

Evaluating *Traveller* English Textbook Series From Saudi Secondary School EFL Teachers' Perspectives

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Abstract

The aim of this study is to evaluate the *Traveller* textbook series from teachers' perspectives. Areas of evaluation are the textbooks' activities, skills, and appropriateness. The study implemented a mixed-methods approach using two instruments: content analysis, and questionnaire. The data collection of the content is carried out by analyzing the content of the six textbooks, from *Traveller 1* to *Traveller 6*; the questionnaire themes were used for the content analysis. 94 teachers responded the questionnaire. The results show that textbook is effective according to the layout, accessibility, activities and skills but teachers hold mixed perspectives regarding its appropriateness. Moreover, results revealed that there might be an association between the teachers' attitudes and the teachers' training and class size.

Keywords: teachers' perceptions, textbook, Saudi EFL teachers, quantitative research, qualitative research

1. Introduction:

Although recent technological teaching materials have helped teachers to achieve their goals, textbooks are still the most common materials used by teachers around the world. In fact, textbooks are essential in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classrooms as they provide students with language skills as well as knowledge about English-speaking countries (Radic-Bojanic & Topalov, 2016). In Saudi Arabia, textbooks are considered to be the main teaching materials used in EFL classrooms (Al-Seghayer, 2017). Recently, textbooks have been commonly evaluated by materials researchers, as they cannot always be a perfect fit for a specific situation (McDonough, Shaw, and Masuhara, 2013). Therefore, textbooks should be evaluated for their use for specific classroom objectives and settings. Such materials should be efficient and meet the perspectives of the EFL teaching program.

The evaluation of textbooks is a professional and specialized process that generally follows criteria generated by researchers such as Tomlinson (2003); Litz (2005); Mukundan, Hajimohammadi, and Nimehchisalem (2011); and McDonough et al. (2013).

The current study will evaluate the secondary school English textbook series entitled *Traveller*, which was approved by the Ministry of Education in Saudi Arabia in (2011). This evaluation process will examine the layout & design, accessibility, activities, skills, and appropriateness of the textbook.

2. Aims of the Study

This study aims to evaluate the overall effectiveness of the secondary-level textbook series *Traveller* to identify their strengths and drawbacks by examining the layout & design, accessibility, activities, skills, and appropriateness of the textbook. Results will offer suggestions to teachers for enhancing and supplementing the textbooks. Also, suggestions and recommendations will be provided to policymakers, textbook designers, and researchers for the development and approval of English textbooks and for making decisions regarding the textbooks that are proper for Saudi students and EFL settings.

3. The Role of Textbooks in the EFL Classroom

A textbook is a book of which "the teacher and, usually, each student has a copy, and which is in principle to be followed systematically as the basis for a language course" (Ur, 1996, p. 183). Textbooks have played an essential role in the improvement and quality maintenance of educational outcomes in many countries (Oates,

2014). Richards (2014) indicated that textbooks provide a central core for language teaching programs, as they lay out the structure of the lessons that provides coherence to the whole course. Therefore, these textbooks guide EFL teachers to achieve the goals of the syllabus.

However, these textbooks could also be detrimental to students' language learning. Sometimes textbooks do not evoke authentic language learning. Learners might be exposed to texts and audios they might never encounter in real life. Alshumaimeri and Alzyadi (2015) asserted that learners should be exposed to authentic materials that enable them to use the target language for the communicative purposes they might encounter in daily life situations. Moreover, less experienced teachers might use the textbook as a frame of reference without considering individual students' needs (Radic-Bojanic & Topalov, 2016).

4. EFL Textbook Evaluation Factors

Evaluation in general "is the judgement of how suitable something is for a particular purpose" (Richards, 2014, p. 29). Materials evaluation is "a procedure that involves measuring the value of or the potential value of a set of learning materials, which involves making judgments about the effect of the materials on the people using them" (Tomlinson, 2003, p. 15). Due to the importance of textbook use in language learning classrooms, these textbooks should be carefully monitored and evaluated (Richards, 2014).

Mukundan et al. (2011) suggested an English language textbook evaluation checklist that included two aspects: general attributes and learning-teaching content. General attribute refers to syllabus and curriculum, methodology, suitability for learners, and physical aspects, whereas learning-teaching content refers to skills and activities.

The study aims to evaluate the *Traveller* textbook series, concentrating on the layout and design, accessibility, activities, skills, and appropriateness. Layout and design refer to the organization and presentation of the items and activities of the textbook (Litz, 2005). According to Sheldon (1988), textbooks are physical artefacts, and the designer should recognize that layout, design, printing quality, and visuals are necessary for a successful textbook. Regarding accessibility, textbooks are considered accessible if they include indices, lists of vocabulary, and headings that allow students to easily use the book for self-learning purposes (Sheldon, 1988). Additionally, this study will examine the skills and activities of the textbook series. The evaluation will concentrate on the four language skills (reading, writing, speaking, and listening) and the activities, which are the set of tasks that students are required to perform, as Oura stated: 'Activities specify what learners will actually perform with the input' (2001, p. 72).

Appropriateness could be accomplished if the textbooks are designed at the right level of maturity and language (Sheldon, 1988). Textbooks should match the students' language level, else students might be demotivated (Guariento & Morley, 2001). Cultural appropriateness is a subject of debate, as some researchers believe that textbooks should be culturally appropriate, while others hold the opposite belief. For example, McKay (2003) claimed that English textbooks should be culturally appropriate, as the English language is not specific to one culture. On the other hand, Tran (2010) thought that learning the culture of the second language is as important as learning the language itself.

As for evaluation types, Tomlinson (2003) proposed three types of materials evaluation: pre-use evaluation, whilst-use evaluation, and post-use evaluation. Pre-use evaluation involves predicting the values of the materials for their users; whilst-use evaluation is an evaluation of the book whilst being used; post-use evaluation assesses the real effects of the materials on the users after being used. The current study evaluates the textbook series whilst-using and post-using it as teachers are currently using the textbook and have used it for almost seven years. To give insight into recent methodologies and implications of textbook evaluation research, the next section will review number of studies relevant to EFL textbook evaluation.

5. Empirical Studies Relevant to EFL Textbook Evaluation

In the field of materials evaluation, several researchers have closely examined the effectiveness of certain textbooks (e.g., Al-Malki, 2014; Allehyani, Burnapp, & Wilson 2017; Madjdi & Rokhayani 2018). These studies were chosen for review because they either share the same textbook, similar contexts, or a similar research methodology with the current study.

In his master's project, Al-Malki (2014) investigated an EFL textbook titled *Flying High* used in Saudi secondary schools. The researcher used a questionnaire to explore the perceptions of 42 teachers regarding the quality of the textbook, preparation programs, teacher practices, and administrative support. He found that teachers' perceptions of *Flying High* were mixed and that there might be a relationship between teachers' perceptions of the textbook and their preparation, practices, and administrative support.

To perform an evaluative study, Madjdi and Rokhayani (2018) examined the 2015-English Textbook developed by the Ministry of Education of Indonesia. The researchers conducted a descriptive qualitative study analysing the content to investigate the integration of norms in reading passages. Findings revealed that along with scholars, teachers and parents, textbooks play an important role in exposing students to norms such as trust, discipline, respect and self-confidence.

Other studies, such as Tsagari & Sifakis (2014) employed a ‘mixed-methods approach’ for data collection. Tsagari and Sifakis (2014) used a mix of quantitative and qualitative instruments to evaluate an English course book used in Greece. They used questionnaires to elicit the perspectives of teachers regarding the effectiveness of the textbook; to add depth in their investigation, they interviewed the book’s authors. The researchers found a discrepancy between the teachers’ perspectives and the authors’ claims. They recommended teacher involvement in decision-making about language learning materials. Also, they recommended that teachers receive training programs to adapt and supplement their textbooks. Moreover, they suggested the involvement of course book designers in a continuous reflection process as they produce the materials.

Allehyani et al. (2017) analyzed two secondary school textbooks, *Traveller 5* and *English for Saudi Arabia*, to determine the extent of inner-circle culture use in Saudi secondary school textbooks. The researchers used two methods: analyzing the content and interviewing educational supervisors. They found that *Traveller 5* refers to multicultural topics and it emphasizes Communicative Language Competence, while the *English for Saudi Arabia* textbook, refers to the Saudi local culture and does not contain authentic materials. The authors recommended that Saudi textbooks should have a greater emphasis on authentic materials taken from English-speaking societies where learners will be exposed to communicative situations common in the daily lives of English language speakers.

Finally, by reviewing these empirical studies of textbook evaluation, the authors gleaned insights from the studies’ evaluation stages, types, tools, samples, findings, and objectives for evaluating the intended textbook series, *Traveller*.

6. Methodology

6.1 Research Questions

- 1) To what extent is *Traveller* textbook series effective according to layout & design and accessibility?
- 2) To what extent is *Traveller* textbook series effective according to activities and skills?
- 3) Is the *Traveller* textbook series appropriate for Saudi secondary school students?
- 4) What factors affect teachers’ perceptive evaluation of the *Traveller* textbook series?

6.2 The Context of the Study

The context of the study is secondary schools in Saudi Arabia. Saudi public schools introduced English in the 1950s, when it was the only foreign language being taught (Al-Shammari, 1984). In fact, English is still considered a foreign language in Saudi Arabia and remains the only foreign language taught in schools (Al-Seghayer, 2017)

6.3 The Textbook

The *Traveller* textbook series for Saudi Arabia was evaluated in this research by Saudi secondary school teachers. This textbook series was authored by H. Q. Mitchell and Marileni Malkogianni and published by MM Publications as a Pilot Edition in 2011 for the King Abdullah bin Abdul Aziz Public Education Development Project (Tatweer). The *Traveller* KSA edition (modified to be culturally appropriate to the Saudi context) consists of textbooks at six levels (*Traveller* 1–6) that take learners from the Beginner to the Advanced level.

6.4 Mixed-Method Research

To answer the research questions, the study involves a ‘mixed-methods approach’. A mixed-methods approach means “adopting a research strategy employing more than one type of research method” (Brannen, 2005, p. 4). This study was conducted using a mix of qualitative and quantitative methods that applied two data collection procedures: 1) content analysis, and 2) a questionnaire. The qualitative data came from the content analysis of the *Traveller* textbook series, and the quantitative data in this study were generated via a questionnaire.

6.4.1 Content Analysis

Content analysis was conducted on the textbooks of the *Traveller* series. In 2017-2018, the KSA edition of the textbooks contained four modules. The data collection of the content was carried out by analysing the content of

the six textbooks, from *Traveller 1* to *Traveller 6*. The questionnaire themes were used for the content analysis. The authors flipped through the textbooks to look for examples that would support the statements in the questionnaire.

6.4.2 Questionnaire

A 40-item survey questionnaire was developed based on the related literature—Dougill (1987), Sheldon (1988), Litz (2005), Mukundan et al. (2011), and McDonough et al. (2013). The questionnaire consisted of two main sections, background information and the textbook evaluation form. The background information section contained 11 questions (see Table 1). The textbook evaluation form included five aspects—layout and design (four items), accessibility (four items), appropriateness (five items), activities (four items), and skills (twelve items)—of the textbook. The questions were based on a five-point Likert scale, from ‘1: strongly disagree’ to ‘5: strongly agree’. The questionnaire was distributed using *Google Forms*, and 94 public secondary school teachers answered the questionnaire overall. The data were analyzed with the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS). For data analysis, the background information data were coded into numbers, for example, male = 1, female = 2.

6.5 Participants of the Study

One hundred twelve teachers responded to the questionnaire, but 18 participants were excluded as they responded that they had never experienced teaching any of the *Traveller* textbook series. Thus, a total of 94 participants took part in the questionnaire. Teachers were male and female, mostly from the central region of Saudi Arabia as *Traveller* series is mostly taught in the central region. The teachers’ background information is demonstrated in (Table 1).

Table 1. Questionnaire participants

Gender	Percent
Male	27.70%
Female	72.30%
Age	Percent
Under 25 years	1.1
25 -35 years	43.6
36 - 45 years	47.9
46 - 55 years	6.4
56+ years	1.1
Years of Experience	Percent
1-5 years	12.8
6 -10 years	35.1
11 - 15 Years	25.5
16 20 Years	16
20+ years	10.6
Saudi Region	Percent
Central Region	59.6
Western Region	21.3
Southern Region	9.6
Eastern Region	7.4
Northern Region	2.1
Qualification	Percent
Bachelors’ Degree	86.2
Masters’ Degree	13.8

In-service training	Percent
Never	23.4
1 - 3 sessions	41.5
4 - 6 sessions	17
6+ sessions	18.1

6.6 Validity and Reliability

Validity and reliability are the two most essential factors needing to be taken into consideration for research instruments. Validity refers to the degree to which an instrument measures what it is supposed to measure (Garrett, 1937). Validity of the instrument was measured by four colleagues (master's students) in the department of Curriculum and Instruction specializing in Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL). Also, the questionnaire was piloted with four public school teachers to measure validity and consistency.

Reliability refers to 'the consistencies of the data, scores or observations obtained using elicitation instruments, which can include a range of tools from standardised tests administered in educational settings to tasks completed by participants in a research study' (Chalhoub-Deville in Dörnyei, 2007: 50). In order to test the reliability of the questionnaire, Cronbach Alpha coefficients were calculated, yielding a value of 0.787 (see Table 2); this result is acceptable, as it is above 0.60 (Dörnyei, 2007).

Table 2. Questionnaire reliability statistics

Cronbach's Alpha	Number of Items
0.787	29

7. Findings

7.1 Content Analysis

The *Traveller* Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA) edition consists of six-level textbooks (Traveller 1–Traveller 6) that take learners from the Beginner to the Advanced level. From the authors' claims (as indicated in the blurb), the textbooks are supplemented with a workbook, a teachers' manual, a teachers' edition workbook, and digital materials, including a student's CD, class CD, test, model lessons, and interactive whiteboard materials. The contents of the students' books, including modules' topics, are demonstrated in Table 3.

Table 3. Content of the Traveller series of textbooks

Textbook	Contents
Traveller 1	<i>Traveller 1</i> contains four modules and a starter section at the beginning of the book titled 'Hello'. Modules' titles are: <i>Youth Culture</i> , <i>What an Experience</i> , <i>Going Places</i> , <i>Nowadays</i> . Each module consists of five lessons, a, b, c, d, e. Each lesson contains reading, grammar, vocabulary, listening, writing, speaking and intonation section. Each module contains a round-up and culture page at the end.
Traveller 2	<i>Traveller 2</i> contains four modules. Module titles are: <i>Help</i> , <i>Timeout</i> , <i>Good job</i> , <i>Diversity</i> . Each module consists of five lessons, a, b, c, d, e. Each lesson contains, reading, grammar, vocabulary, listening, writing, speaking, and intonation. Each module contains a round-up and culture page at the end.
Traveller 3	<i>Traveller 3</i> contains four modules. Module titles are: <i>Window on the world</i> , <i>Heroes</i> , <i>Work & Leisure</i> , <i>Planet Earth</i> . Each module consists of two lessons, a, b. Each lesson contains, reading, grammar, vocabulary, listening, writing, and speaking sections. Each module contains of a round up and culture page at the end.

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- Traveller 4** *Traveller 4* contains four modules titled: *That's Incredible, On the Move, Up-to-Date, Human Nature*. Each module consists of two lessons a, b. Each lesson contains, reading, grammar, vocabulary, listening, writing, and speaking sections. Each module contains a round-up and culture page at the end.
- Traveller 5** *Traveller 5* contains three modules titled: *All over the World, Beyond Limits, What the Future Holds*. Each module consists of two lessons 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6 (counted from module 1 to 3). Each unit contains, reading, grammar, vocabulary, listening, writing, speaking and examination practice sections. Each module contains a round-up at the end.
- Traveller 6** *Traveller 6* contains four modules titled: *Get the Message, Body and Mind, Getting Ahead, Around the Globe*. Each module consists of two lessons 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8 (counted from module 1 to 4). Each unit contains, reading, grammar, vocabulary, listening, writing, speaking and examination practice sections. Each module contains a round-up at the end.
-

The textbook's content analysis will be based on the same questionnaire's themes: layout and design, accessibility, appropriateness, activities, and skills (skills include reading, writing, listening, and speaking). The content analysis is based on the researchers' evaluation of the series. The researchers collected the data using paper and pen and flipping through the textbooks (*Traveller 1–Traveller 6*) to collect examples that would either support or contradict the statements on the questionnaire. Throughout the content analysis, the page number of the example is given after the title of the textbook (e.g., *Traveller 1: 20* means that the example is from *Traveller 1*, page 20).

Layout & Design

Accessibility

The *Traveller* series contains many factors that enhance accessibility. Each module has a different colour at the top of the pages, which makes going back to a specific module easier. The objectives of each module are clearly stated at the first page to facilitate monitoring the progress of the curriculum. As a warmup for the modules, the first page includes a number of pictures, and students are asked to flip through the module to find these pictures to get an overview of the main topics. Also, the sections headings of each lesson are written in larger and different fonts. For the purpose of self-study, all *Traveller* books include vocabulary lists and pages of grammar reference at the end of each book that include extra explanation of the grammatical rules presented in the lessons.

Appropriateness

Regarding appropriateness to students' interests, *Traveller* modules include many topics that would hold students' attention. For example, module 3 in *Traveller 2* is titled 'Good Job', and students are exposed to people doing different jobs; also, students are trained to write their CVs, which is proper for the 16- to 17-year-old students, as they are deciding their college majors. However, the textbooks include some topics that do not match students' interests, such as the writing section, where students are given a sample of a book review of a novel that was published in 1870 and are presented a mysterious sea creature (*Traveller 4: 64*).

The *Traveller* series follows the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR), which is divided into basic, intermediate, and advanced levels; basic is A1–A2, intermediate is B1–B2, and advanced is C1–C2. Following the CEFR, the *Traveller* series began from the basic level (A2) in *Traveller 1* to a level between intermediate and advanced (B2–C1) in *Traveller 6*. From the researcher's view, starting with the second basic level (A2) is proper, as Saudi students start secondary stage after having six years of English language learning in the intermediate and primary schools, but throughout the six years, students take only two sessions (45 minutes) a week in the three primary school years and four sessions a week in intermediate school.

For the purpose of cultural appropriateness, MM publications has developed KSA editions of its textbooks so that all topics and illustrations are culturally appropriate to the Saudi and Muslim context.

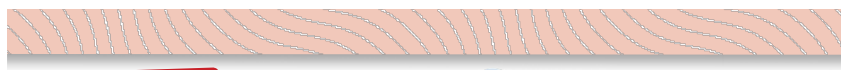
The *Traveller* series was piloted in a number of Saudi regions in 2011. The books contained seven modules, five compulsory and two optional. As claimed by the authors, the *Traveller* textbooks are designed to be taught in five classes a week in 60-minute sessions. However, the Saudi secondary schools assign English for four to five sessions of 45 minutes each per week. In the 2017–2018 edition, the length of the textbooks was modified to match the intended amount of contact time of Saudi secondary schools; the compulsory modules were reduced to four modules instead of seven, and the two optional modules were removed.

Activities

The *Traveller* textbooks (from 1 to 6) provide a balance of activities; each module includes reading, writing, speaking, listening, grammar, and vocabulary in balanced activities. The activities’ incorporation of individual, pair, and group work; throughout the textbooks, students are asked to work in groups or pairs, particularly in the speaking sections. Furthermore, the textbook’s activities encourage creative responses. To encourage creativity, some of the activities stimulate the students’ imagination in the writing and speaking tasks (e.g., students are asked to use the pictures in the books along with their imagination to tell a story to the rest of the class (*Traveller 3: 31*)). The activities are task-based, which requires interactive use of the new language, as they include discussions, pair conversations, problem-solving tasks, and role-plays. By practicing discussions and problem-solving tasks, students are also encouraged to practice meaningful communication that concentrates on fluency rather than accuracy.

Skills

a. Writing: There are two writing sections in each module of all *Traveller* textbooks, and most of the writing tasks are integrated with the speaking task, where students are asked to talk about a certain topic and then write about it. For example, students are asked to tell each other how they feel and ask for advice in the speaking section; then in the writing section, they are asked to write a short post of 80–100 words describing a problem they have and asking for advice (*Traveller 2: 11*). In another example, students are asked to use the ideas in the speaking activity to write their opinion about mobile phones (*Traveller 1: 65*).



4. WRITING AN ACCOUNT OF A TRUE EVENT

- A. Discuss.**
 • Have you ever done anything very embarrassing? • What was it?
- B. Read the account and answer the questions.**
- When and where did the event take place?
 - How did the writer feel during and at the end of his experience?
 - What is the purpose of each paragraph?
 - Why does the writer use Direct Speech?
 - Which tenses does the writer use?
 - Which linking words does the writer use and why?

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A DAY I'LL NEVER FORGET

Probably the most embarrassing thing I've ever done was two years ago. I was travelling by train, going from Paris to London with some friends from university.

There were many people on the train, so I had to wait for almost half an hour to get some coffee. As soon as I sat down with my coffee, I realised I needed to get something from my luggage. So, I said to my friends 'Nobody touch my coffee' and left. However, on my way back to my seat, I saw one of my friends sipping my coffee. I was furious! 'Hey, that's mine!' I shouted and grabbed the cup, which wasn't a good idea because I spilt the coffee all over him and even on a few other passengers. But the worst thing was that the person with the coffee wasn't my friend. It just looked like him from behind.

My friends, who were further up the train, were laughing their heads off. I immediately apologised to the people, but they were still pretty angry with me. I wanted the ground to swallow me up. I'll never forget that day.

C. Join the pairs of sentences using the linking words/phrases in the box. More than one answer may be correct.

- | | | | |
|------------|-------|--------|----|
| as soon as | when | before | as |
| because | while | but | so |

- I realised that Nasir was angry. I stopped laughing.

- Abdulrahman was running up the stairs. He fell and broke his leg.

- Bob took a taxi to work. He was late.

- They left the room. The baby started crying.

- I start work at 9:00. I always get up at 8:00.

- We had dinner. Then we went out.

WRITING TASK

D. Think about a funny, embarrassing or annoying experience that you have had and write about it. Your account should be between 100–120 words. Go to the Workbook, p. 12.



- When writing an account of a true event:
- use the first person (I/we).
 - divide your account into paragraphs.
 - try to make your writing flow by:
 - writing the events in chronological order: Use Past tenses (Past Simple and Past Progressive).
 - using linking words/phrases expressing time (when, while, as, as soon as, before, after, during, until, in the end, etc.), contrast (but, however), cause (because) or result (so, as a result).
 - try to make it interesting to the reader by using:
 - a variety of adjectives (surprised, furious, etc.).
 - adverbs/adverbial phrases (suddenly, fortunately, to my surprise, etc.).
 - idioms (I nearly tripped out of my skin! etc.).
 - direct speech, questions and exclamations.
 - a variety of structures (Comparisons, Relative Clauses, Passive Voice, etc.).

Moreover, the tasks promote creativity because most of the questions ask for students' ideas and opinions. For example, students are given a writing activity titled 'An Essay Expressing an Opinion' in which they are asked to present their ideas and arguments about living in a town or city (*Traveller 4: 32*).

b. Reading: Every module of the *Traveller* series includes three reading sections. From the authors' claims, some of the reading passages are magazine articles. The reading sections are contextualized with pictures and discussion questions where students can recall their prior information before reading the texts. For example, students are asked in the discussion section about the famous people they already know as good role models (*Traveller 1: 20*).

c. Speaking: Each module of the series includes three or four speaking sections. The speaking activities are developed to create meaningful communication by focusing on fluency rather than accuracy. Students are not given rules on how to produce a speech but rather asked to discuss issues freely in pairs or groups. The speaking sections include speaking activities with speech stations that are relevant to the students' background. For example, as a warmup activity, students were asked about kinds of extracurricular events their school has organized before talking about the pictures of extracurricular events (*Traveller 6: 14*; see Figure 3.).

Unit 1 speaking

1. WARM-UP

- What kind of extra-curricular events does your school/college organise?
- Have you ever participated in any of them?

writing, careers sports competitions
debating contests art exhibitions field trips

2. CHOOSING BETWEEN OPTIONS

Work in pairs. Student A, read the situation, look at the pictures and ask the questions. Student B, go to page 103, read the information and answer Student A's questions.

Situation:
I am the president of the Student Council. We have decided to organise an extra-curricular event: that will bring the students together. However, first we want to hear from other students like you about which option you think would be best.

First:
You should look at the pictures on the right and ask:
• What are the options?
• What are the advantages/disadvantages of each option?

Then:
When you have all the information you need, explain which activity you have chosen. Be ready to explain why you didn't choose the other option. Remember to use information you learn from asking questions to explain your final choice.

Finally:
After you have shared your decision, you will be asked more questions about the topic.

indoor outdoor submit raise money
weather conditions popular appeal to
(in)expensive refreshments

OPTION 1



OPTION 2




develop talent encourage creativity
cultivate cultural awareness expose to
broaden horizons acquire further knowledge

3. FURTHER DISCUSSION

Discuss the following questions. You can use some of the words/phrases in the box.

- Do you think that extra-curricular activities are important? Why / Why not?
- In your opinion, which extra-curricular activities are most interesting? Why?



d. Listening: Traveller textbooks include three or four listening sections in each module. The listening activity appears at the end of the lesson to ensure students' prior knowledge of new vocabulary. To test the authenticity of the listening materials, the researcher listened to the tracks for Traveller 1 and found that the audio does not represent what students might hear in real situations. Speakers do not interact naturally, as students might hear people speaking on TV or radio, but rather speak ideally (very politely) and in a slow tone. Also, most of these recordings include speakers using only British accents.

7.2 The Questionnaire

There were 94 participants in the questionnaire, 26 (27.7%) male and 68 (72.3%) female teachers, mostly from the central region of Saudi Arabia, as other regions use other textbooks. The majority of participants held bachelor's degrees. The questionnaire is divided into two sections: general information (e.g., the teacher's age,

years of experience, and training opportunities) and the overall perspectives of the textbooks, which consisted of the main themes of this evaluative study (layout, accessibility, appropriateness, skills, and activities).

Layout and Design

Table 4. Layout and design

Statement		SD	D	N	A	SA	M	SD
12. The textbook's layout is attractive	N	3	5	28	43	15	3.65	.92
	%	3.2	5.3	29.8	45.7	16.0		
13. It includes efficient use of text and visuals	N	4	5	29	47	9	3.55	.89
	%	4.3	5.3	30.9	50	9.6		
14. It includes only little illustrations and pictures.	N	8	40	22	21	3	3.55	.89
	%	8.5	42.6	23.4	22.3	3.2		
15. The printing quality is low.	N	27	35	15	12	5	2.28	1.16
	%	28.7	37.2	16	12.8	5.3		

Findings in Table 4 show that that teachers hold positive attitudes concerning the textbook's layout, as 43 teachers (45.7%) agreed and 15 teachers (16%) strongly agreed that the textbook's layout is attractive, while only 3 teachers (3.25%) strongly disagreed and 5 teachers (5.3%) disagreed. On Item 13, 47 (50%) of the teachers agreed and nine (9.6%) of the teachers strongly agreed that the textbook includes efficient use of texts and visuals, and 29 (30.9%) held neutral attitudes. 40 (42.6%) of the teachers disagreed and eight (8.5%) strongly disagreed that the textbook includes only few illustrations and pictures. On Item 15, 'The printing quality is low,' 27 (28.7%) of the teachers strongly disagreed and 35 (37.2%) disagreed.

Accessibility

Table 5. Accessibility

Statement		SD	D	N	A	SA	M	SD
16. The textbook is clearly organized.	N	5	11	31	36	11	3.39	1.0
	%	5.3	11.7	33	38.3	11.7		
17. The students can find their location in the textbook at any point.	N	5	18	30	35	6	3.2	1.0
	%	5.3	19.1	31.9	37.2	6.4		
18. It is difficult for students to use the textbook for self-study purposes.	N	7	29	25	26	7	2.9	1.0
	%	7.4	30.9	26.6	27.7	7.4		
19. The textbook includes indexes, vocabulary lists and section headings.	N	3	8	26	31	26	3.73	1.0
	%	3.2	8.5	27.7	33	27.7		

The figures in Table 5 reveal that the teachers perceive that the textbook is accessible, as 36 teachers (38.3%) agreed and 11 teachers (11.7%) strongly agreed that the textbook is clearly organized, while 11 teachers (11.7%) disagreed and 5 teachers (5.3) strongly disagreed. On Item 17, 'The students can find their location in the textbook at any point,' 30 teachers (31.9%) held neutral attitudes, 35 teachers (37.2%) agreed, and 6 teachers (6.4) strongly agreed. Teachers' attitudes toward the students' use of the textbook for self-study purposes were neutral, as 29 teachers (30.9%) teachers disagreed, 7 teachers (7.4%) strongly disagreed, 26 (27.7%) teachers agreed, and seven teachers strongly agreed that 'It is difficult for students to use the textbook for self-study purposes.' On Item 19, 'The textbook includes indices, vocabulary lists, and section headings,' 31 teachers (33%) agreed, 26 (27.7%) strongly agreed, and 26 held neutral attitudes.

Appropriateness

Table 6. Appropriateness

Statement		SD	D	N	A	SA	M	SD
20. It matches the level of students.	n	12	36	26	17	3.		1.0
	%	12.8	38.3	27.7	18.1	3.2	2.6	
21. It is culturally appropriate to the students.	n	7	16	31	35	5	3.15	1.0
	%	7.4	17	33	37.2	5.3		
22. It meets the needs of the students.	n	7	23	31	29	4	3	1.0
	%	7.4	24.5	33	30.9	4.3		
23. It is somewhat boring for students.	n	7	14	44	23	6	3.07	.97
	%	7.4	14.9	46.8	24.5	6.4		
24. The amount of the textbook matches the intended amount of contact time.	n	19	23	25	23	4	2.68	1.1
	%	20.2	24.5	26.6	24.5	4.3		

The findings in Table 6 reveal that half of the teachers (51.1%) disagreed or strongly disagreed that the textbook matches students' level, while 17 (18.1%) of the teachers agreed and three (3.2%) strongly agreed. Regarding cultural appropriateness, 35 teachers (37.2%) agreed and 5 teachers (5.3%) strongly agreed that the textbook is culturally appropriate to the students, while 16 (17%) disagreed, seven (7.4%) strongly disagreed, and 31 (33%) were neutral. On Item 22, 29 teachers (30.9%) agreed and 4 teachers (4.3%) strongly agreed that the textbook meets the needs of the students, while 23 (24.5%) of the teachers disagreed and 7 (7.4%) strongly disagreed. On Item 23, 44 (46.8%) of the teachers were neutral about the statement 'It is somewhat boring for students'; 23 (24.5%) agreed and 6 (6.4%) strongly agreed. 23 teachers (24.5%) agreed and 4 teachers (4.3%) teachers strongly agreed that the length of the textbook matches the intended amount of contact time, while 19 teachers (20.2%) disagreed and 23 teachers (24.5%) strongly disagreed.

Activities

Table 7. Activities

Statement		SD	D	N	A	SA	M	SD
25. The textbook provides a balance of activities.	n	6	24	23	35	6	3.11	1.0
	%	6.4	25.5	24.5	37.2	6.4		
26. The activities encourage communicative and meaningful practice.	n	5	9	24	49	7	3.46	.95
	%	5.3	9.6	25.5	52.1	7.4		
27. The activities incorporate individual, pair and group work.	n	5	10	29	40	10	3.42	.99
	%	5.3	10.6	30.9	42.6	10.6		
28. The activities discourage creative responses.	n	10	39	26	16	3	2.6	.99
	%	10.6	41.5	27.7	17	3.2		

Table 7 reveals that teachers are in favor of the textbook's activities. Teachers' responses show similar ranges for the options of agree, neutral, and disagree regarding the statement that the textbook provides a balance of activities. On Item 26, 49 teachers (52.1%) agreed, 7 teachers (7.5%) strongly agreed, 24 teachers (25.5%) were neutral, 9 teachers (9.6%) disagreed, and 5 teachers (5.3%) strongly disagreed that the activities encourage communicative and meaningful practice. Forty teachers (42.6%) agreed and 10 teachers (10.6%) strongly agreed with the statement, "The activities incorporate individual, pair, and group work," while 10 teachers (10.6%) disagreed and 5 teachers (5.3%) strongly disagreed. On Item 28, 39 (41.5%) of the teachers disagreed and 10 (10.6%) of the teachers strongly disagreed that the activities discourage creative responses.

Skills

Table 8. Reading

Statement		SD	D	N	A	SA	M	SD
29. The textbook encourages students to do extensive reading.	n	6	25	20	38	5	3.11	1.06
	%	6.4	26.6	21.3	40.4	5.3		
30. The reading selections are authentic (e.g., from newspapers) pieces of language.	n	1	7	33	49	4	3.5	0.744
	%	1.1	7.4	35.1	52.1	4.3		
31. There is only little variation of text types.	n	10	40	26	18	0	2.55	0.923
	%	10.6	42.6	27.7	19.1	0		

The findings in Table 8 show that 39 (40.4%) teachers agreed, 5 (5.3%) strongly agreed, 20 (21.3%) were neutral, 25 (26.6%) disagreed, and 6 (6.4%) strongly disagreed with the statement 'The textbook encourages students to do extensive reading.' On Item 30, more than half of the teachers agreed or strongly agreed (56.4%) that the reading selections are authentic pieces of language, while only 8 (8.5%) of the teachers disagreed or strongly disagreed. 40 teachers (42.6%) disagreed and 10 teachers (10.6%) strongly disagreed with the statement, 'There is only little variation of text types.'

Table 9. Writing

Statement		SD	D	N	A	SA	M	SD
32. The practice allows students to develop creative writing.	N	4	17	29	31	13	3.34	1.06
	%	4.3	18.1	30.9	33	13.8		
33. The practice is below students' language level.	N	26	36	14	17	1	2.26	1.08
	%	27.7	38.3	14.9	18.1	1.1		
34. The practice allows students to produce texts to meet real-world needs.	N	4	14	33	34	9	3.31	0.986
	%	4.3	14.9	35.1	36.2	9.6		

As Table 9 indicates, 31 teachers (31.8%) agreed, 13 (13.8%) strongly agreed, 29 (30.9%) were neutral, 17 (18.1%) disagreed, and four (4.3%) strongly disagreed that the practice in the reading sections allows students to develop creative writing. In item 33, 62 (66%) of the teachers disagree or strongly disagree with the statement 'The practice is below students' language level.' On Item 34, 34 teachers (36.2%) agreed, nine (9.6%) strongly agreed, 33 (35.1%) were neutral, 14 (14.9%) disagreed, and four (4.3%) strongly disagreed that the practice allows students to produce texts to meet real-world needs.

Table 10. Listening

Statement		SD	D	N	A	SA	M	SD
35. The listening material is contextualized by background information and pictures.	n	4	19	27	38	6	3.24	.99
	%	4.3	20.2	28.7	40.4	6.4		
36. The listening material is authentic, and it exposes students to a large range of accents and real voices.	n	4	9	22	44	15	3.6	1.00
	%	4.3	9.6	23.4	46.8	16		
37. It includes only limited activities that would facilitate comprehension.	n	3	32	32	22	5	2.93	.959
	%	3.2	34	34	23.4	5.3		

The figures in Table 10 show that 44 (46.8%) of the teachers agreed or strongly agreed that the listening material is contextualized by background information and pictures, while 23 (24.5%) disagreed or strongly disagreed, and

27 (28.7%) held neutral attitudes. Regarding listening authenticity, 59 (62.8%) teachers believed that the listening material is authentic and exposes students to a large range of accents and real voices. On Item (37), 22 teachers (23.4%) agreed, 5 (5.3%) strongly agreed, 32 (34%) were neutral, 32 (34%) disagreed, and 3 (3.2%) strongly disagreed with the statement, 'It includes only limited activities that would facilitate comprehension.'

Table 11. Speaking

Statement		SD	D	N	A	SA	M	SD
38. The activities are developed to create meaningful communication.	N	5	11	20	56	6	3.45	.969
	%	5.3	11.7	21.3	55.3	6.4		
39. The textbook provides students with a variety of interaction patterns.	N	2	12	29	39	12	3.5	.947
	%	2.1	12.8	30.9	41.5	12.8		
40. The textbook includes speech situations that are irrelevant to students' background.	n	4	32	29	24	5	2.93	.992
	%	4.3	34	30.9	25.5	5.3		

Table 11 shows that 56 teachers (55.3%) agreed and 6 teachers (6.4%) strongly agreed that the activities are developed to create meaningful communication, while 20 (21.3%) held neutral attitudes and 16 (17%) disagreed or strongly disagreed. On Item 39, 39 teachers (41.5%) agreed, 12 (12.8%) disagreed, 29 (30.9%) were neutral, 12 (12.8%) disagreed, and 2 (2.1%) strongly disagreed with the statement, 'The textbook provides students with a variety of interaction patterns.' On Item, teachers had mixed feelings towards the statement 'The textbook includes speech situations that are irrelevant to the students' background.'

7. 3. Correlations Between Teachers' Attitudes and Their Background Information

A Pearson coefficient test was applied to find out whether there is a correlation between teachers' attitudes to the textbook's layout, accessibility, appropriateness, activities, and skills and their gender, age, teaching experience, qualifications, training, school location, and number of students in the classroom. Table 12 reveals that the teachers' gender, age, teaching experience, qualifications, and region have no significant correlations with attitudes towards the textbook ($p > 0.05$). On the other hand, it can be observed from Table 4.7 that the teachers' training correlates positively with their attitudes towards the textbook's layout [$r = 0.339$, $n = 94$, $p = 0.001$ ($p < 0.05$)]. Also, the teachers' training has a statistically significant relationship with their attitudes towards the textbook's activities [$r = 0.209$, $n = 94$, $p = 0.043$ ($p < 0.05$)]. Moreover, the teachers' training has significant correlation with their attitudes to the skills [$r = 0.220$, $n = 94$, $p = 0.033$ ($p < 0.05$)]. Additionally, the findings in Table 12 reveal that there is a highly significant correlation between the number of students in the classroom and a teacher's perceptions of the textbook's activities [$r = 0.274$, $n = 94$, $p = 0.008$ ($p < 0.05$)].

Table 12. The Correlations Between Teachers' Attitudes and Their Background Information

		Training	Number of Students
Layout	Pearson	0.339	0.084
	Correlation		
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.001	0.419
Appropriateness	N	94	94
	Pearson	0.010	0.045
	Correlation		
Activities	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.920	0.667
	N	94	94
	Pearson	0.209	0.274
Skills	Correlation		
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.043	0.008
	N	94	94
	Pearson	0.220	0.120
	Correlation		
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.033	0.249
	N	94	94

8. Discussion

8.1 To What Extent Is Traveller Textbook Series Effective According to Layout & Design and Accessibility?

From the two data collection procedures (content analyses and questionnaire), findings show that the textbook is attractive and accessible; it includes efficient use of text and visuals, and it contains aspects that would support accessibility, like headings, subheadings, indices, and vocabulary lists. This is in the line with Lähdesmäki (2009) who claimed that the visual outlook of texts, such as layout features, provides important cues in the textbook context. Also, Sheldon (1988), claimed that textbooks are considered accessible if they include indices, lists of vocabulary, and headings that allow students to easily use the book for self-learning purposes.

8.2 To What Extent Is Traveller Textbook Series Effective According to Activities and Skills?

Regarding the textbooks' activities, the findings of the study reveal that the textbooks provide a balance of activities which also encourage communicative and meaningful practice and incorporate individual, pair, and group work. Hinkel (2010) mentioned that the use of Communicative Language Teaching enables students to learn language skills communicatively inside and outside the classroom. Moreover, the activities of the textbook are task-based and student-centred, involving students in language learning through the completion of tasks with little teacher interaction. The task-based approach specifies the goals of the tasks rather than focusing on the language, where activities should be practical and engage students with the real world (Oura, 2001).

The findings show that the textbook provides a balance of both receptive and productive skills. In fact, when students are given the opportunity to integrate the four language skills, their performance of language is positively affected (Doughill, 1987).

The reading materials are authentic and encourage students to do extensive reading. This is in line with Allehyani et al. (2017), who evaluated *Traveller 5* and found that the textbook contains authentic materials. Indeed, the use of such materials enables students to practice the language as they might encounter it in real life. Alshumaimeri and Alzyadi (2015) stated that exposing students to authentic materials would enable them to use the target language for communicative purposes outside the classroom. However, Guariento and Morley (2001) argued that the use of authentic materials makes learners confused and demotivated, as the language used might be too complicated and difficult for them.

From teachers' perspectives, the writing practice allows students to develop creative writing skills and write texts that meet real-world needs, which latter was also found by the content analyses, the researchers found examples of writing sections that prepare students to write letters, emails, and book reviews. Also, many examples of guided practice were found in the textbook: Students are given a 'Tip' box in every writing section that provides guided points on how to write a specific task. This finding reflects the view of Richards (2014), as he asserted that writing activities should have clear outcomes and purposes. However, teachers did not agree that the practice is below students' language level, and, based on their responses to the former question, where they did not agree that the textbook matches students' level, the researchers reasonably assumed that the practice is above the students' level. This could be a drawback of the textbook, as students might be demotivated if they find the practice too difficult (Guariento & Morley, 2001).

The listening practice is contextualized by background information and pictures. This is a valuable point, as contextualization of the listening material would help students recall their prior knowledge of the topic before listening. The questionnaire results show that the listening material is authentic and exposes students to a large range of accents and real voices. However, by listening to many tracks of the listening material, the researchers found that they are presented slowly and only in a British accent. Outside the classroom, students will not hear English created for EFL education, but rather speech that is produced for wider purposes. As mentioned earlier, the idea of using authentic materials has been subject of debate for many years. Richards (2001) claimed that textbooks might reflect the world as a perfect place without exposing students to real issues. On the other hand, Martinez (2002) claimed that authentic materials might be culturally biased and difficult to understand, especially for beginners and elementary learners.

The speaking practice in the *Traveller* textbooks creates meaningful communication. Indeed, this is noticed in the textbooks as the speaking sections encourage pair and group work, discussions, and role-plays. Similarly, studies on the same textbook and other commercial textbooks used in Saudi contexts found that textbooks encourage communicative competence (e.g., Al-Malki, 2014; Alshumaimeri & Alzyadi, 2015; Allehyani et al., 2017).

8.3 Is the Traveller Textbook Series Appropriate for Saudi Secondary School Students?

The findings show that the *Traveller* series of textbooks does not match the students' language level. In the

survey, more than half of the teachers indicated that the series does not match students' level. According to Al-Seghayer (2017), the newly adopted Saudi textbooks are targeted to ESL (English as a Second Language) contexts which do not give Saudi EFL students the practice they need. Actually, the difficulty of the textbooks hinders students' comprehension of the language input (Safari & Montazeri, 2017).

As for the cultural appropriateness of the textbook, teachers held mixed perspectives. Some teachers agreed that the textbook is culturally appropriate for the students, while others held neutral attitudes, and 20% thought it culturally inappropriate. However, by investigating the inner-circle culture of two Saudi secondary school textbooks, *English for Saudi Arabia* and *Traveller 5*, Allehyani et al. (2017) found that *Traveller 5* exposes students to multicultural topics. In fact, the use of cultural aspects in language materials has been widely debated over the years. Some researchers believe that learning the foreign culture is part of learning a second language. For example, Tran stated, "Learning the culture of a second or foreign language can be as instructive as learning the language itself" (2010, p. 36). On the other hand, McKay (2003) claimed that English no longer belongs to a specific culture, and there is a need for language materials to be culturally appropriate for the diverse language contexts.

Concerning the amount of class time provided for teaching the investigated textbook, most of the teachers answering the questionnaire disagreed that the length of the textbook is not well suited to the available class time.

8.4 What factors affect teachers' perceptive evaluation of the *Traveller* textbook series?

The results in Table 12 reveal that there is a significant correlation between the teachers' preceptions to layout and design and their number of training sessions; teachers who received more training hours perceived the textbook's layout positively. Moreover, training correlated positively with the teachers' perception of the skills. In fact, the survey indicated that teachers in Saudi Arabia are not given many preparation programmes, as 20% of the teachers had never had in-service training. The association of the teachers' training with their perception of the textbooks concurs with other relevant studies, such as Al-Malki (2014) and Tsagari and Sifakis (2014). By evaluating another Saudi secondary school textbook, *Flying High*, Al-Malki (2014) found that there could be an association between the teachers' perceptions of the new textbook and their preparedness, practices, and administrative support provided. Al-Malki (2014) suggested teaching educational programmes that would focus on the new curriculum implemented. Tsagari and Sifakis (2014) found that teachers indicated that they had not received the training necessary for teaching the textbooks evaluated and that the greater the integration of teachers' readiness in the textbook's development, the more they will succeed in contributing to language learning. McDonough et al. insisted that teachers be trained 'to be able to evaluate, adapt and develop their own approaches in the form of principled materials based on their own judgement and experience' (2013: 48).

Additionally, the results of the current study reveal that class size does matter in EFL teaching and learning, as English classes are based on communication and require interaction between students. In the context of the current study, half of the survey participants revealed that their current classes consisted of more than 30 students. In fact, teachers are more likely to apply new English teaching approaches in a medium class size, as large classes are always associated with students' disorderliness, distraction, and lack of efficiency. Azizinezhad et al. (2013) conducted a study to investigate the relationship between teachers' attitudes regarding applying different teaching techniques and class size; they found that all teachers use more techniques in small classes than in large classes.

9. Conclusion

This study was implemented to evaluate the effectiveness of *Traveller* textbook series in terms of layout & design, accessibility, appropriateness, activities, and skills. The findings of this research showed that the textbook's layout, accessibility, activities, and skills are effective. However, results revealed that the textbook does not match the students' language level; teachers claimed that the textbook is above the Saudi secondary students. Furthermore, teachers held mixed perspectives concerning cultural appropriateness and class time. Finally, results revealed that teachers who had been offered more training sessions were more likely to have positive preceptions towards the textbook's activities and skills. Also, teachers with fewer students in the classroom showed positive preceptions concerning the textbook's activities.

Based on the findings of the present study, teachers should be viewed as an essential element in the design and development of language courses, as they are the implementers of these materials. Also, involving teachers in decision-making would upgrade the learning-teaching process, as teachers' satisfaction would be reflected positively in their teaching.

Finally, further research on other textbooks used in Saudi schools in general is recommended. Also, future research could include a larger sample and compare the textbooks used in secondary schools.

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