

Validation of a Content Analysis Checklist
for Teaching Persian to Non-Persians
and English Textbooks

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ABSTRACT

Thanks to technology and fast changes in social life, the content of textbooks should be evaluated regularly to be compatible and adapted with the daily needs of learners, and applying a checklist is a common approach to textbook evaluation. This study attempts to present a valid, reliable, and practical checklist for evaluating Persian and English textbooks. For this purpose, more than 40 Persian and English checklists were studied, and a new five-point Likert checklist was created based on these checklists, some of these questions are the common ones in these checklists, some are specific to these checklists, and some new items were added by the authors and finally a new checklist with 95 questions in 4 main categories of physical features, design and lay out; skills and sub-skills; subject and content; practical consideration was created. Some English and Persian instructors and professors viewed the checklist to verify its content validity and after some

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correction, 83 English and Persian language teachers and instructors answered the items. They were free to add or rectify items if needed, as well as to give their opinion. The data was entered into the R software and was analyzed, as a result, some questions were deleted, as their factor load was below 0/5. All remained constituents were considered valid and reliable because their AVE was above 0/4 and their CR was between 0/5 and 1, and Cronbach's Alpha was more than 0/7. This new validated checklist could be useful for Persian and English language teachers and instructors, PLT (Persian language teaching) and ELT material developers, plus curriculum developers.

Keywords: Validation, content analysis, textbooks, checklist, evaluation

1-Introduction

Many factors affect the language learning/teaching process, among which textbooks play a fundamental role. As textbooks are the primary agents of conveying knowledge to learners they are of high importance for both teachers and learners (Cunningworth, 1995; Hutchinson & Toress, 1994: Urr, 1996: Williams,1983; Sheldon,1988) and Some believe that a textbook is one side of the triangle of education (Lodhi et.al., 2019) .Through using textbooks learners obtain some information, attitude and knowledge. In fact textbooks play a fundamental role in all educational classes such as institute, schools and colleges all over the world (Karinger,2001) as some consider it as "an almost universal element of teaching" (Hutchinson & Toress, 1994, p.135), which means that in most countries, textbooks act as the main teaching instrument in classrooms. Although in the globalized era, students could learn language through different ways of internet, TV, etc, textbooks are still the best ways of language learning (Serasi, Fatimah, Rahman Hakim & Anggraini, 2021). Selecting an appropriate textbook is of high importance because both teachers and students spend most of their time on it and is the base of teacher's planning in presenting the material, in addition if a student be absent, could benefit the book to compensate it. Moreover, textbooks which contain suitable criteria play a fundamental role in students' interest attraction and make the learning process enjoyable. "Sometimes the main reason for learners' interest in a subject or their dislike of it simply is the textbook" (Bakhsheshi,

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2014, p.2). The textbook has a facilitating role in teaching as it saves time, manages lessons and discussions, in addition, teaching and learning are easier and faster (Hutchinson & Toress, 1994, p. 318). Through the use of textbooks, both instructors and students have a clear prospect of what they are going to teach or learn; in fact, textbooks systematize the process of teaching/learning, as Sheldon (1988) refers to as a "rout map of any ELT program" (p.238). In many cases, the textbook itself can be the main motivational factor to spark the learner's attention and motivation (Bakhsheshi, 2014; Dornyei, 2009; Richards, 2014). Therefore, selecting an appropriate textbook to be taught in the classroom is an essential point. ELT textbooks have attracted many researcher's attention, because they make a great contribution to second language acquisition (Razmjoo & Raissi, 2010).

There are widely available English and Persian textbooks in Iran, and as no textbook "fits perfectly" (Byrd & Schuemann, 2014, p.387) to the teaching/learning situation, and selecting an appropriate textbook is a complex task. Moreover, the content of textbooks could determine the success or failure of the learning/teaching process. Evaluation is a good solution for these problems and has a pivotal role in choosing a suitable textbook. One meaningful way of evaluating textbooks is a checklist, and if a checklist is developed, validated, and applied carefully, it is a precious instrument for textbook evaluation (Stufflebeam, 2000). In addition, "as the technology of evaluation and the targeted content area for a checklist develops, a checklist sooner or later is likely to be out of date. Also, applications of the checklist will often point out areas for improvement. Thus, once again, it is emphasized that checklist development and evaluation should be an ongoing process" (Stufflebeam, 2000, p.10). This is exactly inconsistent with those who believed that "if course materials are to remain up-to-date, contextually relevant and responsive, they need to be regularly reviewed and evaluated" (Russo & Olvitt, 2006, p.35).

Statement of the problem and Significance of the study

Thanks to technology and fast changes in social life, the content of textbooks should be evaluated regularly to be compatible and adapted with the daily needs of learners. Many studies have dealt with evaluating English textbooks, and through analyzing their

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reliability, validity, and practicality, researchers have found some problems (Mukandan & Ahur, 2010); however, very few studies have been conducted to analyze Persian textbooks thus far. With this gap in mind, the current article established an eclectic checklist based on the many existing checklists to evaluate the suitability of the Persian textbooks, and to compare the overall suitability of the most commonly used Persian and English textbooks in Iran.

In recent decades, Iran has expanded its communication with different nations worldwide, especially with neighboring countries, and interest in learning Persian has increased dramatically. Teaching Persian has some problems and the lack of suitable material and textbooks is one of them. Thus, it seems that by applying evaluation criteria and comparing the results with the most common English textbooks taught in Iran, we could promote the quality of these textbooks; in addition, this could provide some reference and guidance for textbook designers. Moreover, through providing insight into the textbooks, instructors could choose textbooks according to their learners' aims and objectives since "any textbook should be used judiciously, since it cannot cater equally to the requirements of every classroom setting"(Williams, 1983, p.251). Establishing a good and practical checklist is a precious contribution to this area. Finally, the results are assumed to be useful for Persian and English language teachers and instructors, PLT (Persian language teaching), ELT material developers, plus curriculum developers.

2-Literature Review

During the past few decades, researchers have developed various checklists to evaluate the content of English textbooks from different perspectives. For example in the past decades researchers such as Sheldon (1988), Cunningsworth (1995), Tucker (1975) and Little John (1996) have presented checklists to evaluate textbooks, their checklists have some common and different criteria.

Cunningsworth (1995) believed that there are many criteria to evaluate textbooks, but he presented the most important ones in a quick-reference checklist including eight categories: aims and approaches, design /organization, language content, study skills, topic, methodology, teacher's book, and practical considerations. For example, the criterion

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of methodology represents questions about the techniques and learning approaches of the textbook. All questions are yes/no questions except six questions. Though learning all four skills compromise the most important function of ELT textbooks, few questions are dedicated to this part.

Russo and Olvitt (2006) developed a qualitative instrument to review and evaluate adults' course materials and stated that others can select some sections of this checklist or use the exact form. They emphasized recording information such as name of the course, country, the purpose of the course, intended learners, etc, before evaluating the course materials. They proposed 70 criteria in four categories. The first category refers to underpinning ideas such as history and context, critical reflection and reflexivity, participation, the social construction of meaning and knowledge, integrated nature of theory and practice, environmental education process of change, environmental education as a process of evaluation. The second category includes orientation to the course like introduction purpose and learning outcomes. The third category refers to teaching and learning strategies such as selection and presentation of content, coherence of concepts, content, and methods across units, view of knowledge and use of learners' experience, activities and feedback, and language. The last category is about accessibility and layout like learning skills, access devices, and visual aids. Some questions have developed according to the mentioned criteria, and individuals should make a checkmark if they agree with each question, and also there is enough space to give their comments.

Mukundan, Hajimohammadi, and Nimehchisalem (2011a) developed an experimental evaluative checklist based on previous evaluation checklists and explained the considerations that were taken into account in conducting it. The developers tried to consider validity, reliability, and practicality in the process of developing the checklist. The checklist contained two major categories of general attributes and learning-teaching contents. Then each section was developed by adding one or more items to describe in detail. The final checklist was a five-point Likert scale with 27 questions to evaluate the textbook.

Mukundan, Hajimohammadi, and Nimehchisalem (2011b) utilized a focus group to refine their previously developed checklist (2011) for a valid, reliable and, practical

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checklist. The focus group included six Ph.D. candidates of TESL who assisted in improving the clarity and inclusiveness of the items. First, the checklist developers had an unstructured interview with the candidates and asked them to talk about the major criteria that should be considered in evaluating ELT textbooks. Then a structured interview was completed in which the candidates were asked to fill the checklist. They could rectify, omit or add necessary items. As a result, two items were restated, and 14 items were added to the checklist. This checklist is valuable for English language teachers and instructors, ELT material developers and evaluators, plus curriculum developers.

Abdelwahhab (2013) developed a valid, reliable, and practical checklist based on the existing textbook checklists. A group of students and teachers answered the 5- point Likert scale questionnaire, and the answers were entered into a data analysis software. An average of the ratings and item and factor analyses were done. Moreover, the participants' opinions were collected and taken into consideration. As a result, some items were merged, deleted, added, and modified, and a checklist with four main categories of physical and utilitarian attributes (25 items), the efficient outlay of objectives and supplementary materials (33 items), learning-teaching content (28 items), and language skills (54 items), was created.

Demir and Artas (2014) attempted to develop an English evaluative checklist. For this purpose, they investigated more than thirty checklists and forms, and twenty-three of them were utilized in creating the new eclectic checklist in which many overlapping items were used along with, the authors' new items. The checklist received critical feedback from some teachers at a conference, and some items were modified and added. The final checklist contains 56 items in 4 sections: subjects and contents (10 items), skills and sub-skills (25 items), layout and physical make-up (7 items), practical considerations (14 items).

Amani Malakouti (2010) carried out an analytic study of some PFL (Persian as a Foreign Language) textbooks to identify their quality, strength, and weak points. For this purpose, she used a combining content analysis model of Tucker (1975), Kheibari (1999), and Zolfaghari (2004). Totally seven volumes of the Iran Language institute textbooks were studied and analyzed. According to the results, this series is not just grammar-oriented like the previous PFL textbooks, and each book is written based on the skill which

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is focused on. For example, In *Learning Persian Vocabulary* textbook, vocabulary, text, and reading include the appropriate criteria of the mixed content analysis model, while listening skill is not considered. In the *Reading and Molavi* textbook, just reading and listening skills are considered, and grammar, pronunciation, writing and speaking skills are ignored. In the *Farsi* textbook which is an intensive course for short-term learning, nearly all language skills are considered and so this one is close to the ideal characteristics of this model.

Kheibari (1999) carried out an analytical content analysis of teaching Persian to non-Persian speakers' textbooks (Azfa, 1993) based on Tucker's (1975) model. She modified this model by adding items such as criteria for evaluating different skills (reading, writing, speaking, and listening), attention to the communicative role of language, and importance of activities. Then with this modified version of Tucker (1975), she evaluated five volumes of the Azfa textbooks. Findings showed that grammar was mainly focused on in the textbook. The textbooks were based on the grammar-translation method, and other skills such as speaking and listening were neglected; consequently, though learners gain grammatical competence, they could not communicate effectively.

3-Methodology

The present study is a quantitative and practical research. To develop an English and Persian language textbook evaluation checklist the following steps were taken. In phase one, an extensive study of relevant literature was conducted, and about forty checklists were scrutinized. Some criteria were commonly used in different checklists which were utilized in the present checklist. Many other features were borrowed from these checklists and some new items were added to the list, and finally a new checklist with 94 questions in four main categories of physical features, design and lay out; skills and sub-skills; subject and content; practical consideration was created. Some specialists examined the face validity of the checklist; they contributed to omit some ambiguities. In the next phase, the new eclectic checklist was administered online, and instructors or teachers who taught "American file" series, "New Interchange" series, "Amoozes novin zaban farsi or new teaching of Persian language" and "Amoozesh farsi be farsi or teaching Persian to Persian" were asked to fill it out. There was an additional column for each question and the

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respondents were free to add their idea or comment there if necessary. Collecting data took three month and the statistical version of 4.0.2 of R software was applied in this study.

4-Discussion

Confirmatory factor analysis investigates to find if performance evaluation is evaluated by questions or items of the checklist or not. Factor loads with estimated standards above 0/5 are considered as suitable since they indicate that the item understudy has a significant effect on the assessment of the relevant structure (Rivard, and Huff, 1988); therefore in this study, all items with factor load of bellow 0/5 (questions number 2, 3,13,14,74, 75, 76, 84) were deleted from the analysis process, other questions were 0/5 above and were suitable. For general evaluation of the checklist Goodness of Fit Indexes such as X², GFI, AGFI, CFI, TLI, SRMR, and RMSEA were used.

Goodness of Fit Indexes of measurement models was as the following table:

Table1: Goodness of Fit Indexes of measurement

| Index | RMSEA | SRMR | TLI | CFI | AGFI | GFI | χ^2/df |
|--|-------|----------------|-------|-------|-------|-------|--------------------|
| Optimal amount | 0,6< | Closer to zero | 0,95> | 0,95> | 0,9> | 0,9> | Between 1 and 3 |
| Acceptable amount | 0,1< | Closer to zero | 0,9> | 0,9> | 0,8> | 0,8> | Between 1 and five |
| organizing, designing, and physical features of the textbook | 0.031 | 0.046 | 0.990 | 0.992 | 0.985 | 0.992 | 1.080 |
| Skills and sub-skills | 0.146 | 0.092 | 0.514 | 0.533 | 0.772 | 0.795 | 2.740 |
| Subject and | 0.072 | 0.048 | 0.969 | 0.984 | 0.987 | 0.996 | 1.427 |

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|-------------------------------------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|
| content | | | | | | | |
| General and practical consideration | 0.075 | 0.043 | 0.963 | 0.974 | 0.979 | 0.990 | 1.458 |

According to the results, all indexes are acceptable, thus the results of this model are trustable.

To investigate the validity and reliability of each item AVE and CR should be computed. A valid constituent is the one in which its AVE is 0/4 above (Huang, Wang, Wu, & Wang, 2013) and the CR of a reliable constituent should be between 0/5 and 1, and Cronbach's Alpha more than 0/7 (Rivard and Huff, 1988). The validity and reliability of the items of this checklist are as the following table:

Table2: Evaluation of convergence validity and reliability of the constituent

| Cronbach's Alpha | CR | AVE | Model |
|------------------|-------|-------|--|
| 0/890 | 0/892 | 0/482 | organizing, designing, and physical features of the textbook |
| 0/981 | 0/983 | 0/482 | Skills and sub-skills |
| 0/876 | 0/916 | 0/516 | Subject and content |
| 0/919 | 0/940 | 0/570 | General and practical consideration |

According to the results, this checklist has acceptable validity and reliability.

5-Results

This study aimed at developing a valid and reliable checklist to evaluate Persian and English textbooks. For this purpose, an eclectic checklist was designed based on the existing checklists as well as adding some new items. Some English and Persian

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professors edited and contributed to the clarity and inclusiveness of the items and confirmed the face validity of the checklist. Then more than 80 Persian and English teachers and instructors filled out the online checklist. The data was entered into 4.0.2 version of R software to be analyzed. Some questions were omitted since their factor load was 0/5 below. according to the results, all indexes are acceptable, thus the results of this model are trustable. All constituents were considered valid because their AVE was 0/4 above, and they were reliable as their CR was between 0/5 and 1, and Cronbach's Alpha was more than 0/7. There for, this is a valid, reliable and practical checklist to evaluate language textbooks. In addition, the criteria of this checklist could be useful for Persian and English teachers, material and curriculum developers, and syllabus designers.

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appendix

| QUESTIONS | | Very bad | weak | adequate | good | Very good |
|--|--|----------|------|----------|------|-----------|
| 1-Physical features, layout and design | 1- The printing quality in terms of paper used is high. | | | | | |
| | 2- The printing quality in terms of fonts and colors used is high. | | | | | |
| | 3- The font used is appropriate. | | | | | |
| | 4- The pictures used are clear and of good quality. | | | | | |
| | 5- The textbook is accompanied with | | | | | |

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| teaching aids such as CDs, workbook and cassettes. | | | | | |
| 6-The textbook is accompanied with teachers' guide. | | | | | |
| 7-Teachers' guide includes guidelines on presenting lessons and extra activities. | | | | | |
| 8-The textbook is organized appropriately based on topics and contents. | | | | | |
| 9-the textbook includes vocabulary list or glossary which shows where each word has been introduced. | | | | | |
| 10-summaries and reviewing activities are provided at regular intervals. | | | | | |
| 11- The textbook includes test samples. | | | | | |
| 12-The textbook contains pictures, diagrams and tables which accelerate the learning process. | | | | | |
| 13-the size and weight of the textbook seems appropriate to carry. | | | | | |
| 14-the textbook is durable. | | | | | |

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|------------------------|---|--|--|--|--|
| 2-skills and subskills | Speaking skills | | | | |
| | 15- Activities are balanced regarding individual responses, pair work and group work. | | | | |
| | 16- Situational conversations are based on learner's background knowledge. | | | | |
| | 17-This section covers a variety of topics and content. | | | | |
| | 18-Speaking activities are based on natural and authentic situations. | | | | |
| | 19-Activities encourage learners to speak. | | | | |
| | 20-Activities are developed to encourage meaningful communication. | | | | |
| | Listening skill | | | | |
| | 21-Tasks are authentic or close to real language use situation. | | | | |
| | 22-There are suitable –Tasks according to the aims of the textbook. | | | | |
| | 23-Tasks contain different topics in varied contexts. | | | | |
| | 24-lisening materials | | | | |

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| have been recorded well and have a good quality. | | | | | |
| 25-The speaker's pace of talking is appropriate for the learner's level. | | | | | |
| 26-The accent used is appropriate for the learner's level. | | | | | |
| 27-The recorded listening materials are interesting and attractive for the learners. | | | | | |
| Writing skill | | | | | |
| 28-Tasks are based on different writing genres. | | | | | |
| 29-Textbook contains practical writing tasks like formal and informal letter writing, report, and essay writing. | | | | | |
| 30- Teaching punctuation marks such as comma and period is emphasized. | | | | | |
| 31- Tasks are interesting. | | | | | |
| 32- Tasks have achievable goal for the learner. | | | | | |
| 33-Tasks are based on learners' capabilities. | | | | | |

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| 34-Activities encourage the learner to rectify her/his writing. | | | | | |
| 35-Writing style is emphasized. | | | | | |
| 36-Accuracy is emphasized. | | | | | |
| 37- Exercises and tasks enhance free writing opportunities. | | | | | |
| 38-Writing activities include different tasks such as guided or controlled composition. | | | | | |
| 39- Tasks are based on the lexicon, grammar and function that learners are familiar with. | | | | | |
| Reading skill | | | | | |
| 40- The selected passages are up-to-date. | | | | | |
| 41- Reading passages include a wide variety of topics. | | | | | |
| 42- The reading passages authentic language. | | | | | |
| 43- The length of the text is appropriate for the learner's level. | | | | | |
| 44-The tasks and activities are | | | | | |

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| appropriate to promote the learner's comprehension. | | | | | |
| 45-Tasks have achievable goals. | | | | | |
| 46-Reading comprehension exercises are designed to improve learner's abilities. | | | | | |
| 47-Texts are used to introduce new grammatical points, functions, and lexicon. | | | | | |
| 48-Texts are interesting enough to encourage reading. | | | | | |
| 49-Texts contribute to comprehension through visualizing, giving background knowledge or pre-reading questions. | | | | | |
| 50-Different cognitive strategies (finding main idea, key words, etc) are used to improve comprehension. | | | | | |
| 51-Activities and tasks promote critical thinking. | | | | | |
| Vocabulary | | | | | |
| 52- The vocabulary load (number of new words in each lesson) corresponds to the | | | | | |

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| | linguistic level of students. | | | | | |
| | 53- There is a gradual increase in the difficulty level of vocabulary (from simple to complex) in the textbook. | | | | | |
| | 54-New words are introduced in varied contexts and situations. | | | | | |
| | 55-New words are accompanied with their phonetic transcription in English or Persian. | | | | | |
| | 56-Exercises contribute to the internalization and reinforcement of new and old vocabulary. | | | | | |
| | 57-New words are repeated in subsequent lessons to be reinforced in meaning and usage. | | | | | |
| | 58-New words are presented in different ways (picture, illustration, etc.) | | | | | |
| Grammar | | | | | | |
| | 59-The first function introducing new structures is interaction and communication. | | | | | |

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| 60- There is a gradual increase in the difficulty level of grammatical structures to cater learning | | | | | |
| 61-New structures are introduced systematically and in meaningful context. | | | | | |
| 62- Structures are repeated in subsequent lessons to be reinforced in the learners' mind. | | | | | |
| Pronunciation | | | | | |
| 63-A specific section is allocated to pronunciation in each lesson. | | | | | |
| 64- Pronunciation points are repeated and practiced in the lessons. | | | | | |
| 65-Textbook contains suitable audio-file to practice pronunciation. | | | | | |
| 66-Intonation patterns regarding different sentences (declarative, interrogative, etc,) are taught. | | | | | |
| 67-Work stress is taught with sufficient examples. | | | | | |
| 68-Word pauses are | | | | | |

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| | taught with sufficient examples. | | | | | |
| | 69- The textbook contains teaching phonetic symbols. | | | | | |
| | 70-There are sufficient exercises for learners to recognize and produce specific sounds. | | | | | |
| | 71-There are sufficient exercises for learners to recognize and produce stress patterns. | | | | | |
| | 72-There are sufficient exercises for learners to recognize and use intonation patterns. | | | | | |
| Subject and content | 73-The content and subject is up-to-date and modern. | | | | | |
| | 74- The pictures are not gender biased. | | | | | |
| | 75- The pictures are not culture biased. | | | | | |
| | 76- Cultural sensitivities have been observed. | | | | | |
| | 77-The content act as a window to learning the target language culture. | | | | | |
| | 78-The topics are challenging enough to | | | | | |

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| | motivate learner to participate actively. | | | | | |
| | 79-The textbook's content and subject is appropriate for the learner's needs. | | | | | |
| | 80- Content and subjects of the textbook is appropriate for the learners age. | | | | | |
| | 81- The content is selected based on structures, functions and situations. | | | | | |
| | 82- The content sequence is based on gradual increase of complexity. | | | | | |
| | 83-The sequence of the content is based on its usefulness or practicality. | | | | | |
| General and practical consideration | 84 The price of the book is fair. | | | | | |
| | 85-The textbook is available. | | | | | |
| | 86- The time allocated to teaching is sufficient. | | | | | |
| | 87- The textbook is appropriate for the learner's level and linguistic background knowledge. | | | | | |
| | 88-The aims and objectives of the textbook is based on | | | | | |

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| | the teaching curriculum and learners needs. | | | | | |
| | 89- The aims of each lesson or textbook is mentioned clearly. | | | | | |
| | 90-The communicative method and techniques are used in the textbook. | | | | | |
| | 91- The textbook is interesting and attractive. | | | | | |
| | 92-The textbook is designed based on the latest teaching methods. | | | | | |
| | 93- The aims of the textbook are clear and explicit for the teachers. | | | | | |
| | 94- The aims of the textbook are clear and explicit for the learners. | | | | | |