

## Evaluating ELT Textbook in Bangladesh: The Case of *English for Today* (Classes Nine-Ten)

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### ARTICLE INFO

#### Article history

Received: December 27, 2020

Accepted: January 11, 2021

Published: February 28, 2021

Volume: 12 Issue: 1

Advance access: February 2021

Conflicts of interest: None

Funding: None

#### Key words:

*English for Today (Eft)*,

The Checklist Method,

External and Internal Criteria,

National Curriculum and Textbook Board (NCTB),

National Education Policy (NEP),

National Curriculum (NC),

Textbook Evaluation

### ABSTRACT

The paper evaluates the ELT textbook *English for Today* (Classes Nine-Ten) which is used as a dominant instructional material in secondary level schools and madrasahs in Bangladesh. The National Curriculum and Textbook Board (NCTB) of Bangladesh published the revised edition of the textbook series *English for Today* in the academic year 2013 incorporating the guidelines proposed in National Education Policy (NEP, 2010) and National Curriculum (NC, 2012). Ever since the introduction of the ELT textbook series, systematic evaluations to examine their pedagogical usefulness and constraints have been found inadequate. The purpose of the study is, therefore, to identify the strengths and weaknesses of the textbook which will help the teachers do maximum application of its strengths in the classroom, and make sensible decisions about the weaknesses. This study followed the 'whilst-use' evaluation type, and adopted mainly the checklist method. The checklist was designed drawing on suitable criteria from the popular checklist developed by McDonough, Shaw and Masuhara (2013). In addition, a short semi-structured interview was conducted with 10 secondary English teachers in order to explore how the teachers would perceive and evaluate the textbook. Though the evaluation identified the textbook's rewarding features, it also revealed a number of limitations which require sincere attention of the curriculum and materials developers. The study implies that the textbook requires both internal and external improvements in order to maximize the learning outcomes and meet the curriculum objectives. The paper also makes recommendations for the curriculum experts and textbook writers for consideration during future editions of the textbook.

### INTRODUCTION

The National Curriculum (henceforth, NC, 2012) which was developed in the light of the 10<sup>th</sup> National Education Policy (henceforth, NEP, 2010) brought about significant changes in the major components of the secondary and higher secondary curriculums in Bangladesh. The NC (2012) had incorporated opinions and recommendations of eminent educationists and relevant stakeholders following a number of seminars and workshops. Later, subject-based curriculums were developed in consultation with National Curriculum Co-ordination Committee (NCCC). The curriculums explicitly stated the aims and objectives of different courses of study at different levels, formulated principles of testing and assessment, and proposed guidelines for materials developers. The NCTB revised the existing textbook series of *English for Today* accommodating the recommendations stated in the curriculum documents. In the context of Bangladesh, textbooks constitute the core instructional material, and teachers, almost invariably, are dependent on them. Since "no textbook or set of materials is likely to be perfect" (McDonough, Shaw & Masuhara, p. 52), evaluation

is possibly the only means to determine the suitability of the textbook by identifying its commendable features, and the areas that need to be improved. Therefore, the objective of this study is to identify the strengths and weaknesses of the textbook. Based on this objective, this study examines a) the teaching and learning contexts; b) the organization and appropriateness of the contents; c) the text's socio-cultural responsiveness; d) the distribution of activities around the basic language skills; and e) the underlying teaching approach and assessment viability. In order to situate the present study in a broader setting, a brief discussion on the secondary level teaching and learning context is provided below.

Absence of a definite language policy even after decades of Bangladesh's independence gives scope for varied opinions to emerge with regard to the status of English as second language (SL) or foreign language (FL). Though Crystal (1997) aligns Bangladesh with countries where English is a second language (L2), the status of English in Bangladesh clearly fits in with the definition provided by Richards and Schmidt (2010) in that English is neither a language for communication in Bangladesh nor is it used for classroom instruction

in the mainstream educational institutes. Therefore, English still remains a foreign language (FL) in Bangladesh, and English is learnt with the aim and objectives appropriate for the learners in the EFL milieu of Bangladesh.

As stated in *English for Today*, the secondary education aims at preparing its learners for entry to higher education through exploring latent potentials. The textbooks have been developed as per the guidelines of NC (2012) the contents of which are rooted in the “humanistic values of Bengali tradition and culture and spirit of Liberation War 1971” (Preface, *English for Today*). Furthermore, the NC (2012) explicitly mentions the objectives for learning English some of which include: a) acquiring competence in all four language skills i.e., LSRW; b) using the competence for effective communication in real life situations at pre-intermediate level; c) acquiring necessary grammar competence; d) developing creativity and critical thinking through English language ; e) becoming independent learners of English by using reference skills; f) using language skills for utilizing information technology; g) being skilled human resources by using English language skills (NCTB, 2012, p.74). The textbook also reflects the curriculum objectives as it considers English as an international language for communicating locally and globally and expects the learners would attain competency in all four language skills” (Preface, *English for Today*). In addition the textbook emphasizes the importance of English as a powerful tool for pursuing higher education, using technology and maintain communications. The textbook series have been developed to attain competency in all four language skills and the contents and illustrations are developed to suit the target learners’ ability i.e., age and cognitive level.

According to the education structure in Bangladesh, the secondary level generally includes classes from six to ten which requires five years of uninterrupted classroom instructions. Students are promoted to class six, i.e., the first rung of the level, only after completion of the primary level which also comprises five years of schooling. If the linguistic ability of the secondary level students is measured on the criteria set by the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR, 2009), it may be compared to A2 i.e., way stage (elementary) level. This means that the students are expected to understand basic information about persons, family, shopping, and to communicate in simple direct exchange of information on common issues. Similarly, the NC (2012) states a number of language functions that the learners are expected to master. They include: (a) describing people; (b) following directions and give instructions; (c) narrating incidents logically; (d) exchanging personal information; (e) participating in conversation; (f) telling stories; (g) surfing the net; (h) listening to the radio and television for specific information; (i) reading and writing formal /informal letters, CVs and emails; and (j) reading maps, charts and graphs (NCTB, 2012, p.76).

Secondary English teachers have scope for taking INSET courses as there are a number of government training institutes such as Primary Training Institutes (PTIs) and Teacher Training Colleges (TTCs) and non-government projects, for instance, English Language Teaching Improvement

Project (ELTIP), Secondary Education Quality and Access Enhancement Project (SEQAEP), Teaching Quality Improvement in Secondary Education Project (TQI-SEP). However, the training sessions could not substantially change the classroom practices so far as CLT is concerned (Karim & Mohamed, 2019). Though it has been nearly 20 years since the introduction of CLT in Bangladesh, a vast majority of teachers still stick to traditional lecture-based approach to teach English with focus on language forms and training has little effect in classroom practices (Uddin, 2020).

It is to be noted that in the context of Bangladesh, there is little scope for ‘pre-use’ evaluation which is generally carried out to select textbooks before the launch of the programme. In Bangladesh, the Ministry of Education (MoE) in collaboration NCTB publishes the textbooks which are subsequently passed on to the students and teachers with no scope for change from the user end. The ‘post-use’ evaluation is also not possible as the textbooks once introduced continue to be used for several years, and it is not definitely known when they will cease to continue. For instance, the secondary English textbooks have been developed twice since the introduction of CLT in the 90s. This indicates that the textbooks being used now will continue for more years through modifications until a curriculum renewal takes place. In this context, the paper attempts to explore the following research questions: a) What are the strengths and limitations of the textbook? b) How do the practicing language teachers perceive the suitability of the textbook?

## LITERATURE REVIEW

Textbooks are defined as “a source in achieving aims and objectives that have already been set in terms of learner needs” (Cunningsworth, 1995, p. 7). According to Cunningsworth (1995), the textbooks have multiple purposes to serve. For instance, they serve as a) a resource for presenting materials (spoken and written); b) a source of activities for learner practice and communicative interaction; c) a reference for learners on grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation; d) a source of stimulation and ideas for classroom language activities; e) a syllabus ; f) a resource for self-directed learning; g) a support for less experienced teachers who have yet to gain confidence. Cunningsworth, however, cautions that the textbook is to be “at service of teachers and learners but not to be their master” (p.7). By stating this, the author indicates the probable influence of the textbook on the teachers, and the consequence of which might be “tyrannical”.

Usefulness of textbook-based teaching is better felt from the statement made by Callison (2003) that “No other institutional technology has had more influence on teaching over the past 100 years than the textbook” (p. 31). On the other hand, Powell and Anderson (2002) opine that since the textbooks play the principal role in the lesson planning and classroom practices, they encourage teacher-based learning. Though arguments for and against textbook-based teaching abounds in relevant literature (Grant, 1987; Hutchinson & Torres, 1994), textbooks enjoy a predominant role in Bangladeshi classrooms due to the absence of reliable supplementary materials.

Evaluation of textbook is important mainly because as Cunningsworth (1995) maintains, it helps the teachers to move beyond impressionistic assessments and further helps the teachers to acquire accurate, useful, systematic and contextual insight into the overall nature of textbook materials. Moreover, increasing quantity of EFL textbooks production every year also makes evaluation necessary as Brumfit (1979) comments “masses of rubbish is skillfully marketed” (cited in McGrath, 2002, p.12). Moreover, through evaluation, as Littlejohn (1998) observes, textbooks can be examined to understand whether appropriate methodology and content have been developed considering the particular learning context.

The present evaluation conforms to what Tomlinson (2003) terms the “whilst-use” evaluation which “involves measuring the value of materials whilst using them or whilst observing them being use [which] can be more objective and reliable.” (Tomlinson, 2003, p.24). It is to be noted that in the context of Bangladesh, there is little scope for “pre-use” evaluation which is generally carried out to select textbooks before the launch of the programme. In Bangladesh, the Ministry of Education (MoE) in collaboration NCTB publishes the textbooks which are subsequently passed on to the students and teachers with no scope for change from the user end. The “post-use” evaluation is also not possible as the textbooks once introduced continue to be used for several years, and it is not definitely known when they will cease to continue. For instance, the secondary English textbooks have been developed twice since the introduction of CLT in the 90s. This indicates that the textbooks being used now will continue for several more years until a curriculum renewal takes place.

## METHOD

The study adopts the qualitative methods of data collection using mainly two tools: the checklist and interviews. The findings of the checklist and the interviews were analyzed qualitatively.

### Evaluation Framework: Rationale and Construction of the Checklist

The checklist was used for a few practical advantages. McGrath (2002), for instance, states advantages of using the checklist method. First, it is ‘systematic’, because it considers all the important elements required for intended information. Second, it is ‘cost effective’, as it allows the researcher to gather plenty of information in short time. Third, it is ‘convenient’ because it allows for the researcher to put all the information in convenient format so that comparative analysis can be done among different materials types. Finally, it is ‘explicit’, because it provides the researcher with patterns and categories which are used for developing a common basis for making decisions. The checklist was constructed following a comprehensive evaluation framework shown in Table 1.

As the table shows, level one aims to make contextual analysis which includes three contextual features: (a) aims

**Table 1.** Two-level evaluation framework

Level two	Evaluation		
	External criteria	Internal criteria	
Level one	Context analysis		
	Aims and objectives	The learner factors	The teacher factors

and objectives; (b) the learner factors; and (c) the teacher factors. Each of these features focuses on a number of relevant issues to establish the context in which the textbook is used. Level two, on the other hand, is based on the evaluation types provided by McDonough, Shaw and Mosahara (2013) which comprises a number of external and internal criteria of the textbook. The external criteria include factual aspects of the book; for example, the title, names of the authors, editors, publishers, the makeup of the course package, physical characteristics, visuals, organization, topic and subject contents. The internal criteria, conversely, involve the presentation of skills, vocabulary and grammar, principles of CLT, and assessment.

### Teacher Interviews

Ten secondary English teachers each having more than ten years of teaching experience selected conveniently from 10 secondary institutions in Chittagong city of Bangladesh were tele-interviewed. They were mainly asked about the strengths and limitations of the textbook. Since the interview was semi-structured, the interviewees were given a few prompts or categories so that they could comment coherently and comprehensively. The interviews were conducted in Bangla which helped the teachers speak comprehensively and coherently.

## FINDINGS & DISCUSSION

### External Criteria

The textbook under evaluation is written by five authors: Raihana Shams, Md. Zulfeqar Haider, Goutam Roy, Surajit Roy Majumder, Md Abdur Razzaque and Naina Shahzadi, and edited by MS Hoque. The course package includes only the textbook with no supplementary materials i.e., workbook, CDs. However, NCTB in conjunction with Bangladesh Rural Advancement Committee (BRAC) developed e-materials on the textbook. The physical details of the textbook are shown in Table 2:

The covers of the book, though printed in colours, are not strongly bound, and the spine is mostly uneven. The illustrations i.e., cartoons, photographs, graphics, though contextualized, do not always seem to stimulate learner curiosity and creativity because the visuals are in black and white colors which sometimes look hazy. But, some illustrations convey important message to help learners understand the importance of the topic. For instance, Unit Five discusses the issue of climate change, and makes use of different illustrations that present the devastating consequences of climate change realistically and motivates the learners to know more about the topic.

**Table 2.** Physical features of *English for Today* (Classes Nine-Ten)

Categories	Description
First publication	2012
Cover colour	Four•colour
Inside colour	Black and White
Type of paper	Newsprint
No. of pages	203
No. of units	14
No. of lessons <sup>1</sup>	73
Binding type & quality	Thread binding and moderate

The progression of the units and lessons of the book takes the learners from a more familiar zone to a less familiar one which is a good way to ease the cognitive load of the learners, and continue gradual development of learning of the content. But, when it comes to vocabulary, selection does not follow any logical order in terms of frequency and range. More importantly, the book does not include any vocabulary list for difficult words or glossary which makes it difficult for learners' autonomous use. In addition, 'Contents' page only mentions the Units, it does not include lesson plan, grammar items, skill focus which are commonly noticed in good language textbook series. In addition, unlike many modern English texts available across the globe, this book does not guide its users as to how to use it, and does not state the aims and objectives of the activities and tasks included. The text, however, provides lesson-wise task specific instructions for learners. One major weakness of the textbook is that it does not have a key which may make the book inappropriate for learners' self-study.

The topics and subject contents are varied and interesting, and have real life implications. Notably, some of the units deal with recent issues like climate change, women empowerment, social media, and renewable energy. As the topics are varied, learners have scope to link those with other subjects, such as science, history, geography, literature. Inclusion of interesting stories based on recent issues gives evidence that the authors are well aware of the new trends in materials developments, and conscious about the cognitive and linguistic level of the target users.

Though the authors have not stated the principle adopted for selecting and grading the contents of the book, it has been observed that the book has followed functions-based approach while sequencing the topics which is evident in the 'learning outcomes' stated prior to each unit. Each unit focuses on several language functions which learners are expected to acquire after the unit is covered. For example, unit one and two focus on narrating incidents and events in a logical sequence, participating in discussions and conversations, reading maps, charts and graphs. On the other hand, units three and four emphasize answering questions, giving opinions, inferring meaning from context, asking and telling about problems, seeking and giving suggestions. It is evident that functions mentioned in a particular unit are more challenging than the preceding unit. It is to be mentioned that the

language functions the units focus on have close correspondence with those stated in NC (2012) for secondary English.

The text is responsive to the socio-cultural needs of the learners. The learners have enough scope to identify themselves with the socio-cultural issues and events portrayed in the book. In an attempt to broaden the learner faculty, the book includes personalities, places and events having local interest and global appeal. For example, Unit Three presents local and global events and festivals, Unit Six deals with historical and cultural heritage of our neighboring countries, and Unit Seven familiarizes learners with personalities who have significantly contributed to the arts and crafts, technology, and humanitarian works at home and abroad. Inclusion of graded literary pieces helps the learners to develop their imagination and provide pleasure of learning language through literature. Moreover, the representation of women is also found in the textbook. The book mentions humanitarian renderings of Mother Teresa in Unit Seven, and Pritilata Waddedar, a revolutionary who sacrificed her life in 1932 in order to thwart the British rule. Nevertheless, with regard to the book's responsiveness towards indigenous and minority groups of the country, no evidence of their socio-cultural representation is found, though specific directives about making the curriculum comprehensive and inclusive are provided in NEP, 2010 and NC, 2012.

Another important criterion investigated is the presence of any inter-textual linkage i.e., if the textbook has correspondence with the other used for the same classes at any semantic or syntactic level. It is found that the two textbooks, *English for Today* & *English Composition and Grammar*, do not maintain any link between them at any level mentioned above. The absence of correspondence makes the textbooks difficult for complementary use or learners' self-study.

## Internal Criteria

### Listening

*English for Today* has ten listening activities distributed in seven units. Unit One, Three, Four, Eight, and Thirteen have one listening activity each, but units Seven and Ten have three and two respectively. Different assessment techniques have been used in listening activities. For example, listening activities one through four and eight require the learners to select correct options from the MCQs. On the other hand, in listening texts five and six, learners have to supply appropriate information and words to fill in the gaps. Activity seven requires the learners to answer comprehension questions and complete a chart by providing correct information. Finally, listening texts nine and ten ask the learners to take notes from what they hear from the audio tape to fill in the grid.

Though the textbook claims to have given equal emphasis on basic language skills, listening skill seems to have received less attention in comparison to other skills. The students may not gain true outcomes of listening activities due to inaccessibility to multimedia support in many schools situated off the city. Moreover, listening activities do not focus on basic pronunciation practices on letters and sounds, words and utterances which are integral part of listening

components as per the curriculum document. Remarkably, Unit Fourteen, in its learning outcomes, states that learners would be able to “recognize and use English sounds, stress and intonation” (*English for Today*, p.174), but the Unit does not have any task or activity on listening. All the listening passages are contextualized conforming to the subject matter of the lesson, but there are no pre-listening tasks to prepare the learners before they get involved in the activity.

### **Speaking**

Varied speaking activities are included in every unit of the textbook. For instance, Unit One has mainly three different types of activities which include storytelling, pair discussion, and asking and answering questions. Unit Two has five types of activities: giving opinions, arguing on given topics, participating in peer and group discussion, talking about pictures, and asking and answering questions. Some of the tasks are persuasive, and motivating, for example, the one in Unit Four (p.52) where learners are instructed to discuss the question, “Why should we learn English?” and give their opinion to the whole class. The text also includes other activities, for instance, agreeing and disagreeing with an opinion, taking and giving interviews, role play (playing the role of the TV anchor and guest speakers, Unit Twelve). Instead of including more ‘pedagogic’ activities, the book could include more tasks on real language functions, such as booking bus tickets over the phone, making hotel room reservations, ordering food in the restaurant, opening bank accounts. Tasks built around language functions are important because they have more real life application and meet the learner needs outside the classroom.

It is to be noted that there is no evidence for pronunciation activities in the text though it is a prerequisite for better and intelligible speaking, and as Harmer (2001) opines, by learning pronunciation the learners do not only become aware of English sounds and sound features, but also become good speakers as they know where to stress and where not.

### **Reading**

Due to existing assessment policy, the text has emphasised reading and writing skills more than the other two skills. All the fourteen units of the textbook have 70 lessons of different length, and each lesson is based on a particular reading passage. The textbook does not state any principle as to how the passages have been organized. However, it is evident that the topics have been organized following a conceptual continuum from more familiar to less familiar areas of the learner. Hierarchy of thematic complexity can also be identified in the selection of topics. The first few units (1-5), for example, deal with relatively easy, common and less abstract issues, such as pastimes, events and festivals, and population boom than the units that follow. From Unit Six onwards, the topics are more challenging and include less familiar issues like climate change, dreams and renewable energy. The last Unit includes literary pieces that aim to give pleasure through instruction on universal values. The textbook has a wide variety of reading activities and tasks distributed across the text. The objective of the activities is mainly to measure the level of reading compre-

hension of learners through different information extracting tools i.e., comprehensive questions, MCQs, information-gap activities and opinion-sharing activities. Though the authors have developed most of the contents, some of the stories have been adopted and adapted from different genres, such as literature, travelogues, journal articles and news features.

### **Writing**

The textbook gives considerable emphasis on writing skills as it presents diverse types of writing activities which can be grouped under three categories: guided, free, and analytic. First activity in Unit One, for instance, requires the learners to write a paragraph on “How tolerant or intolerant you are towards your classmates” by giving examples in support of their claims. The second activity which falls in Unit Two is about analyzing a graph which shows the changing attitude to pastimes in a community. Then, the third activity focuses on writing an essay on “How you celebrated this year’s Independence Day at your school”.

Though the writing tasks mentioned above can be labeled as free writing activity, there is evidence of guided writing too. The activity in Unit Five, for example, is about writing a letter to the Editor of a newspaper expressing concern about growing deforestation which is followed by a few prompts to guide the learners to organize their thoughts. Moreover, Units Ten, Eleven and Fourteen present a variety of guided writing practices. For instance, in Unit Eleven, learners are given a listing activity where they have to list problems of load shedding following the comparison and contrast technique between the urban and rural areas.

The problem with the progression of writing tasks is that the book first engages learners with free-writing, and then, guided and semi-guided writing which is theoretically erratic. According to the continuum of writing tasks provided by Kern (2002), writing practice in EFL setting starts with controlled-composition activities, then, learners move to less-controlled activities. After that, learners are given guided tasks in controlled situations from where they proceed to do free-writing activities with growing confidence. In the case of the present textbook such sequence has not been properly maintained.

### **Vocabulary and grammar**

The authors have de-emphasized the vocabulary and grammar contents in the book. No unit and /or lesson is specifically designed for vocabulary learning, and no unit objectives mention about knowledge of grammar and vocabulary. Exclusion of grammar focus from the book can be justified on the ground that the learners at the secondary level study a separate book on grammar and composition. But, the absence of explicit vocabulary learning activity is not justifiable. Moreover, the distribution of lexical items—in terms of range, frequency and familiarity—across the text does not seem to have followed any hierarchy. For instance, the first lesson of the text starts with:

Long ago, a young man found life in the family in his village full of problems and sufferings. Quarrels, ill-feelings, jealousy, enmity- all were part of everyday

life there. So he left the house and went to a jungle to live by himself.

(*English for Today*, Classes Nine-Ten, p.2)

On the other hand, the following excerpt from the last Unit is as follows:

Rosamond, a little girl about seven years old, was walking with her mother in the streets of London. As she passed along she looked in at the windows of several shops, and saw a great variety of different sorts of things. She wanted to stop to look at them and buy them all, without knowing their uses or even without knowing their names.

(*English for Today*, Classes Nine-Ten, p.186)

In the two excerpts above, no remarkable difference in the level of syntactic and semantic complexity is noticed. However, the first excerpt has more abstract words, such as ill-feeling, jealousy, enmity than the second one which has more frequently used words, such as mother, streets, windows, shops.

### Teaching approach and communicativeness

If Howatt's (1984) view on the versions communicative language teaching (CLT) is considered, the textbook follows the *weak* version as the text's activities inspire the learners "to learn [English] to use" instead of "using to learn it" (p.279) which is evident in the objectives mentioned prior to each unit of the book. Contents for the book have been drawn from areas that are familiar to the learners who can associate what they read in the book with what they have already experienced or will experience in life. Activities are, therefore, contextualized.

The textbook has a wealth of skill-based activities which, if appropriately used in the classroom, will encourage interactive sessions through which communicative learning outcomes are hoped to be achieved. In addition, the revised textbook has a number of projects (Unit Four, Lesson 5); debate tasks (Unit Five, Lesson 1) which aim to offer the learners hands-on experience of working outside the classroom in the real world setting, and engage the learners in critical thinking as well as develop speaking skills. However, since most of the activities are more, to use Hyland's (2003) terms, 'pedagogic', than 'real word', there is scope for making them more suitable for learners' practical needs.

The evaluation shows that the authors have put in much effort to make the book communicative by including varied and interesting topics as well as realistic language tasks. Along with communicative activities the book offers enough scope for authentic interactional activities where learners pay attention to the contexts, and the roles people play in society. For instance, in the first unit learners are given real world tasks where learners are required to write about what they will do if they see open garbage on their way to school (Figure 1). Besides, pedagogical tasks are also found in the book. For example, in Unit One, students are asked to make a list of things they should not do at home, in school and society.

### Assessment

Exercises following the lessons in the book aim at measuring the learner understanding of the lesson content as well

Suppose this road is near your school. As students of this school, what responsibilities do you think you have to get rid of this nuisance? Make a list on how you will discharge the responsibilities?



Figure 1. A motivating language task  
English for Today (Classes Nine-Ten), P. 13

as gauging the level of learning outcomes predicted in the objectives preceding every unit. Exercises are up to the level of expected learner ability. i.e., they are neither difficult nor easy, but challenging considering their age, linguistic and cognitive maturity. The book, at the end, provides model questions for Paper One and Paper Two so that year-end achievement test formats match these model test papers.

Another area that demands notice is whether the textbook under evaluation can be used following the assessment criteria stated in Council of Europe (2009) for test development. It has been found that neither the textbook nor the NC (2012) makes any reference to Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR). The curriculum does not mention the language activities, language domains and competence levels of the secondary learners the way CEFR does.

### Teacher Interview

A short telephonic interview was taken from 10 English teachers about the strengths and weaknesses of the textbook. The interview gathered valuable comments which have been analysed into categories, and shown in Table 3:

The responses as shown above are varied as a wide range of issues emerged on both sides. Of 17 issues raised in 10 categories, the teachers point out 10 negative features whereas 8 points are positive. Some of the weak points concern the focus of skills which, according to the teachers, are not proportionately given to all the four skills. Second, with regard to physical features of the book, low paper quality and loose binding have been marked out as weaknesses. Other weaknesses identified include uninteresting tasks, less grammar tasks, absence of task/activity map, lack of variety in question types, absence of supplementary materials i.e., CDs, workbooks, teacher guides. On the other hand, the teachers have mentioned a few good features such as beautiful cover page, interesting topics, use of stimulating illustrations, and reflection of national culture and society. If we have a critical look into the issues raised by the teachers, it would be obvious that the strong points are more intrinsic and content based whereas the weak points are more extrinsic.

### CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS

The paper evaluated the textbook *English for Today* (Classes Nine-Ten) developed by NCTB in the light of NEP (2010)

**Table 3.** Strengths and limitations of *English for Today* as perceived by teachers

Categories	Strengths	Limitations
Physical aspects	Books look attractive	Paper quality is low Binding is loose
Approach	CLT approach followed	
Contents	Topics & themes are varied and interesting	
Organisation	Units and lessons are properly organised	
Tasks and activities		No task/activity map is provided Tasks are not interesting No variety in question types
Skill focused	R/W focused	Language skills are not equally focused Not enough pronunciation practices
Supplementary materials		No supplementary materials ( CD, TG, WB etc.) are supplied
Suitability for teaching and learning	Suitable for learning and teaching purposes	
Reflection of society & culture	Society and culture properly reflected	No lesson on moral issues
Grammar and vocabulary use		Less grammar exercises Vocabulary level is above the learner ability

which was launched for classroom use in the secondary level institutions. The evaluation attempted to investigate the usefulness of the textbook following a comprehensive checklist and a brief teacher interview. The textbook, as the evaluation shows, is enriched with commendable features though a number of external and internal limitations have been identified which require sincere attention from the authority concerned. The study offers the following suggestions so that they can be considered for future editions of the textbook to maximize the learning outcomes, and achieve the curriculum objectives:

- i. Making the textbook more user-friendly by incorporating (a) a comprehensive task/activity matrix with aims and objectives duly stated; (b) unit-wise glossary for difficult words; and (c) keys to tasks/ activities where possible and necessary.
- ii. Making the textbook more communicative by designing activities and tasks in functional formats based on real situations, such as booking bus tickets, making hotel room reservations, ordering food online, opening bank accounts, filling-in admission forms and the like.
- iii. Maintaining logical progression of contents and distributing vocabulary following a hierarchy in terms of range, frequency and familiarity.
- iv. Redesigning the syllabus to distribute proportionate skill-based contents.
- v. Establishing lexical and syntactic link between *English for Today* and *English Grammar and Composition* to provide scope for supplementary use.
- vi. Including pronunciation practices to make the learners aware of the basic English sounds and sound features to enable them to become intelligible speakers.
- vii. Consulting the CEFR prior to developing or revising the curriculum for selecting domains and competence levels of the learners and assessment procedures.

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## APPENDIX A

Evaluation checklist: *English for Today (Classes Nine-Ten)*

<b>A. External criteria</b>		
1	<i>Factual details</i>	Title: Author/s: Publisher: Components (TG/WB/Cassettes/video/CALL materials/Other): Colour No. of chapters/units/lessons/sections Total no. of pages Binding type & quality
2	<i>Visuals</i>	Visuals—if well produced, effective, creative and socially and culturally relevant
3	<i>Organization and accessibility</i>	Organization of units/lessons Availability of 'Book Map' or 'Table of Contents' to help learners to locate specific topic/page? Vocabulary development and distribution The text's suitability for self-study
4	<i>Topic and subject content</i>	Topics—variety, relevance, suitability for learners' age and cognitive level
5	<i>Selection and grading of content</i>	Nature of content selection: based on structure, functions, or situation? Basis for the sequencing of the content- based on complexity, learnability, or usefulness?
6	<i>Socio-cultural values</i>	Socio-cultural contexts in the textbook Representation of women Portrayal of social relationships Representation of minority/ethnic groups
7	<i>Linkage</i>	The text's link to other books in the series
<b>B. Internal Criteria</b>		
1	<i>Presentation of skills</i>	Type of listening passages and practices- dialogue, conversation?
	<i>Listening</i>	Type of activities -e.g., comprehensive questions, extracting specific information, etc. Audio/video recordings for listening tasks?
	<i>Speaking</i>	Degree of emphasis on spoken English in the textbook Type of tasks/activities for speaking are included in the textbook
	<i>Reading</i>	Type of reading passages- authentic or created? Appropriacy of subject matter- being interesting, challenging, topical, varied, culturally acceptable Types (genres) are used (literary, scientific, journalistic, travelogue etc.)?
	<i>Writing</i>	Type of writing activities included: controlled, guided, free writing? Progression and variety of tasks
2	<i>Grammar &amp; Vocabulary</i>	Treatment of grammar Specific unit/lesson focusing on learning vocabulary Principled basis for selection and distribution of vocabulary
3	<i>Teaching Approach and communicativeness</i>	The teaching approach followed in the book? Activity types: contextualized, pedagogical, realistic The textbook's claim to be communicative Presence of communicative activities, use of authentic materials and realistic tasks Type of communicative activities: real world (outside classroom application) or pedagogic (inside classroom situation only)?
4	<i>Test and assessment</i>	Units/lessons having adequate exercises through which learners can be measured Difficulty level of exercises Model question papers with the text

## APPENDIX B

## Teacher interview questions

- Would you please comment on some of the strengths of the textbook *English for Today (Classes Nine-Ten)*?
- Do you notice any limitations of the book or identify any area that can be improved to make the book more effective?