqi Secondary School	Males	6
Abu Tammam School For Basic and Secondary Education	Males	6
Anas Bin Al Nudhar School For Basic and Secondary Education	Males	6
Al Bidya School For Basic Education	Males	3
Dhadna School For Basic Education	Males	3
Al Qiaan School For Basic Education	Males	4
Saad Bin Abi Waqqas School For Basic Education	Males	3
Al Esteqlaal School For Basic and Secondary Education	Males	3
Total		100

Teachers' Questionnaire

Please answer all of the following questions:

A: General Information / Background:

1. Gender:

☐ Male   ☐ Female

2. Nationality:

☐ UAE National   ☐ Other: …………………..

3. Highest grade or level of education completed:

☐ Bachelor   ☐ Diploma   ☐ Masters   ☐Other (please specify) ………

4. How many years have you been teaching English?

☐ Less than 2 years   ☐ 2 – 5 years   ☐ more than 5 years

5. Which grade(s) are you teaching?

☐ 7   ☐ 8   ☐ 10

6. How many hours do you spend in the classroom per week?

☐ 12   ☐ 18   ☐ 24

B: Information about the teacher's book:

1. Do you use the *UAE English Skills* teacher's book?
☐ Yes   ☐ No
2. If you have answered with yes, how often do you use it?

☐ I totally depend on it and closely follow its directions.
☐ I read the lesson tips and directions, and sometimes plan my lesson based on them.
☐ I refer to it from time to time when I find difficulty in teaching an activity.
☐ I rarely follow the teacher's book, but I like to read it to get an idea of how to teach the lesson.
☐ Other, ……………………………………………………………………………………

3. Did you read the introduction in the teacher's book?
☐ Yes   ☐ No

4. Do you think it's important to read the introduction?

☐ Yes   ☐ No
Why or why not?

 ----

5. How often do you refer to the teacher's book to get answers for the activities in the

textbook?

☐ Always   ☐ Sometimes   ☐ Never

C: Using the textbook:

1. How comfortable are you teaching *UAE English Skills?*
☐ Very comfortable
☐ Quite comfortable
☐ Somewhat comfortable
☐ Not too comfortable
☐ Not comfortable at all

2. How much classroom time (0-100%) do you devote to teaching from the textbook?--%

3. Have you tried to modify the textbook you're using?
☐ Yes   ☐ No

If the answer is Yes, please explain the reason of modification
:……………………………………..……………………………………………………………

4. If you answered with yes, please tick the modifications you made (tick all that apply):

☐   Using the overhead projector more in the classroom.
☐   Simplifying the content of the textbook
☐   Having more quizzes and regular tests
☐   Providing summaries of important materials
☐   Reducing the amount of required readings
☐   Skipping listening and speaking lessons
☐   Giving extra tutorials
☐   Providing more revision sheets
☐   Other, please specify: _____

5. What section(s) of the textbook do you like teaching most? (tick all that apply)

☐ Speaking
☐ Listening
☐ Reading
☐ Writing
☐ Grammar

- Please explain why:

----

6. What section(s) of the textbook did you notice your students enjoying the most? (tick all that apply)
☐ Speaking
☐ Listening
☐ Reading
☐ Writing
☐ Grammar

7. What specific section(s) of the textbook did you find most necessary for your students' success in the term exams? (tick all that apply)
☐ Speaking
☐ Listening
☐ Reading
☐ Writing
☐ Grammar

8. What section(s) of the textbook did you find least necessary for your students' success in the term exams? (tick all that apply)
☐ Speaking
☐ Listening
☐ Reading
☐ Writing
☐ Grammar

9. Did you attend training sessions or workshops to help you use the textbook?
☐ Yes   ☐ No

10. After using the textbook, do you think you need more training and preparation to help you deal with teaching the textbook?
☐ Yes   ☐ No

Please explain why or why not:

----

11. Please mark the extent to which you agree or disagree with each of the following

statements:

   a. This textbook has given me the opportunity to work with colleagues teaching other subjects in my school.
   ☐ Strongly disagree   ☐ Disagree   ☐ Agree   ☐ Strongly Agree   ☐ Not sure

b.   This textbook has led me to make changes in my teaching.
☐ Strongly disagree   ☐ Disagree   ☐ Agree   ☐ Strongly Agree   ☐ Not sure

c.   The textbook's English is somehow difficult for me.
☐ Strongly disagree   ☐ Disagree   ☐ Agree   ☐ Strongly Agree   ☐ Not sure

d.   I enjoy teaching this textbook.
☐ Strongly disagree   ☐ Disagree   ☐ Agree   ☐ Strongly Agree   ☐ Not sure

e.   This textbook contains interesting topics.
☐ Strongly disagree   ☐ Disagree   ☐ Agree   ☐ Strongly Agree   ☐ Not sure

f.   I have learned a lot of new English from this textbook.
☐ Strongly disagree   ☐ Disagree   ☐ Agree   ☐ Strongly Agree   ☐ Not sure

g.   The time allotted for covering all the units of the textbook is sufficient.
☐ Strongly disagree   ☐ Disagree   ☐ Agree   ☐ Strongly Agree   ☐ Not sure

h.   The textbooks need stories and poems in addition to the academic texts available
     in them.
☐ Strongly disagree   ☐ Disagree   ☐ Agree   ☐ Strongly Agree   ☐ Not sure

i.   Teacher-based instruction is required for students' full comprehension of the
     content of this textbook.
☐ Strongly disagree   ☐ Disagree   ☐ Agree   ☐ Strongly Agree   ☐ Not sure

j.   The website provided with the textbook, and the ready-made lesson plans are
     very useful.
☐ Strongly disagree   ☐ Disagree   ☐ Agree   ☐ Strongly Agree   ☐ Not sure

k.   My teaching has improved as a result of using this textbook.
☐ Strongly disagree   ☐ Disagree   ☐ Agree   ☐ Strongly Agree   ☐ Not sure

C: Additional information:

If I would like more information from you, would you be prepared to be interviewed?

☐ Yes   ☐ No

If so, please give your:

Name: _____

Email or phone number: _____

Thank you for your assistance

Appendix B2:

Teachers' Textbook Evaluation Form

Choose the answer that best expresses your opinion for each item:

Criteria	Highly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Highly Agree
A. Practical Considerations:				
1. A teacher's guide, workbook, and audio-tapes accompany the textbook.				
2. The authors' views on language and methodology are comparable to mine.				
3. Teacher's edition is comprehensive, organized, and easy to use.				
B. Layout and Design:				
4. The textbook is organized effectively.				
5. The layout and design is appropriate and clear.				
6. An adequate vocabulary list or glossary is included.				
7. The textbook includes a detailed overview of the functions, structures, and vocabulary that will be taught in each unit.				
8. Adequate review sections and exercises are included.				
9. An adequate set of evaluation quizzes or testing suggestions is included.				
10. The teacher's book contains guidance about how the textbook can be used to the greatest advantage.				
11. The material's objectives are obvious to both the teacher and the student.				
C. Activities:				
12. The textbook provides a balance of activities. (There is an even distribution of free vs. controlled exercises and tasks that focus on both fluent and accurate production).				
13. The activities encourage sufficient communicative and meaningful practice.				

Criteria	Highly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Highly Agree
14. The activities incorporate individual, pair, and group work.				
15. The grammar points and vocabulary items are introduced in motivating and realistic contexts.				
16. The activities allow students to personalize their response and provide their own meaning.				
17. The textbook's activities can be modified or supplemented easily.				
D. Skills:				
18. The materials include and focus on the skills that my students need to practice.				
19. The materials provide an appropriate balance of the four language skills.				
20. The textbook pays attention to sub-skills (listening for gist, note-taking, skimming for information).				
21. The textbook highlights and practices natural pronunciation.				
22. The practice of individual skills is integrated into the practice of other skills.				
E. Language Type:				
23. The language used in the textbook is authentic (like real life English).				
24. The language used is at the right level for me and my students' current English ability.				
25. The progression of grammar points and vocabulary items is appropriate.				
26. The grammar points are presented with brief and easy examples and explanations.				
27. The language functions exemplify English that I and my students will be likely to use.				
28. The language represents a diverse range of English usages and accents.				

Criteria	Highly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Highly Agree
F. Content:				
29. The subject and content of the textbook is relevant to my students' needs as English language learners.				
30. The subject and content of the textbook is generally realistic.				
31. The subject and content of the textbook is interesting, challenging, and motivating.				
32. There is sufficient variety in the subject and content of the textbook.				
33. The materials are not culturally biased and they do not portray any negative stereotypes.				
G. Overall:				
1. The textbook is appropriate for the language-learning aims of my students.				
2. The textbook is suitable for medium-large number of students in classes of government schools.				
3. The textbook raises my students' interest in further English language study.				
4. I would choose to teach this textbook again.				

- Adapted from (Cunningsworth, 1995; McGrath, 2002; Richards, 2001; Sheldon, 1988).

Appendix C1:

Results from the Teachers' Questionnaires

1. Teachers' answers to section B in the questionnaire. (N=100).

Question	Answers	Frequency
1. Do you use the UAE English Skills teacher's book?	Yes	100
	No	0
2. If you have answered with yes, how often do you use it?	- I totally depend on it and closely follow its directions.	22
	- I read the lesson tips and directions, and sometimes plan my lessons based on them.	47
	- I refer to it from time to time when I find difficulty in teaching an activity.	26
	-I rarely follow the teacher's book, but I like to read it to get an idea of how to teach the lesson.	5
3. Did you read the introduction in the teacher's book?	Yes	86
	No	14
4. Do you think it's important to read the introduction?	Yes	94
	No	6
5. How often do you refer to the teacher's book to get answers for the activities in the textbook?	Always	23
	Sometimes	76
	Never	1

2. Teachers' answers to question C 1 in the questionnaire:

Question	Answer	Frequency
How comfortable are you teaching the *UAE English Skills*?	Very comfortable	25
	Quite comfortable	47
	Somewhat comfortable	18
	Not too comfortable	5
	Not comfortable at all	5

3. Teachers' answers to close-ended statements (N=100):

No.	Statement	SD	D	A	SA	NS
a	This textbook has given me the opportunity to work with colleagues teaching other subjects in my school.	1%	17%	58%	12%	12%
b	This textbook has led me to make changes in my teaching	2%	2%	56%	34%	6%
c	The textbook's English is somehow difficult for me.	36%	50%	11%	1%	2%
d	I enjoy teaching this textbook.	1%	3%	55%	37%	4%
e	This textbook contains interesting topics.		5%	56%	39%	
f	I have learned a lot of new English from this textbook.	5%	14%	58%	18%	5%
g	The time allotted for covering all the units of the textbook is sufficient.	21%	51%	22%	4%	2%
h	The textbooks need stories and poems in addition to the academic texts available in them.	10%	27%	40%	16%	7%
i	Teacher-based instruction is required for students' full comprehension of the content of this textbook.		12%	63%	21%	4%
j	The website provided with the textbook, and the ready-made lesson plans are very useful.	7%	14%	53%	9%	17%
k	My teaching has improved as a result of using this textbook.	6%	12%	65%	9%	8%

Appendix C2:

Results from the Teachers' Textbook Evaluation Form

(N=100)

Criteria	Highly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Highly Agree
A. <u>Practical Considerations:</u> 1. A teacher's guide, workbook, and audio-tapes accompany the textbook.		2%	56%	42%
2. The authors' views on language and methodology are comparable to mine.	1%	23%	62%	14%
3. Teacher's edition is comprehensive, organized, and easy to use.	2%	11%	58%	29%
B. <u>**Layout and Design:**</u> 4. The textbook is organized effectively.		9%	65%	26%
5. The layout and design is appropriate and clear.		11%	67%	22%
6. An adequate vocabulary list or glossary is included.	6%	17%	55%	22%
7. The textbook includes a detailed overview of the functions, structures, and vocabulary that will be taught in each unit.	1%	32%	52%	15%
8. Adequate review sections and exercises are included.	3%	26%	62%	9%
9. An adequate set of evaluation quizzes or testing suggestions is included.	3%	40%	48%	9%
10. The teacher's book contains guidance about how the textbook can be used to the greatest advantage.	1%	9%	66%	24%
11. The material's objectives are obvious to both the teacher and the student.	1%	23%	64%	12%
C. <u>Activities:</u> 12. The textbook provides a balance of activities. (There is an even distribution of free vs. controlled exercises and tasks that focus on both fluent and accurate production).	1%	15%	70%	14%
13. The activities encourage sufficient communicative and meaningful practice.		15%	61%	24%

Criteria	Highly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Highly Agree
14. The activities incorporate individual, pair, and group work.		5%	68%	27%
15. The grammar points and vocabulary items are introduced in motivating and realistic contexts.	1%	20%	71%	8%
16. The activities allow students to personalize their response and provide their own meaning.		18%	70%	12%
17. The textbook's activities can be modified or supplemented easily.	3%	13%	62%	22%
D. Skills: 18. The materials include and focus on the skills that my students need to practice.	1%	10%	65%	24%
19. The materials provide an appropriate balance of the four language skills.	2%	5%	52%	41%
20. The textbook pays attention to sub-skills (listening for gist, note-taking, skimming for information).		6%	53%	41%
21. The textbook highlights and practices natural pronunciation.	1%	7%	53%	39%
22. The practice of individual skills is integrated into the practice of other skills.		7%	78%	15%
E. Language Type: 23. The language used in the textbook is authentic (like real life English).		13%	58%	29%
24. The language used is at the right level for me and my students' current English ability.	6%	15%	68%	11%
25. The progression of grammar points and vocabulary items is appropriate.		31%	56%	13%
26. The grammar points are presented with brief and easy examples and explanations.	1%	23%	55%	21%
27. The language functions exemplify English that I and my students will be likely to use.	2%	23%	66%	9%
28. The language represents a diverse range of English usages and accents.	1%	12%	74%	13%

Criteria	Highly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Highly Agree
F. Content:				
29. The subject and content of the textbook is relevant to my students' needs as English language learners.	3%	19%	68%	10%
30. The subject and content of the textbook is generally realistic.		12%	67%	21%
31. The subject and content of the textbook is interesting, challenging, and motivating.	1%	13%	65%	21%
32. There is sufficient variety in the subject and content of the textbook.		9%	69%	22%
33. The materials are not culturally biased and they do not portray any negative stereotypes.	5%	26%	57%	12%
G. Overall:				
34. The textbook is appropriate for the language-learning aims of my students.	1%	8%	77%	14%
35. The textbook is suitable for medium-large number of students in classes of government schools.	1%	31%	61%	7%
36. The textbook raises my students' interest in further English language study.		22%	63%	15%
37. I would choose to teach this textbook again.	2%	9%	61%	28%

In-depth Evaluation Form *

Design and Methodology
- What are the components which make up the total course package?
- In general, what does each of the components offer?
- What are the stated aims of the course package?
- What indications of the aims and objectives are there in the content page?
- Does the material discuss and identify areas of student needs?
- If so, is this awareness reflected in the content and approach of the textbook?
- Are visuals used as an integral part of teaching material or are they essentially decorative?
- Are there reference sections? If so, are there pointers to them in the main text? Are they well integrated?
- Is there an index of language items?
- Is there a list of new vocabulary? If so, does it show where each word is first introduced?
- Is the material suitable for use in a self-study mode? Does it have a key to exercises?
- Is there a structured sequencing of the content in the textbooks based on complexity, learnability, usefulness, etc?

Activities
- Is the textbook sensitive to different learning styles and can it accommodate them?
- Does the material provide additional material for independent study based on material already taught, e.g. a workbook, students' cassettes for home study, additional reading material?
- Is the syllabus of the textbook primarily communicative (e.g. by using communicative activities, functions, etc as its primary units)?
- If communicative activities are used as learning material, are they real, in terms of the real world, or realistic, i.e. communicative in the classroom situation only?
- Does the textbook recognize the unique function of the teacher in certain aspects of teaching, such as guiding, monitoring and encouraging students, explaining difficulties, responding to questions?
- Does the textbook offer alternative or ways of extending learning activities?
- Are students encouraged to take some degree of responsibility for their learning?
- Are learners encouraged to use language creatively?
- What is the attitude towards learner errors?
- What is the attitude towards the use of students' mother tongue?

Skills
- Does the skill work progress in terms of complexity and difficulty?
- Does the textbook use authentic material at an appropriate level?
- If a semi-authentic material is used, is it representative of authentic discourse?
- If non-authentic material is used, is it nevertheless a good model for learners to follow?

- *Listening*
- What kind of listening material is contained in the course?
- Are there specific listening passages?
- If so, what kinds of activities are based on them?
- Is the listening material set in a meaningful context?
- What is the recorded material on audio-cassette like in terms of sound quality, speed of delivery, accent, and authenticity?
- *Speaking*
- What kind of material for speaking is contained in the course?
- Are there any specific strategies for conversation or other spoken activities?
- Is any practice material included to help learners to cope with unpredictability in spoken discourse?
- *Reading*
- Is there a focus on the development of reading skills and strategies?
- Is the reading material linked to other skills work?
- Is there emphasis on reading for pleasure and for intellectual satisfaction?
- How many reading texts are there, and how frequently do they occur?
- How long are the texts? Do they encourage intensive/extensive reading?
- How authentic are the texts?
- What text types (genres) are used? Are they appropriate?
- Are the texts complete or gapped?
- Does the material help comprehension by, for example:
    o   Setting the scene
    o   Providing background information
    o   Giving pre-reading questions?
- What kind of comprehension questions are asked:
    o   Literal (surface) questions
    o   Discourse-processing questions
    o   Inference questions?
- To what extent does the material involve the learner's knowledge system?
- *Writing*
- How does the material handle controlled writing, guided writing, and free or semi-free writing?
- Is paragraphing taught adequately?
- Is there emphasis on the style of written English?
- Is attention given to the language resources specific to the written form, such as punctuation, spelling, layout, etc?
- Are learners encouraged to review and edit their written work?
- Is a readership identified for writing activities?

Language Type
- *Grammar*
- What grammar items are included? Do they correspond to students' language needs?
- Are they presented in small enough units for easy learning?
- Is there an emphasis on language use (meaning)?

- Are the newly introduced items related to and contrasted with items already familiar to the learners?
- Where one grammatical form has more than one meaning, are all relevant meanings taught (not necessarily together)?
  Vocabulary
- Is vocabulary-learning material included in its own right? If so, how prominent is it? Is it central to the course or peripheral?
- Is there any principled basis for selection of vocabulary?
- Is there any distinction between active and passive vocabulary, or classroom vocabulary?
- Does the material enable students to expand their own vocabularies independently by helping them to develop their own learning strategies?
- Is new vocabulary recycled adequately?

Subject and Content
- Are real topics included in the textbook? If so, how varied are they?
- Will the textbook contribute to expanding learners' awareness and enriching their experience?
- Are the topics sophisticated enough in content for the learners, but at the right level linguistically?
- Do they actually do what they set out to do? If informative, do they inform, if humorous, do they amuse, if controversial, do they challenge, etc?
- At school level, do they link in with other subjects (e.g. history, geography, science)?
- Are the social and cultural contexts in the textbook comprehensible to the learners?
- Are both sexes given equal prominence in all aspects of the textbook?
- Are social relationships portrayed realistically?

*Adapted from Cunningsworth (1995)

Appendix E1:

Samples of Conversations from the *UAE English Skills*

Sample 1

Tapescript

Presenter:	**Speaking 2**
	B 1 Look at the conversation and listen.
Boy 1:	When do you usually wake up?
Boy 2:	At half past six.
Boy 1:	Do you get up immediately?
Boy 2:	No. I get up at about quarter to seven.
Boy 1:	What do you usually have for breakfast?
Boy 2:	I always have coffee and two pieces of toast.
Boy 1:	How do you get to school?
Boy 2:	Sometimes I walk and sometimes I go by car.
Boy 1:	What time do you have lunch?
Boy 2:	At quarter past one.
Boy 1:	Do you ever sleep in the afternoon?
Boy 2:	No, I don't. I never sleep in the afternoon.

Sample 2

Tapescript

Presenter:	**Speaking 1**
	C 1 Listen.
Man 1:	How do you spend your free time?
Man 2:	Listening to music.
Man 1:	Anything else?
Man 2:	Watching television, reading.
Man 1:	Do you like playing sports?
Man 2:	No, I don't. I hate playing sports.
Man 1:	What about watching?
Man 2:	Well, I like watching tennis and basketball. What about you?

Sample 3

Tapescript

Presenter:	**B 1 Listen.**
Voice 1:	When were you born?
Voice 2:	In 1976.
Voice 1:	So you are 29?
Voice 2:	No, I'm not. I'm 30.
Voice 1:	Are you married?
Voice 2:	Yes, I am.
Voice 1:	When did you get married?
Voice 2:	Oh, a long time ago. 1997.
Voice 1:	Have you got any children?
Voice 2:	Yes, I have. Three. Two boys and a girl.
Voice 1:	What does your father do?
Voice 2:	He's dead, actually.
Voice 1:	Oh, I'm sorry.
Voice 2:	Thank you.
Voice 1:	When did he die?
Voice 2:	In 2004.

Sample 4

Tapescript

Presenter:	**Speaking**
	D 1 Listen.
Tutor:	Hello. How are you?
Esteban:	I'm fine, thanks.
Tutor:	Are you a student?
Esteban:	Yes, I am.
Tutor:	Are you English?
Esteban:	No, I'm not. I'm Spanish.
Tutor:	Where are you from?
Esteban:	I'm from Madrid.
Tutor:	What's your name?
Esteban:	My name's Esteban. Esteban Cortes.
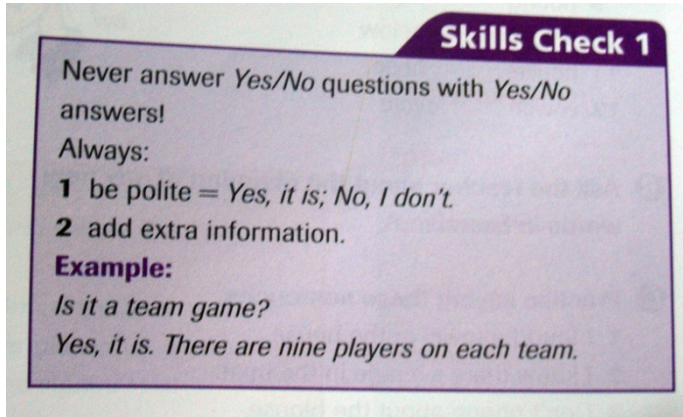
By Permission of Terry Phillips.

Appendix E2:

Samples of Speaking Strategies and Tasks from the *UAE English Skills* Textbooks.

Sample 1

Skills Check 1

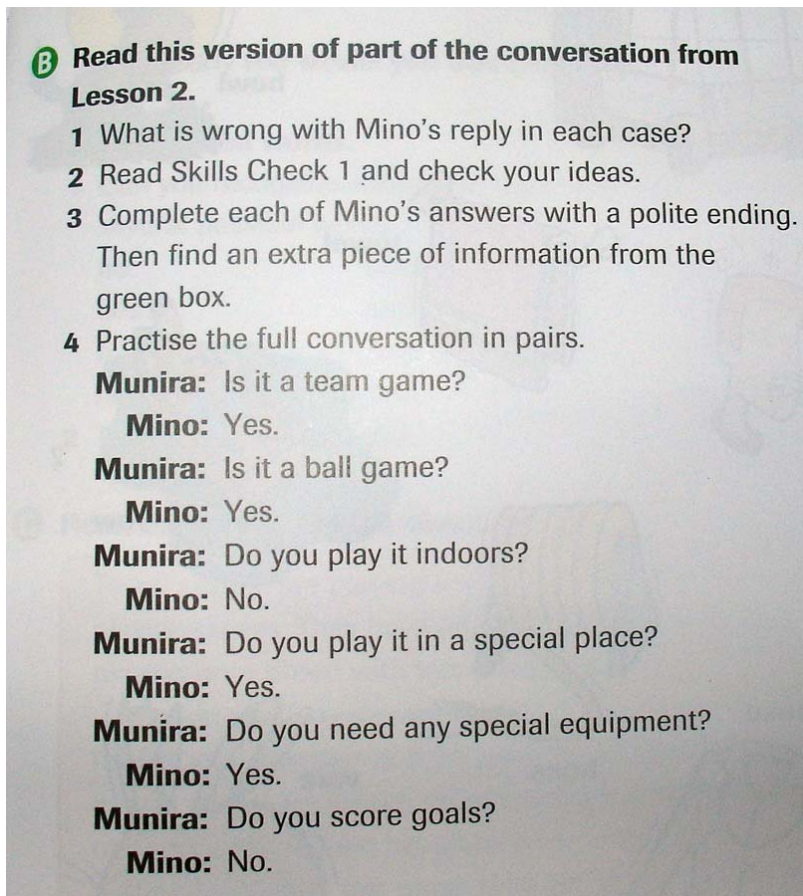Never answer *Yes/No* questions with *Yes/No* answers!
Always:
1 be polite = *Yes, it is; No, I don't.*
2 add extra information.
Example:
Is it a team game?
Yes, it is. There are nine players on each team.

Sample 2

Ⓑ **Read this version of part of the conversation from Lesson 2.**
1 What is wrong with Mino's reply in each case?
2 Read Skills Check 1 and check your ideas.
3 Complete each of Mino's answers with a polite ending. Then find an extra piece of information from the green box.
4 Practise the full conversation in pairs.

Munira: Is it a team game?
Mino: Yes.
Munira: Is it a ball game?
Mino: Yes.
Munira: Do you play it indoors?
Mino: No.
Munira: Do you play it in a special place?
Mino: Yes.
Munira: Do you need any special equipment?
Mino: Yes.
Munira: Do you score goals?
Mino: No.

By Permission of Terry Phillips.

An Excerpt of a Grammar Activity from the Grade 8 *UAE English Skills* Textbook

8	In Geography last lesson, we learnt *that* Canberra is the capital of Australia.	*learn* + *that* + complete sentence = fact
9	Write a summary of the *important points* after the lesson.	adjective + noun
10	Do you know the population *of China*?	*a/the* + noun + *of* + noun structure
11	She is *Japanese*.	revision
12	We have three lessons *each* day.	revision
13	Work *starts* at 7.30 a.m.	revision
14	*Are there any* rivers in your country?	revision

Appendix F1:

Samples of Tests from the Test Booklet

Sample 1

① **Read and write.**

Look at Figure 1.

1 Read the first paragraph. Label the figure with words from the paragraph.

2 Read the second paragraph. Draw lines from the person to the retina.

3 Read the third paragraph. Do the experiment. What happens?

_____ **(11 marks)**

_____

4 Read the fourth paragraph. How does the brain help us see?
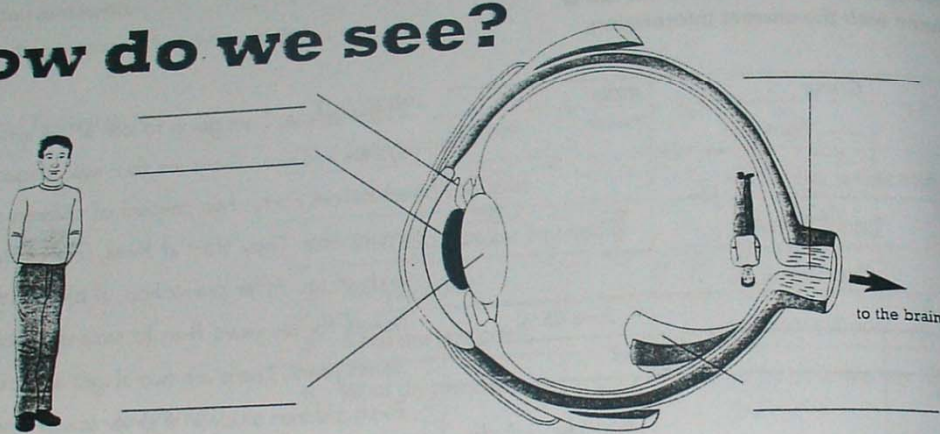
a) _____

b) _____ **(6 marks)**

How do we see?

Figure 1: How the eye sees a person

Light comes from everything around us. It goes into the eye through the pupil. The pupil is the black spot in the centre of the eye. The light passes through the lens. The lens focuses the light into a picture on the retina. The retina is at the back of the eye. The picture goes to the brain through the optic nerve.

But there is something strange about the picture on the retina. Imagine we are looking at a person. Light from the feet passes through the lens and goes to the top of the retina. Light from the head passes through the lens and goes to the bottom of the retina. So the picture of the person is upside down.

There is another strange thing about human eyes. We have two eyes. Each eye sees a slightly different picture. Try this experiment. Look at the person in Figure 1. Close your left eye. Now close your right eye. Repeat. What happens?

The retina sends information to the brain. It sends an upside-down picture from the left eye and another upside-down picture from the right eye. But we don't see two upside-down people. Why? Because the brain turns the two pictures into one picture and it turns the picture the right way up.

Sample 2

Ⓓ Write each fraction as a percentage and a decimal.

Example:

fraction	percentage	decimal
½	50%	0.5
¼		
⅓		
⅕		
⅒		

(8 marks)

Write the missing preposition or – in each phrase.

Sample 3

Ⓐ Name the weather conditions.

Example:

1   _rain_   4   _____

2   _____   5   _____

3   _____   6   _____

(5 marks)

Ⓑ Make the superlative form of each adjective.

Example:

high   _the highest_   4 low   _____   8 good   _____

1 dry   _____   5 sunny   _____   9 bad   _____

2 foggy   _____   6 wet   _____   10 far   _____

3 hot   _____   7 windy   _____

(10 marks)

Ⓒ Complete each sentence with

By Permission of Terry Phillips.

Samples from the Formal Test

Sample 1

Reading Passage 2

❖ **Read the Following Text:**

A school report is a good thing because **parents** should know how their children are doing. If a child is doing badly, parents and teachers can help him or her. The schools, together with the homes, provide the basic learning experience for her or him. The report gives a clear idea about the pupil's work. It shows the signs of problems that are affecting the pupils. If a pupil is good, parents and teachers can **encourage** him or her to excel. If they are weak, they make them work hard to get better.

A) Choose the correct answer:

1. *The main idea of the passage is:* (1)
   a. The problems of childhood.   b. The weak learning experiences.
   c. The importance of school reports.   d. The bad parents and teachers.

2. *Who can help school children in their studies?* (1)
    a. Doctors   b. Parents and teachers   c. engineers   d. pupils

3. *A school report gives a ……………. idea about the pupil's work.* (1)
   a. Clear   b. sweet   c. light   d. problems

4. *Parents and teachers can help ………….. pupils work hard to get better.* (1)
   a. good   b. weak   c. short   d. wild

5. *What does the word* **parents** *mean?* (1)
   a. Grandfather   b. uncle   c. aunt   d. father and mother

Sample 2

<u>Vocabulary</u>

A) Choose the correct answer:

1- *In ------------------ yesterday, we learnt about the Five Pillars of Islam.*

a. History   b. Religious Studies   c. IT   d. Geography

2- *If you don't know the word, look it up in the ----------------------.*

a. Dictionary   b. primary   c. secondary   d. learn

3- *At the age of 6 students go to ------------------------------school.*

a. secondary   b. primary   c. college   d. university

4- *After leaving school 90% of students go to --------------------------*

a. secondary   b. primary   c. dictionary   d. university

5- *How do you ------------------------------------ juice?*   **j – u – i – c- e.**

a. spell   b. learn   c. teach   d. explain

6- *We learnt about triangles in -------------------------*

a. History   b. Arabic   c. Maths   d. English

7- *Miss Fatma Shaheen is our ------------------------- teacher.*

a. Sport   b. Science   c. IT   d. university

8- *Umm Al Mumneen is a ----------------------- school.*

a. secondary   b. primary   c. college   d. university

9- We learnt how to draw maps in --------------------

a. History   b. Religious Studies   c. IT   d. Geography

10- We take ----------------- classes in the computer lab.

a. History   b. Religious Studies   c. IT   d. Geography

The Marking Scheme for Grades 7 and 8

Marking Scheme for Grades 7 & 8*
Academic Year 2006 – 2007/One Session Exam – Two Hours

Oral Test	**30 marks**
Listening	15 marks
Speaking	15 marks
Written Test	**70 marks**
I. Passage 1 (80 – 100 words) **(1) Types of questions**	**10 marks**
A. Completion of a table/diagram/columns/graph /timeline 6 missing items (6x1)	6 marks
B. 2 T/F items (2x1)	2 marks
C. Completing statements - MC items/ 4 options (2x1)	2 marks
II. Passage 2 (120 - 150 words) **(2) Types of questions**	**10 marks**
A) 1 main idea/whole text (gist) MC 4 options	1 mark
B) 3 specific information – MC 4 options	3 marks
C) 2 lexical items - underlined words in the passage. MC 4 options	2 marks
D)2 WH questions with MC answers 4 options (2x2)	4 marks
III. Vocabulary – **Types of questions**	**15 marks**
A) 10 MC items 4 options (10x1)	10 marks
B) Classifying information/completing phrases – 5 items. (5x1)	5 marks
IV. Grammar – **Types of questions**	**20 marks**
A.15 MC items 4 options (15x1)	15 marks

B. Reordering jumbled words to make meaningful sentence patterns (5x1)	5 marks
V. Writing – (The 3 sets A-C are COMPULSORY)	**15 marks**
A) Word level: Adding the missing letters: vowels, consonants or clusters. (4 x1/2) *B) Sentence level*: Writing 3 meaningful sentences (Thematically-related) (3x1) *C) Paragraph level* : A choice of only one the of following: Writing a paragraph of a bout 80-100 words, using the notes provided. *OR* - Writing a parallel paragraph	2 marks 3 marks 10 marks
Total	**100 Marks**

* 1. Passage I(none-prose e.g. a sequence of events/ advertisements/ brochures, history of development of things,   tables, charts, etc) .
 2. Passage II (descriptive text).

VITA

Hessa Al Falasi was born on the 17th of November, 1980, in Fujairah, UAE. She is an English teacher at Fujairah Primary School for Girls. She started her teaching career in September, 2004. She has a B.A. in English Language and Literature from The United Arab Emirates University, UAE. She is a member of TESOL Arabia and the Teachers' Association in Fujairah. She was a presenter in a panel about English language assessment in the Gulf at the AUS 1st TESOL Symposium in April, 2006. She also prepared and presented workshops for English language teachers in Fujairah, including workshops about action research and learners' autonomy. Her publications include an article, "Changing Seasons, Changing Cultures", in TESOL Arabia's *Perspectives*, and a paper, "Just Say Thank You: A Study of Compliment Responses," in the *Linguistic Journal*.