

Teachers' Evaluation of Get Smart Plus 3 Textbook Used in the Malaysian Year 3 Classrooms

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Abstract

This study aimed to find out the teacher's perceptions about the suitability and strengths and weaknesses of the CEFR aligned textbook, Get Smart Plus 3 textbook used for Year 3 students in Malaysian schools. A mixed-method approach was employed in this research in which an eclectic checklist was used for the quantitative part while semi-structured interview was conducted for the qualitative part. 36 respondents were involved in the quantitative part, while two Year 3 teachers were interviewed. The findings showed that the Get Smart Plus 3 textbook is highly useful for the learners in terms of general attributes, vocabulary, grammar, language skills, activities, and supplementary materials. However, foreign culture and contexts used in the textbook need to be reviewed as the teachers found these elements to be of concern for the students. The findings can help materials writers and the curriculum development unit to reevaluate and improve on the textbooks to suit the Malaysian context.

Keywords: Textbook Evaluation, CEFR, Get Smart Plus 3

Abstrak

Kajian ini bertujuan mengenalpasti persepsi guru tentang kesesuaian dan kekuatan serta kelemahan buku teks CEFR, iaitu get Smart Plus 3 yang di gunakan Untuk murid Tahun 3 di sekolah Malaysia. Kaedah mod campuran telah digunakan dalam kajian ini dengan menggunakan senarai semak eklektik untuk bahagian kuantitatif dan juga kaedah temubual untuk bahagian kualitatif. Seramai 36 orang responden telah terlibat untuk menjawab soal selidik dan dua orang responden telah ditemubual untuk kajian ini. Berdasarkan penemuan hasil kajian ini, didapati bahawa buku teks Get Smart Plus 3 sangat berguna bagi pelajar dalam beberapa aspek seperti sifat umum, perbendaharaan kata, tatabahasa, kemahiran bahasa, aktiviti dan bahan bantuan tambahan. Namun begitu, budaya asing dan konteks yang digunakan dalam buku teks perlu di kaji semula kerana guru mendapati elemen ini bermasalah bagi pelajar. Dapatan kajian ini boleh membantu penulis buku dan unit pembangunan kurikulum dalam menilai semula dan menambahbaik buku teks agar sesuai dengan konteks Malaysia.

Kata kunci: Penilaian Buku Teks, CEFR, get Smart Plus 3

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

One of the key components of teaching and learning is the textbook. Textbooks, which have many benefits for both teachers and students, constitute the foundation of many different language learning and teaching methods, claim Amerian and Khaivar (2014). According to Sheldon (1988), textbooks are the obvious core of any ELT programme and provide significant benefits for both teachers and students. Therefore, the value and function of textbooks are crucial, as they have a direct impact on students' success or failure in the classroom (Mukundan, 2007). In Malaysia, our educational system has made extensive use of textbooks. As the educational system and organisation have changed throughout time, a wide variety of textbooks have been offered in classrooms. In 2011, the Standard Primary School Curriculum (KSSR) replaced the Integrated Primary School Curriculum (KBSR), which had been the previous curriculum. In order to satisfy these requirements and further the goals of the new curriculum, a new textbook was adopted. The Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR), an international standard for describing the language proficiency among the learners, was once more introduced to the Malaysian educational system in 2017. 2018 saw the official adoption of the CEFR standard in Malaysian educational institutions. Making the learners capable of competing worldwide in the future is one of the justifications for implementing the CEFR. Super Minds and Get Smart Plus 3 are two new textbooks that have been made available for use in elementary classrooms in conjunction with the CEFR. It is said that the new curriculum includes many bands as a way to assess pupils' classroom performance. The pupils' success in acquiring language and information will be gauged by their placement in the CEFR bands A1, A2, B1, B2, C1, and C2. Students in years 1 and 2 utilise the Super Minds Book 1 textbook, which was released in 2017, while students in years 3 use the Get Smart Plus 3 textbook, which was released in 2019. Studies have revealed numerous complaints made by teachers who are currently using the CEFR-

aligned textbooks since their introduction (e.g., Mohamad Lukman Al Hadi & Parilah MohdShah, (2020); Ponnusamy, et al., (2021); Mohamad Uri & Mohd Abd Aziz (2018); Mohammad Din & Yamat, (2020); Johar & Abdul Aziz, 2018). (2019). More research on instructors' perceptions is therefore necessary because they, together with their pupils, are the final users of the textbooks. To that goal, the following research questions are addressed in this paper:

1. What are teacher's perceptions of the CEFR aligned Get Smart Plus Year 3 textbook?
2. What are some of the strengths and weaknesses of the Get Smart Plus 3 according to the teachers?

■2.0 LITERATURE REVIEW

The Need For Textbook Evaluation

It is crucial to have a reliable source of teaching and learning resources available. For instance, selecting a quality textbook is necessary to make learning in the classroom meaningful. In fact, a reliable source of information can increase both the likelihood that students will acquire the language proficiently and that the curriculum's goals will be met. Therefore, a textbook evaluation is necessary to determine whether or not the book is appropriate to be one of the materials utilised by the teacher. According to Tomlinson (2008), there are two things that can lead to learning failure, hence a textbook evaluation is required. The first is possibly a result of the publisher being more focused on the book's demand than on the crucial aspects that will determine the textbook's effectiveness. The second reason is that the publishers might rely on their instincts when creating a textbook that they believe the students will find useful. The real result might not be in their favour if the textbook fails to meet the demands of the students or the goals of the curriculum. Evaluation of the textbook could therefore prevent such events from occurring. Additionally, by conducting the evaluation, the instructor, administrators, and material developer are given the knowledge necessary to make an informed judgement about the best textbook for the students. Sheldon (1988) identified a number of objectives for the textbook evaluation. The teacher or the programme creator will first be assisted in choosing the best textbook for the students by the results of the textbook evaluation. The evaluation will also assist the teacher in becoming familiar with its contents, which could help them identify the benefits and drawbacks of the textbook. In a similar vein, Arikan (2008) argues that a thorough assessment of the textbook could benefit students, teachers, and administrators. As a result, the instructor will have the chance to exploit the book's strengths, the tasks and exercises, throughout the teaching and learning session.

Additionally, textbook review can be highly helpful for teachers' professional development and personal advancement. Cunningsworth (1995) and Ellis (1997), quoted by Litz (2005), claim that evaluating textbooks for effectiveness in assessments aids teachers in developing a variety of skills and contextual knowledge about the overall character of the textbook. This is because through performing the evaluation, the instructor acquires the skills necessary to evaluate and critique the textbook's information and other aspects. In addition, they could ask other experts' opinions on the subject. Thus, following the evaluation, the advantages and disadvantages of using a textbook might be recognised. If the results indicate any negative effects on the currently being used book, additional action will need to be done. For instance, there should be supplemental books or materials to assist the primary text or offer the teacher strong support so they can make the most of the textbook. The teachers will gain insight into the textbook's content and may be able to indirectly identify the strong and weak parts of the textbook's components by examining the pros and cons of the textbook. In his study, Wright (1990) underlined that students' opinions on textbook evaluation may serve as a teacher's indicator. The reason for this is that a teacher can learn more about the preferences of the students in language learning by doing this, which will help the instructor use, adapt, and adopt the assignments and textbook materials in accordance with the needs of the students.

THE ROLE OF TEACHERS IN TEXTBOOK EVALUATION

A group of persons involved directly with the textbook is made up of teachers and students. "Teachers are a critical factor in the successful implementation of curriculum modifications, and notably in textbook," Mahfoodh and Bhanegaonkar (2013) wrote in their study. Even if they are given low-quality tools and materials, qualified teachers will be able to create effective lesson plans. According to Ahmadi and Derakhshan (2016) and other studies, instructors are the people with the skills needed to manage, assess, and keep an eye on the educational system's programmes, particularly when utilising textbooks to educate. They are the ones who engage directly with the information and tools, such as the textbook that has been selected for educational objectives. In order for learning to be relevant, the textbook used during teaching and learning sessions needs to be acceptable and suited for the students. Additionally, according to Cunningsworth (1995), one of the best ways to get user feedback is to evaluate the textbook. Both teachers and students frequently use textbooks as learning resources in the classroom. In order to gain a deeper understanding of the subject, it is necessary to gather and analyse their perceptions of the textbooks. Since teachers are required to use the textbook as supporting material for their teaching, the textbook has become one of the sources of instructions by the teachers in teaching and learning process.

Ansari and Babaii (2002) stated that teachers are accountable to evaluate textbooks, that make the assessment of teaching materials is one of the important parts of a teacher's work. Many teachers are self-proclaimed that they are not competent to evaluate the textbook due to lack of confidence. Therefore, most of the teachers think that they are incompetent to do the evaluation in which it is very essential as they are one of the main users that are familiar with the textbook. Based on those authors, it clearly shows that teachers and students have a significant role in textbook evaluation. This is because, they are the major users and have been using the book extensively during teaching and learning process. Besides, their opinion and judgment are very crucial in determining the suitability and appropriateness of the book. Thus, their attitude towards the textbook should be collected and analyzed. Moreover, the ability to use or adapt the textbook is considered as part of the teacher's professional knowledge so that they would have the chance to share their views on the advantages and disadvantages of the textbook they use for their teaching in the classroom. As a result, it may be worthwhile for the administrators, syllabus designers or material developers to take further actions for improvements in the future.

The Role And Advantages Of Textbook In Teaching And Learning

One important resource that has been used in the classroom is the textbook. The textbook and the instructional materials utilised by language constructors are the primary elements in language education, according to Mahfoodh and Bhanegaonkar (2013). While another academic claimed that some students believed textbooks to be the best sources of information and to be more reliable than teacher-prepared materials (Sheldon, 1988). According to Richards (2001), textbooks have a big influence on what students learn in class. It could be used as the foundational information for the lesson, the various skills that are taught, and the language the students use in the classroom. The statement made by Kayapinar (2009) that the course materials give students security by letting them know what to anticipate from them and what is expected of them is paralleled here. For new teachers, the textbook can be a big aid because it offers certain instructions and enables them to organise and deliver the lesson in accordance with the curriculum.

Besides, Cunningsworth (1995) identifies a textbook as a resource in presenting the material, a source for learners to practice and do the activities during the teaching and learning process. They also provide the learners with language components within the textbook. Textbooks also serve as a syllabus and a self-study source for learners. Thus, it can be said that teachers and students are the major users of textbook. This is supported by Chitravelu, et. al (2005) in which they stated that the textbook is one of the essential materials to be used in the classroom. This is because, the content of the textbook can serve as a reference for the teacher to deliver the knowledge and carry out the activities for the students to acquire the understanding in language learning. Textbook can become a main resource for the teachers and students. It can be seen as a pillar of the course as it provides guidance in many aspects including the content, language components and the activities to be carried out in the classroom. Sometimes, it is difficult for the teacher to produce his or her own materials that are suitable and appropriate to the students in order to carry out the lesson. Thus, the existence of textbook will be very beneficial. As Ghorbani (2007) stated that textbooks are basic tools that play the significant roles in obtaining knowledge in the application of the objectives of a course.

The utilisation of textbooks has many advantages for the users. As the textbook's primary users, teachers and students benefit much from it. Richards (2001) has enumerated a sizable number of advantages for those who use the textbooks. First, several programmes that are in line with the framework and curriculum are included in the textbooks. Second, they might provide uniform instruction in all of the school's classrooms. Thirdly, they offer a variety of educational resources that are up to par in terms of quality and maintenance. Fourth, the textbooks can offer useful linguistic input and models. Fifth, they save the teacher time because they don't require as much work to prepare the information for the pupils in the classroom. Sixth, as the textbook includes a handbook for the teacher's use, it can be used to train teachers. Finally, they offer eye-catching images that teachers and students both find appealing.

Ur (1996) also has listed several advantages of using the textbook in language learning. First, textbook may help the teacher and students by providing specific framework to be followed. Second, they can be used as syllabuses as all the content are systematically arranged. Third, the textbooks are also time saving as they have readymade texts as well as the learning tasks in which students may use it in the classroom or as their homework. Forth, they could also become an economic way of providing materials for the teachers and students. Fifth, a textbook is very convenient as it is light and easy to carry from one place to another. Sixth, for a beginner teacher, a textbook can be a guide, support, or good companion as it helps to give ideas in preparing the lesson for the students. Above all the benefits that have been mentioned, it is clearly shown that the usage of textbook could bring many advantages to its users. The benefits are comprehensive as they involve many aspects in which related to the textbook. The use of textbook could bring positive effects to its users who are involve in teaching and learning process in school.

Disadvantages Of Textbook In Teaching And Learning

Despite of advantages of using the textbook, there will also be some disadvantages with the use of textbook in teaching and learning. Richards (2001) has listed several negative effects of using the textbook. The textbook contains inauthentic language whereas the content of the book may be distorted in order to avoid controversial issues. Besides, the textbooks may not reflect the needs of the students and it usually highly cost and many of the learners probably could not afford it. Richards (2001) further cited that the use of textbook may give some limitations to the teachers and might deskill them as well. This is because, the teachers rely solely on the textbook as medium of instructions and they allow the textbook to decide things that related to teaching and learning process. Muhammad (2009) in his study investigated the methods English teachers in Indonesia used and applied textbooks during lessons. The results revealed that teachers concluded textbooks are unable to serve the users' needs due to lack of content appropriateness. This is because teachers have to modify the materials during the preparation and implementation processes and also, they have difficulties to use materials due to unfamiliar and irrelevant contents of the textbook. Furthermore, Mukundan (2014) in his study found out that, certain components in textbooks that have been used by year 5 and year 6 students in Malaysian Primary schools are inappropriate and ineffective to some extent. This is because, the teachers must adapt materials in order to use them for their teaching practices.

Some other author, Ur (1996) also has listed a few numbers of disadvantages relating to textbook. She claimed that there is no single book that could cater the students' different needs to acquire the knowledge in the classroom. Besides, the topics in the textbook may not interesting and relevant to the students that make them become bored and uninterested to learn the language. Ur (1996) further added that a textbook can limit the teacher's creativity because it has its own features and principles in which may not suit the different preferences of the students. Teachers may find themselves as mediators who have no freedom in carrying out the lesson to cater different levels of the students for, they are bound to the textbooks. Richards and Ur seem to be on the same page regarding the negative effects of textbook in education field. It is understood that it is quite impossible to meet all students' different needs in the classroom with a single textbook. On the other hand, the use of textbook may demotivate the teachers as they are restricted to use the material to deliver to the learners. Hence, a teacher must be creative in preparing the material and provide enough resources for the students to be able to learn the language in the classroom. He or she must become a resourceful and energetic in manipulating the usage of a textbook by creating or adapting the material to be used by the learners.

Criteria Of Textbook Evaluation

There must be systematic ways of doing something in order to get a good outcome. By doing this, the results will be more reliable and accurate for that matter. Hence, there are several attributes pertaining to the textbook evaluation. Mukundan (2007) stated that there are plentiful textbook evaluation checklists as useful tools that enhance the quality of evaluating the suitability and practicality of textbook. According to Harmer (1996) as cited by Amerian and Khaivar (2014), in textbook evaluation there should be some general criteria for physical appearance, content of the text, methodology and aims of the teaching program, specific needs of the teacher and how much the textbook fulfil these needs. Litz (2005) in his study stated several criteria that need to be evaluated in a textbook. There is the textbook package which consists of several criteria, the layout and design, the activities, the skills incorporated within the textbook, the language type and content. All criteria that have been mentioned by the scholars show that the components are important to be evaluated to acquire the overview of the textbook and find the suitability to be used in the classroom.

In addition, there are some other criteria in evaluating the textbook such as the specific language functions, grammar, and skills to fulfil the need of the students. Furthermore, another criterion that need to be considered is the accessibility and availability of the textbook in which it will help the students to find the book easily. Besides, it also suggested by Peterson and Coltrane (2003) that culture must be incorporated as a dynamic component of language learning and teachers should realize the cultural aspects that has been taught to the students. Hence, another criterion to be evaluated is the representation of cultural element and gender component in which the item, content and topics are match with the students' background, personalities and needs.

3.0 METHODOLOGY

This study aimed to look at teachers' evaluation of the Get Smart Plus 3 textbook used in Year 3 schools in Malaysia. The book comprises 133 pages, with 10 units in total. The study adopted a mixed method approach of both quantitative and qualitative approaches for data collection and analysis. 36 English language teachers were selected randomly from primary schools in different districts in Johor as the participants for the quantitative part of the study. All the respondents have experience teaching English to Year 3 pupils, with 20 teachers with more than 8 years of experience, and the rest between 3 to 8 years' experience of teaching primary school pupils.

The checklist for the quantitative data comprises items from seven different checklists, namely, Daud and Celce Murcia (1979), Garinger (2002), Ghorbani (2011), McDonough and Shaw (1993), Munkundan (2011), Razmjoo (2010), Tomlinson (2003). The checklist consists of ten subheadings, namely, general attributes (5 Items), vocabulary (5 Items), grammar (4 Items), speaking (2 Items), listening (2 Items), writing (3 Items), reading (3 Items), pronunciation (4 Items), supplementary materials (5 Items), and tasks and activities (4 Items). The items are based on a Likert Scale of 1-4, i.e., Poor (value= 1), Fair (value= 2), Good (value= 3), Excellent (value= 4). The data was analyzed using the SPSS for descriptive mean statistics of mean and interpreted by using the Mean Scores Interpretation Guide by Mukundan (2015) as it is significant to the study.

Table 1 Mean Scores Interpretation Guide

Scores	Range	Interpretation
0	0.00-0.80	Negligible Usefulness
1	0.81-1.60	Low Usefulness
2	1.61-2.80	Moderate Usefulness
3	2.81-3.60	High Usefulness
4	3.61-4.00	Very High Usefulness

Table 1 shows the Mean Scores Interpretation Guide. For the semi-structured interviews, questions were derived from two other checklists, namely from Cunningsworth (1983) and Sheldon (1988) to obtain a more in-depth view of the teachers regarding the textbook. Two teachers were interviewed based on availability and accessibility. The interviews were transcribed. The process of coding was done in which the emergent themes were recorded and analyzed to answer the research question. The following questions were asked during the interview to get more information about the strengths and weaknesses of the textbook:

- What do you think of the appearance and general design of the textbook?
- How are the language skills (Listening, Speaking, Reading, and Writing) dealt with in the textbook?
- How is the language content (Vocabulary, Grammar, Pronunciation) dealt with?
- Do you think the textbook is suitable for our students and it fulfils their needs?
- What are the problems you have faced during the teaching and learning session while using this textbook?
- How can this textbook be improved?

4.0 RESULTS

36 Year 3 schoolteachers from different districts in Johor were involved in this study. The results from the data that had been collected are analyzed and presented in the following tables, based on Descriptive Mean Analysis, followed by the analysis of the transcripts from the interviews.

Teachers' Perceptions On Get Smart Plus 3 (Quantitative Analysis)

This section answers research question 1, which is to identify teachers' perceptions towards the elements such as general attributes, vocabulary, grammar, speaking, writing, reading, pronunciation, supplementary materials as well as task and activities on the new textbook which is the Get Smart Plus 3 used by the year 3 students in Malaysian primary schools.

Table 2 General Attributes

Items	Criteria				Mean
	Poor	Fair	Good	Excellent	
The textbook takes into account the currently accepted methods of ESL/EFL	0	3	22	11	3.22
It gives directions for presentation of language items	0	4	27	5	3.03
It relates content to the learner's culture and context	21	12	3	0	1.53
Cultural sensitivity has been considered	20	16	0	0	1.47
It has authentic and real use of language	0	0	33	3	3.08

Table 2 shows the statistics for General Attributes. The findings show that the new Get Smart Plus 3 considers the currently accepted methods of ESL, for this the teachers have checked both good and excellent with a mean score of 3.22 in terms of its usefulness. Besides, it also gives directions for presentation of language items, and it has authentic and real use of language, represented by the scores, $M=3.03$ and $M=3.08$, respectively. However, the textbook contents are not related to the learner's culture and context ($M=1.53$) and the cultural sensitivity has not been considered appropriately ($M=1.47$) which indicates low usefulness.

Table 3 Vocabulary

Items	Criteria				Mean
	Poor	Fair	Good	Excellent	
It presents vocabulary in appropriate contexts and situations	0	2	26	8	3.17
The selection of the vocabulary is based on specified criteria	0	1	30	5	3.11
A load of vocabulary is appropriate to the level of learners	0	3	21	12	3.25
Words are efficiently repeated and recycled across the book	0	2	20	14	3.33
Distribution of the vocabulary across chapters and the whole book is good	0	2	25	9	3.19

Table 3 shows that that the vocabulary used in Get Smart Plus 3 textbook is appropriate to the level of learners ($M=3.25$) and words are efficiently repeated and recycled across the book ($M=3.33$) which indicates highly useful. Furthermore, the respondents agreed that the distribution of the vocabulary across chapters and whole book is good which represents by ($M=3.19$). Besides, the selection of the vocabulary for the textbook is based on specified criteria and it has appropriate contexts and situations which represented by ($M=3.11$) and ($M=3.17$) respectively that indicates highly useful.

Table 4 Grammar

Items	Criteria				Mean
	Poor	Fair	Good	Excellent	
It stresses communicative competence in teaching structural item	0	0	28	8	3.22
It provides adequate models featuring the structure to be taught	0	1	30	5	3.11
Grammar is contextualized	0	4	27	5	3.03
Grammar is introduced explicitly and reworked incidentally throughout the book	0	3	27	6	3.08

Table 4 shows the third component evaluated for the Get Smart Plus 3 textbook, i.e., Grammar. The respondents agreed that the textbook stresses on communicative competence in teaching structural items as well as adequate models featuring the structure to be taught which represent by ($M=3.22$) and ($M=3.11$) respectively. In addition, the respondents agreed that the grammar element is contextualized (excellent; $M=3.03$), introduced explicitly and reworked incidentally throughout the book ($M=3.08$) which indicates high usefulness.

Table 5 Speaking

Items	Criteria				Mean
	Poor	Fair	Good	Excellent	
Speaking tasks are complete, appropriate, and adequate.	0	6	23	7	3.03
It includes speech situations relevant to the learners' background	16	20	0	0	1.56
The speaking activities are developed to initiate meaningful communication	18	17	1	0	1.53

Table 5 reveals that the speaking tasks in Get Smart Plus 3 are complete, appropriate, and adequate, with a mean score of 3.03. However, all the respondents claimed that it does not include speech situations relevant to the learners' background and the activities are not developed to initiate meaningful communication, with the mean scores of 1.56 and 1.53, respectively to show that the textbook is unsuitable for the learners, thus of low usefulness in regard to developing speaking skills.

Table 6 Listening

Items	Criteria				Mean
	Poor	Fair	Good	Excellent	
The tasks for listening are arranged from simple to complex	0	4	28	4	3.00
The tasks are authentic	0	4	29	3	2.97

Table 6 shows the listening component that has been evaluated for Get Smart Plus 3 textbook. The mean scores ($M=2.97$) and ($M=3.00$), show that the tasks for listening are said to be authentic, and they are arranged from simple to complex that indicates high usefulness.

Table 7 Writing

Items	Criteria				Mean
	Poor	Fair	Good	Excellent	
The written tasks are related to the structure and vocabulary practiced orally	0	1	30	5	3.11
They give practice in controlled and guided composition in the early stages	0	4	28	4	3.00
They relate learning to the learners' interest and context.	0	3	31	2	2.97

Table 7 shows the scores for writing tasks in Get Smart Plus 3 textbook. In terms of the structure and vocabulary practiced orally, the scores if $M=3.11$. Furthermore, 88.9 percent of the respondents agreed that the written activities are given in controlled and guided composition for the early stages of the writing tasks. In addition, the writing skills, and activities in the textbook are able to relate with the learners' interest and context ($M=2.97$) indicating that the Get Smart Plus 3 textbook was highly useful to the learners.

Table 8 Reading

Items	Criteria				Mean
	Poor	Fair	Good	Excellent	
Reading tasks offer exercises for the understanding of the plain sense and implied meaning	1	1	31	3	3.00
It selects passages within the vocabulary range of the student	0	4	27	5	3.03
It selects passages reflecting a variety of styles of contemporary English	0	2	30	4	3.06

Table 8 shows the reading component that has been evaluated in Get Smart Plus 3 textbooks. The reading tasks are said to offer exercises for the understanding of the plain sense and implied meaning for the learners with a score of $M=3.00$, that indicates high usefulness. Apart from that, 88.9 percent of the respondents agreed that the textbook contains passages within the vocabulary range of the students with the mean of 3.03. Furthermore, the passages in the textbook also reflect a variety of styles of contemporary English ($M=3.06$), which indicates high usefulness as well.

Table 9 Pronunciation

Items	Criteria				Mean
	Poor	Fair	Good	Excellent	
The presentation is complete and appropriate	0	5	22	9	3.11
There is sufficient exercise on the recognition and production of individual sounds	0	5	24	7	3.06
There is a sufficient exercise on recognition and production of stress pattern	0	7	22	7	3.00
There is sufficient exercise on recognition and production of intonation	0	9	24	3	2.83

Table 9 shows that the pronunciation component in Get Smart Plus 3 is used efficiently throughout the textbook ($M=3.11$) which indicates high usefulness to the learners. Besides, the exercises on recognition and production of individual sounds, stress patterns and intonation are sufficient, with the means score indicating high usefulness with ($M=3.06$), ($M=3.00$) and ($M=2.83$), respectively.

Table 10 Task and Activities

Items	Criteria				Mean
	Poor	Fair	Good	Excellent	
The activities are interesting and adequate	0	3	22	11	3.22
The activities are designed so that the learners are using language rather than just practicing specified features of it	0	3	28	5	3.06
The activities help learners to communicate fluently, accurately, appropriately, and effectively	0	3	22	11	3.22
There is a balance between controlled and free activities	0	5	14	17	3.33
The activities and exercises are varied in the format so that they will continually motivate and challenge learners	0	3	27	6	3.08

Table 10 shows that all tasks and activities are well presented throughout the textbook. From the results, the respondents agreed that the activities in the textbook are interesting and adequate for the learners ($M=3.22$). In addition, the activities designed in the textbook can help learners to communicate fluently, accurately, appropriately, and effectively ($M=3.22$) that indicate high usefulness to the learners. Apart from that, 91.7 percent of the respondents agreed that the activities and exercises are varied in the format so that they will continually motivate and challenge the learners ($M=3.08$), which again shows high usefulness.

Table 11 Supplementary Materials

Items	Criteria				Mean
	Poor	Fair	Good	Excellent	
The book contains visual materials such as pictures, videos, flashcards	0	0	26	10	3.28
It contains audio/video material	0	0	24	12	3.33
The teacher guide is available and gives useful and complete guidance along with alternative activities	0	0	9	27	3.72
The book has a workbook and supplementary activities	0	0	13	23	3.64

Table 11 reveals that the materials that support the Get Smart Plus 3 textbook are very resourceful. Based on the results, the book contains visual materials such as pictures, videos, and flashcards as well as audio or video material, ($M=3.28$) and ($M=3.33$) respectively. Besides, the textbook also comes with workbook and supplementary activities ($M=3.64$). In addition, the respondents also agreed that the teacher's guide provided together with the textbook is beneficial as it gives complete guidance along with alternative activities for the teacher to use in the classroom ($M=3.72$). For the teacher guide and supplementary materials, the mean scores indicate very high usefulness.

Strengths And Weaknesses Of The Get Smart Plus 3 (Qualitative Analysis)

To answer research question 2, semi-structured interviews were conducted with 2 Year 3 teachers who have experience using the textbook to find out their perceptions on the strengths and weaknesses of the textbook. The interview sessions were transcribed and coded into several appropriate themes, such as suitability to learners, learning-teaching content, language content and language skills.

Theme 1 - Suitability to Learners

Suitability to learners is the first theme that relates to the appropriateness of the textbook, the components to meet the learners' needs and the accessibility of element of culture to the learners. All these aspects are important in determining the relevance of the textbook for the year 3 pupils to use in the classroom. In terms of the physical appearance of the textbook, both respondents agreed that it is appropriate and suitable for the learners. They said that the cover of the textbook has more colourful images as well as large fonts in bright colours. The design and layout of the textbook are creatively illustrated that could attract the learners at a first glance. For example, respondent B mentioned about the strength of the layout and illustrations:

"Referring to Get Smart Plus 3 textbook, it contains more colourful and interesting pictures. By looking at the front page, the style of the words and attractive illustration can help to grab pupils' attention".

Both respondents added that that the Get Smart Plus 3 textbook is suitable and appropriate to be used with the learners of high or above average levels of proficiency because they are able to understand and comprehend the content of the lesson, whereas the book of a much higher level for the lower proficiency learners which would be difficult for them to follow. This is explained by Respondent A:

"The problem faced during the teaching and learning session is difficulty in getting students to understand the content. For example, the texts have not been adapted to the local context but directly copied from the original version. It is quite difficult for me to explain to the low proficiency learners on how to understand the lesson during teaching and learning session in the class".

Apart from that, the respondents stated that the textbook is quite difficult for the lower proficiency learners due to the foreign context used in the book. This aspect is mainly to do with certain topics as well as examples that relate for to British culture. Therefore, the respondent A suggested that the local context or example should be incorporated into the textbook to make the learning more meaningful to the learners. For example, respondent A stated that:

“It is quite difficult for me to explain to the low proficiency learners on how to understand the lesson during teaching and learning session in the class. Therefore, it has strong British context with minimal local context. The textbook can be improved or reviewed on the extensive use of foreign cultural references which will only confuse students and teachers. For me, that is possible enough for our MOE to make adjustment to the textbook so that more into our Malaysian context”.

Theme 2 - Learning-Teaching Content

The second theme from the interviews is the learning and teaching content which relates to the problems or difficulties that the teachers have/are faced with when using the book in the classroom. The teachers agreed that most of the topics and content of the textbook are adequate and suitable to the learners' needs. As for example, the topic in the textbook starts with *Welcome* in Module One in which the learners have been introduced with the basic elements such as friends, family, numbers, and clock in which to get them to get familiar with the topic and the incoming topic later. However, both respondents stated that they have several problems during the teaching and learning sessions as the contents/ topics in the textbook are based on foreign contexts and especially based on different cultural elements. For example, respondent A stated:

“The problem faced during the teaching and learning session is difficulty in getting students to understand the content. For example, the texts have not been adapted to the local context but directly copied from the original version”.

Similarly, the teachers also mentioned difficulties using the textbook for teaching and learning as it requires more explanations from the teacher especially on the contexts and cultural elements that students are unfamiliar. Respondent B stated:

“Of course I have problems during teaching and learning session in the classroom. One of the problems is, I have to provide more explanation to the pupils when it comes to the topic that the pupils are not familiar with. It is due to some extent in which there will be some different in context and cultural aspects that are different with us, Malaysians”.

Theme 3 - Language Content

The third theme from the interviews is language content which is about the integration of several components such as vocabulary, grammar and pronunciation. Both respondents revealed that the pronunciation component in Get Smart Plus 3 is quite problematic and difficult for learners due to the accent of the native speakers. Thus, students are not able to follow the pronunciation of native speakers. For example, respondent A stated that:

“However, the pronunciation is somehow a ‘killer’ to the pupils. Teaching pronunciation using the materials that have been provided such as CD is quite difficult because of the accent of the native speaker”.

Similarly, Respondent B stated that in doing pronunciation activities, she has to spend more time teaching the words as the students are not able to repeat after the recordings due to native speaker accent of received pronunciation (RP) which is unknown to them:

“Teaching pronunciation is quite difficult when I’m using the CD because of the accent of the speaker. I have to do a lot of pronunciation exercises with them and let them work in pairs or groups to enhance their confident to speak and pronounce correctly”.

On the other hand, both respondents agreed that the grammar and vocabulary components are well-presented and designed throughout the textbook and the words are recycled or repeated in the activities. For example, the respondent B stated that:

“In terms of vocabulary content, there are not many new words that they have to learn in each chapter. It’s good because we can use repetition technique using different sentences to help the students understand better”.

Theme 4 - Language Skills

The final theme is language skills, which refers to the four language skills, i.e., listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Both teachers stated that the skills are well-presented and planned as they are efficiently developed throughout the textbook and equally distributed for each chapter or module, and the teachers are given guidance on how to do the listening and speaking activities effectively, which is a strength of the textbook. For example, respondent A stated:

“The textbook dealt with all language skills especially four common skills of listening, speaking, reading, and writing. The most important is every unit has got guidance for teacher to conduct listening and speaking skills which I think are helpful enough to the teacher”.

Teacher B also agreed that the skills are presented well, and the CD is a great help for teachers when doing listening and speaking activities. She added that:

“It includes all skills that we need. Reading and writing can be taught using the textbook directly. Teacher can also use the CD provided to help the pupils understand better especially when teaching listening and speaking”.

■5.0 DISCUSSION

The findings from both the quantitative and qualitative data revealed that the Get Smart Plus 3 textbook in general is highly useful, however, for effective teaching and learning in the Malaysian classrooms, some improvements are needed.

From the quantitative analysis, we found that the textbook is suitable to be used in the Malaysian Year 3 classrooms as most of the components of the textbook received mean scores of between 2.81 to 3.60 which indicate high usefulness based on the Mean Scores Interpretation Guide by Mukundan et al., (2015). Similarly, based on the four themes identified from the interviews, i.e., suitability to learners, learning-teaching content, language content and language skills, the teachers agreed that the textbook in general is suitable. In terms of general attributes and layout for example, the book is perceived as highly useful as it is presented in an attractive and colourful way that can attract the learners’ interests. Tok (2010) explains the importance of layout and design of a textbook that needs to be interesting and eye-catching so that the learners will be attracted to the book from their first experience and be motivated to explore the book further. Similarly, Sarem et al., (2013), state the importance of general appearance, size, and format of a textbook to raise the level of interest of students in the use of the textbook. The repetition of vocabulary across the textbook has made the learning process easier as the learners understand better when the words are recycled. Besides, the supplementary materials that come with the textbook are highly useful to the learners and to the teachers. The results of the questionnaire show that the textbook is full of resources such as the pictures, audio as well as the video to enhance the learning experience in the classroom. Furthermore, the teacher’s guidebook is very useful that they might use it to get the idea on how to create an interesting lesson which is going to be used during the teaching and learning session. Vocabulary and grammar components are said to be efficiently developed throughout the textbook in which there are no extensive new vocabularies introduced as well as adequate grammar components for the learners to learn. In general, the Get Smart 3 is considered as highly useful as most of the components, such as reading, grammar, vocabulary, writing, speaking, tasks and activities, and supplementary materials, are well received by the teachers. Thus, the Get Smart Plus 3 fits the scope of a good textbook with according to Bartram (2010), can facilitate better learning and motivate learners.

The findings from both the quantitative and qualitative analyses however, indicated some components that have raised concerns for the teachers, which received scores of low usefulness and were also discussed as the weaknesses of the textbook by the teachers who were interviewed. Firstly, that the book lacks relevance to learners’ culture and context and needs to give more consideration for cultural sensitivity. In addition, both respondents from the interview stated that there are certain topics in the textbook that are out of the Malaysian context which have led to difficulties for the learners during teaching and learning sessions. According to Zu and Kong (2009), language and culture are closely related, and the element of culture is important to be imparted in the textbook. The integration of culture into the textbook and teaching will make the whole teaching and learning process become complete. Thus, to instill the local cultural element into the textbook is important so that the learning process will be more meaningful to the language learners. Kırkgöz (2009) explains that the content of the textbook must meet the current curriculum goals and objectives as well as the learners’ needs. Learner needs thus, is one of the important elements that need to be considered when developing a textbook.

Secondly, although the teachers agreed that all the skills are presented well and are sufficient for the learners as they can develop the skills gradually from time to time, the speaking skills component received scores of low usefulness as the speech situations given are said to be irrelevant to the learners’ background, while the activities themselves do not initiate meaningful communication. In addition, the teachers found the accent of the native speakers in the activities for listening skill and pronunciation to be challenging for the learners. They mentioned that the students found native speaker accent difficult to understand, and this made teaching these components more difficult for teachers. According to Kırkgöz (2009) a good textbook must comprise complete components such as the content and the language skills that can fulfil the objectives of the curriculum as well as the learners’ needs. Sadiku (2015) highlights the importance of the listening and speaking skills for effective communication, but to achieve this, the activities must ensure purposeful communication that reflect authentic or real-life situations. The teachers had also stated that the textbook is more suitable for high and above average students as it is quite challenging for lower proficiency students.

Thus, although the strength of the textbook Get Smart Plus 3 textbook include interesting activities with comprehensible instructions that make the book suitable for the learners, the findings also highlight the need for some improvements that need to be addressed. For these reasons, the Get Smart Plus 3 textbook needs to be adapted to be more culturally suitable, give focus to lower proficiency learner needs as well, and include activities that lead to meaningful and authentic communication. that relate to interests and abilities of the Malaysian learners. Our findings concur with the findings of past studies (Ghazi Mohd Takal et al.,2021; Johar & Abdul Aziz, 2019) that the CEFR aligned imported textbooks are challenging for teachers and students and need improvements. We concur with Ponnusamy et al., (2021) that for imported textbooks that focus on foreign cultures, there is a need for the textbooks to be customized to suit the needs of Malaysian learners. ‘Custom textbooks’ thus, can involve local teachers in helping to adapt the elements that are found to be more challenging or lacking in relevance and purpose for meaningful use of the language.

■6.0 CONCLUSION

The Get Smart Plus 3 textbook used by Year 3 pupils is one of the textbooks that was introduced by the Ministry of Education under the adoption of the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR) for English language teaching and learning in Malaysian schools. Since the introduction of the new CEFR aligned textbooks, studies have highlighted various issues raised by teachers using the textbooks. Following such concerns, this study investigated the perceptions of Year 3 teachers about the strengths and weaknesses of the textbook. The findings showed that the Get Smart Plus 3 textbook is highly useful in terms of general attributes, language skills, supplementary materials, task, and activities, and has adequate vocabulary and grammar components as well. However, the teachers also identified concerns with some elements of the textbook, such as the lack of cultural sensitivity as some contents are not related to the learners’

culture and context. Learners are exposed to foreign cultures that learners are unable to relate to. In addition, the textbook does not include speech situations that are relevant to the learners' background, which impedes meaningful and purposeful practice of the target language, thus the learners are unable to participate during the lesson due to the unfamiliar cultural contents in the textbook. Besides, the textbook is said to be more suitable for high to medium proficiency level students. In summary, the new imported textbook, Get Smart Plus 3 is highly useful but can be challenging in some respects for the learners. The study highlights the importance of textbook evaluation by teachers when selecting textbooks. The strength and weaknesses of the textbook can be used to provide better insights to textbook writers, teachers and the curriculum development unit. We suggest that for textbooks to be better suited for the Malaysian learners of varying levels, some parts of the textbook can be customized.

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