

## مدى توافق كتب اللغة الإنجليزية الأولية المستخدمة في الجامعات السعودية مع الثقافة السعودية الإسلامية

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ملخص البحث. هدفت الدراسة إلى مزيد من المعرفة عن حالة تعليم اللغة الإنجليزية في السنة الأولى في جامعات المملكة، وهدفت كذلك إلى معرفة لأي مدى تتفق الكتب المستخدمة في تدريس اللغة الإنجليزية في السنة الأولى من التعليم الجامعي في أقسام ومراكز اللغة الإنجليزية في الجامعات السعودية مع الثقافة السعودية الإسلامية. وللوصول إلى هذين الهدفين استخدم الباحث أداتين حيث تم توزيع استبانته على رؤساء أقسام اللغة الإنجليزية لمعرفة المزيد عن تدريس اللغة الإنجليزية في السنة الجامعية الأولى، بالإضافة إلى قائمة لمعرفة مدى توافق الكتب المقررة لتدريس اللغة الإنجليزية في السنة الأولى من التعليم الجامعي بجامعات المملكة (صور، المحتويات، الألفاظ، التمارين) مع الثقافة السعودية الإسلامية.

ولقد تضمنت النتائج اختلافات واضحة بين الجامعات السعودية في اختيار الكتب والوحدات الدراسية المستخدمة لتدريسها وإن كانت قد أظهرت وعياً في اختيار الكتب المتوافقة إلى أكبر حد مع الثقافة السعودية الإسلامية ولكن هذا الأمر لا يتفق مع سلسلة الكتب المسماة Interactions I and II حيث وجد إنها تتصادم مع الثقافة السعودية الإسلامية.

وعلى هذا فقد أوصت الدراسة بعمل برنامج موحد لاختيار الكتب وباستبدال كتب Interactions I and II بكتب أفضل. كما اقترحت تكوين لجنة على مستوى المملكة لتقييم الكتب الواردة من الخارج على فترات زمنية محددة وأوصت الدراسة كذلك بتكوين فريق من الخبراء وواضعي المناهج وكاتبي الكتب الدراسية لتطوير كتب دراسية متوافقة مع الثقافة السعودية الإسلامية لتدريس اللغة الإنجليزية.

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Strongly disagree	Disagree	Un-decided	Agree	Strongly agree
0	1	2	3	4

**Culture****13 The contents develop appreciation of Islamic and Saudi culture**

The contents reflect the Islamic and Saudi culture  
They develop appreciation of the Saudi environment

The concepts are linked to the students' background knowledge

They reflect students' experiences.

They encourage Saudi moral values

They contain no stereotypes on the basis of religion, race, sex, age, social class, occupation or ethnic groups

They do not include selections highlighting religious aspects contrary to Islam

They do not contradict Islamic Saudi culture

**Appendix C****A list of textbooks reviewed by the researcher**

It must be mentioned here that the study did not evaluate the textbooks of English for specific purposes like the ones used at King Faisal and King Fahad Universities.

1. *A 101 Course in English Language: A New Approach*. Marghalani, Abdul-Rahman. Dar Al-Ameen, 1996.
2. *A 102 Course in English Language: A New Approach*. Dar Al-Ameen, 1996.
3. *A Communicative Grammar (Interactions 1)*. Kirm, Flaine, and Pamela Hartmann. McGraw-Hill, 1996.
4. *A Communicative Grammar (Interactions 2)*. Werner, Patricia, Mary Church, and Linda Baker. McGraw-Hill, 1996.
5. *A Listening/Speaking Skills Book (Interactions 1)*. Tanka, Judith and Paul Most. McGraw-Hill, 1996.
6. *Listening/Speaking Skills Book (Interactions 2)*. Tanka, Judith, Paul Most, and Linda Baker. McGraw-Hill, 1996.
7. *A Reading Skills Book (Interactions 1)*. Kirm, Flaine and Pamela Hartmann. McGraw-Hill, 1996.
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19. *Understanding and Using English Grammar*. Azar, Betty. Prentice Hall, 1981.
20. *Writing as a Thinking Process*. Lawrence, Mary. The University of Michigan Press, 1976.
21. *Writing Good Sentences*. Faulker, Calude. Scribner, 1980.

against the Islamic and Saudi one (words like boyfriend, girlfriend, wine, gambling)

**III Exercises**

Strongly disagree	Disagree	Un-decided	Agree	Strongly agree
0	1	2	3	4

**General**

9 Exercises develop students' comprehension of the reading materials

The exercises offer opportunities to practice new words and structures

They encourage critical thinking

They recognize individual differences

There are clear directions for the exercises

There are varied types of exercises

There is a suitable pattern of review

They promote meaningful communication

Strongly disagree	Disagree	Un-decided	Agree	Strongly agree
0	1	2	3	4

**Culture**

10 Exercises promote meaningful communication in situations that are consistent with Islamic and Saudi culture

The situations do not clash with Islamic and Saudi culture

They do not include propagation of any culture opposing Islamic and Saudi culture

Strongly disagree	Disagree	Un-decided	Agree	Strongly agree
0	1	2	3	4

**IV. Contents**

**General**

11 The contents are appropriate to be used in the classroom

The contents are appropriate to the needs of the students

They satisfy the students' varied interests

They are up-to-date

They are arranged in logical order

They motivate the students to read

They help in achieving the goals of the syllabus

They satisfy individual differences by presenting varied levels of difficulty

They help in applying what is learnt

Strongly disagree	Disagree	Un-decided	Agree	Strongly agree
0	1	2	3	4

**V. Concepts**

**General**

12 The concepts are appropriate to be taught in the classroom

The concepts presented are appropriate to the students' intellectual abilities

There is adequate explanation of concepts

They are presented in a graded way

Strongly disagree	Disagree	Un-decided	Agree	Strongly agree
0	1	2	3	4

**Vocabulary control**

**4 Vocabulary control is suitable for the students**

- New words are selected on the basis of frequency and usefulness
- The textbook contains graded presentation of new words
- It contains appropriate contextual situations according to the Islamic beliefs
- The vocabulary load is appropriate
- It contains a glossary of new and difficult words
- Basic words are appropriate to the linguistic abilities of the students
- Basic words reappear throughout the textbook

Strongly disagree	Disagree	Un-decided	Agree	Strongly agree
0	1	2	3	4

**Syntactic complexity**

**5 Syntactic complexity is appropriate to the students**

- The textbook contains familiar sentence structure
- It contains easily understandable complex sentences
- It contains understandable language patterns
- The sentence length is suitable for the students.

Strongly disagree	Disagree	Un-decided	Agree	Strongly agree
0	1	2	3	4

**Cohesion**

**6 The textbook contains appropriate cohesive ties (relationship between adjoining clauses and sentences)**

- There are clear relationships between pronouns and their referents
- There are explicit ties between clauses and sentences (and, but, yet)

Strongly disagree	Disagree	Un-decided	Agree	Strongly agree
0	1	2	3	4

**Coherence**

**7 There is coherence within the reading selections in the textbook to ease comprehension**

- There are clear identifiable organizational patterns in the textbook
- The textbook contains consistent information
- The subheadings help in understanding
- Important portions of the textbook are highlighted

Strongly disagree	Disagree	Un-decided	Agree	Strongly agree
0	1	2	3	4

**Culture**

**8 The vocabulary items are consistent with Islamic and Saudi culture**

- The textbook contains appropriate contextual situations that do not contradict Islamic and Saudi culture
- Vocabulary items do not propagate any culture



**Appendix B**

**Textbook Evaluation Checklist  
Information Sheet**

**A) Textbook Information**

Title \_\_\_\_\_

Author (s) \_\_\_\_\_

Publisher \_\_\_\_\_

Year of Publication \_\_\_\_\_

**B) Textbook Evaluation Sheet**

**Instructions:** Please check one of the five columns given against each item:

**No. Items**

**I. Illustrations**

Strongly disagree	Disagree	Un-decided	Agree	Strongly agree
0	1	2	3	4

**General**

1 The illustrations help in comprehending the text

The illustrations are appropriate to university students

They portray the text well

They are directly related to the text

They are clear, simple and attractive

Strongly disagree	Disagree	Un-decided	Agree	Strongly agree
0	1	2	3	4

**Culture**

2 The illustrations are consistent with Islamic and Saudi culture

The illustrations contain nothing against the Islamic religion

They contain no stereotypes on the basis of religion, race, sex, age, social class, occupation or ethnic groups

They do not tempt to religious aspects of other religions

**II Vocabulary**

Strongly disagree	Disagree	Un-decided	Agree	Strongly agree
0	1	2	3	4

**Appropriateness**

3 The vocabulary items used in the textbook are appropriate

Most of the vocabulary items are familiar to the students

Unfamiliar vocabulary items are fully illustrated with sufficient contextual clues

Technical vocabulary items are fully explained

**Table No.2. Books used within ten years then changed and reasons for changing them: (for answering question # 5). Please use one table for each textbook:**

Course #	Course Title	Title of book	Author	Publisher	Pub. Year	Assigned		Changed	
						Year	Term	Year	Term

Reasons for changing the book:

Course #	Course Title	Title of book	Author	Publisher	Pub. Year	Assigned		Changed	
						Year	Term	Year	Term

Reasons for changing the book:

Course #	Course Title	Title of book	Author	Publisher	Pub. Year	Assigned		Changed	
						Year	Term	Year	Term

Reasons for changing the book:



## Appendix A

**A Survey Regarding the Current State of Teaching  
Freshman English in Saudi Arabian Universities**

Dr. Ahmed Omer Alhaidari  
Faculty of Education, King Abdulaziz University, Madina

University: \_\_\_\_\_ College\Center \_\_\_\_\_

Chairman's Name \_\_\_\_\_ Phone No. \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

Please answer the following questions:

1. What are the titles and numbers of Freshman English courses taught at each level? Please give the number of the study units/credit hours assigned to each course:

Course #	Course Title	S. Units

Course #	Course Title	S. Units

2. How many sections of Freshman English courses are taught in your department or center?  
\_\_\_\_\_
3. How much time per week is allocated to each study unit? \_\_\_\_\_ hour(s)
4. When was each textbook currently used prescribed for each freshman course? Please give full details of the books. Also, please give the semester and the year. (Kindly fill in table number one.)
5. For the last ten years, how many textbooks have been used in each freshman course? Please, mention their titles, authors and publishers. For each textbook used, please mention the reasons, if any, behind changing it.(Kindly fill in table number two)
6. What criteria are used while selecting the books currently under use in freshman English courses?
7. What procedures were followed for the selection of the textbooks currently under use?
8. List the number of teachers involved in the selection of the textbooks currently under use. Also, please, give their nationalities, qualifications, and experience of teaching EFL / ESL

Table 4. Contd.

Evaluation items	Book 1**	Book 2	Book 3	Book 4	Book 5	Book 6	Book 7	Book 8	Book 9	Book 10	Book 11	Book 12	Book 13	Book 14	Book 15	Book 16	Book 17	Book 18	Book 19	Book 20	Book 21	
<b>III. Exercises</b>																						
<b>General:</b> 9. Exercises develop students' comprehension of the reading materials	1	1	4	3	4	3	3	3	3	3	3		3	3	3	3	1	3	4	4	3	
<b>Culture:</b> 10. Exercises promote meaningful communication in situations that are consistent with Islamic and Saudi culture	4	3	0	1	0	1	0	11	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	3	1	3	4	3	
<b>IV. Contents:</b>																						
<b>General</b> 11. The contents are appropriate to be used in the classroom	1	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	1	3	3	3	
<b>V. Concepts:</b>																						
<b>General:</b> 12. The concepts are appropriate to be taught in the classroom	3	3	3	3	3	3	0	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	4	3
<b>Culture</b> 13. The contents develop appreciation of Islamic and Saudi culture	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	2	1	0	1	1	1	3	2

\*\*Names of the textbooks are given in Appendix C in the same order as given above.

\*\*\*NA means not applicable.

Table 4. Summary of the results obtained on the evaluation of freshman level textbooks\* by using the following five columns rating scale

Evaluation items	Book 1**	Book 2	Book 3	Book 4	Book 5	Book 6	Book 7	Book 8	Book 9	Book 10	Book 11	Book 12	Book 13	Book 14	Book 15	Book 16	Book 17	Book 18	Book 19	Book 20	Book 21	
<b>I. Illustrations:</b>																						
<b>General:</b>	NA***	NA	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	NA	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3
1. The illustrations help in comprehending the text																						
<b>Culture:</b>																						
2. The illustrations are consistent with Islamic and Saudi culture	NA	NA	0	1	1	1	0	1	1	1	3	NA	1	1	2	1	0	2	1	3	2	
<b>II. Vocabulary</b>																						
<b>Appropriateness:</b>																						
3. The vocabulary items used in the textbook are appropriate	3	13	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	4	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3
<b>Vocabulary control:</b>																						
4. Vocabulary control is suitable for the students	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	1	3	3	3	3	
<b>Syntactic complexity:</b>																						
5. Syntactic complexity is appropriate to the students	3	3	3	4	4	3	4	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	4	3	3	3	3	3	3
<b>Cohesion:</b>																						
6. The textbook contains appropriate cohesive ties (relationships) between adjoining clauses and sentences	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	1	4	3	3	3	4
<b>Coherence:</b>																						
7. There is coherence within the reading selections in the textbook to ease comprehension	3	3	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	3	3	3	4	4	4	4	3	4	3	3	3	4
<b>Culture:</b>																						
8. The vocabulary items are consistent with Islamic and Saudi culture	4	4	0	1	0	0	0	1	1	1	1	3	1	1	1	3	1	1	3	4	4	1

\*0= strongly disagree, 1 = Disagree, 2 =Undecided, 3 = Agree, 4 = Strongly agree

Table 3. Contd.

No.	University	College	Course no.	Course title	Title of replaced book	Author(s)	Publisher	Year of pub.	Year of selection	Year of replacement	Reasons for replacement
4.	K. Saud Univ	Arts	113	Comprehension I	<i>Developing Skills</i>	L.G. Alexander	Longman		82	90	Outdated
			010	Intensive Eng.	<i>Welcome to English 2</i>	Willard Sheelen	ELS, Inc.	76	?	2nd/1418 H	Were based on audiolingual approach, hence outdated. One more integrated set is chosen
			101	"	<i>Welcome to English 3</i>	"	"	77			
5.	K. Fahad Univ.	English Center	101	Freshman Composition I	<i>Graded Exercises in English</i>	Robert Dixon	Dixon English Series	-	?		A lot of culturally unacceptable material
			101	Freshman Composition I	<i>Introduction to Academic Discourses</i>	T. Dale	KFUPM Press	90	90	1st/94	The book was updated with revision
			101	Freshman Composition	<i>English Simplified</i>	Ellesworth	"	90	1st/90	1st/98	Weak on verbs
			102	Freshman Composition II	<i>Researching and Reporting</i>	Hidden/Baker	"	90	1st/90	1st/98	An updated version is adopted





Table 2. Selection of books

No.	University	College	Criteria for choosing books	Procedure	Those involved in the procedure
1.	K.A. Univ.	Arts and Humanities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Bridge the gap between secondary English and the English required for studying specialized courses in linguistics and literature</li> <li>- Should not include written materials or pictures not allowed within the religious, social, political setup of KSA</li> <li>- Should be covered within the time allowed (one term)</li> <li>- Should teach the 4 skills and grammar</li> <li>- The need of students in English as basis to their studies</li> </ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- 4 teachers with 10-20 years of experience and one language instructor with 10 years of experience.</li> <li>- Saudi, South American, Sudanese, American</li> </ul>
2.	K.A. Univ.	Edu. Madinah	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Availability and up to date</li> </ul>	<p>Some staff member(s) choose the book and offers it to the department council to approve it after a serious discussion</p> <p>A Book Selection Committee (now). Before the Chairman used to choose the books.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- 6 teachers with 5-20 years</li> <li>- Pakistani, Sudanese, Egyptians, Jordanian, and Saudi</li> <li>- Chairman</li> </ul>
3.	Ummul Qura Univ.	Social Sciences			
4.	King Saud Univ	Taif Arts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Nothing</li> <li>- Compatibility with course description</li> <li>- Appropriateness of materials</li> <li>- Usefulness, &amp; relation to other books at the level</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Acquiring the books from publisher</li> <li>- Considering them by the selection committee</li> <li>- Discussing then deciding</li> <li>- A committee</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- 7 teachers with 10-20 years experience</li> <li>- Saudi, Syrian, American</li> </ul>
5.		Education-Abha			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- 5 teachers with 8-20 years experience</li> <li>- Saudis, Egyptians, Sudanese, American</li> </ul>
6.	King Fahad Univ.	Language Center	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Developed within the department</li> <li>- Scientific English &amp; research</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Developed within the department, input is received at the end of the year and then books are revised</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- 21 teachers with 5-10 years experience</li> <li>- South African, American, British, Canadian</li> </ul>
7.	King Faisal Univ	Language Center	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Suitability of materials to (a) students' level in English (b) their area of specialization</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- A pilot study is made by staff</li> <li>- Using the books as supplementary</li> <li>- If good the book is put into active usage</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- 7 teachers with 10-20 years experience</li> <li>- Somalese, Palestinian, Jordanian, American, British, Saudi</li> </ul>

Table 1. Contd.

University	College	No. of courses	Course No.	Course title	Study units	Title of books	Author	Publisher	Year of pub.	Terms & year assign.	
K. Saud Univ.	Edu. Abha	4	010 Inten. Prog.	- Listening	4	<i>A Communicative Grammar</i>	Elaine Kirm & Jack Darcy	McGraw Hill		2nd/A.H. 1418	
				- Reading	4	<i>A Reading Skills Book</i>	Elaine Kirm & Pamela H.	"			
				- Grammar	5	<i>A Listening/Speaking Skills book</i>	Judith T. & Paul M.	"			
				- Writing	4	<i>A Writing Process Book</i>	M.K. Segal & C. Pavlite	"			
King Fahad Univ.	Eng. Lang. Center	3	101	Composition 1	5	<i>Introduction to Academic Discourse</i>			90/94	1st. 1990	
			102	Composition 2	4	<i>Researching &amp; Reporting</i>				1990	

Table 1. Contd.

No.	University	College	No. of courses	Course No.	Course title	Study units	Title of books	Author	Publisher	Year of pub.	Terms & year assign.
5.	K. Faisal	Language Center	1	151	- General English	-	<i>Idea Exchange</i>	Linda London Blanton	- Heinle & Heinle	1988	
					- Intensive English		- <i>Understanding Eng. Grammar</i>	- Betty Azar	- Prentice Hall	1992	
							- <i>Improving Aural Comprehension</i>	- Montley	- U. of Michigan	1972	
6.	K. Saud Univ.	Arts	7	111	<i>Writing Skills</i>	3	<i>Writing Good Sentences</i>	C. Faulthener	Scribner	1980	1st/1983
				113	Comprehension (1)	2	<i>Developing Skills</i>	L.G. Alexander	Longman	1980	
				112	Spoken English	2	<i>English Conversation Practice</i>	Grant Taylor	McGraw Hill	1967	
				114	Composition (1)	3	<i>Warriner's Grammar &amp; Comp.</i>	John Warriner	Harcourt Brace	1988	
				115	Comprehension (2)	3	<i>English for Today 6</i>	NCTE	McGraw Hill	1975	
				117	Basic Skills	3	<i>Connections &amp; Contexts</i>	Walker Wright	Harcourt Brace	1981	
				116	Remedial Grammar	3	<i>Rapid Review of Eng. Grammar</i>	Jean Praninskas	Englewood Cliffs	1975	

Table I. Contd.

No.	University	College	No. of courses	Course No.	Course title	Study units	Title of books	Author	Publisher	Year of pub.	Terms & year assign.
3.	Ummul Qura Univ.	Social Sciences	7	101	English Language	2	<i>Proceeding into English</i>	Dean Curry	USA	1982	1st/A.H. 1410
				110	Structure (1)	3	<i>Developing Communicative Competence</i>	Brader	Univ. of Pittsburgh	1974	"
				120	Listening/Speaking	3	<i>Improving Spoken English</i>	Morley	Univ. of Michigan	1979	"
				130	Writing (1)	3	<i>From Sentence to Paragraph</i>	Di Pippo	Prentice Hall	1966	
				121	Listening/Speaking	3	<i>Improving Spaking Skills</i>	Morley	Univ. of Michigan	1979	
				131	Writing (2)	3	<i>Writing as a Thinking Process</i>	Mary Lawrence	"	1980	
				141	Reading (2)	3	<i>Encounters</i>	Berger	Harcourt Bros	1980	
4.	Ummul Qura Univ.	Edu. Taif	2	101	English Language 1	2	<i>A 101 Course in English Language: A New Approach</i>	Abdul Rahman Marghalani	Dar Al Ameen, Cairo	1996	
				102	English Language 2	2	<i>A 101 Course in Eng. Lang. A New Approach</i>	Abdul Rahman A. Marghalani	Dar Al Ameen, Cairo	1996	

Table 1. Books used

No.	University	College	No. of courses	Course No.	Course title	Study units	Title of books	Author	Publisher	Year of pub.	Terms & year assign.
1.	K.A. Univ Jeddah	Arts and Humanities	6	101	Grammar & Composition	-	<i>A Communicative Gram (Interactions 1)</i>	Elaine Kirm & Jack Darcy	McGraw Hill	1990	-
				102	Oral English	-	<i>A Listening/Speaking Skills Book (Interactions 1)</i>	Judith Tanka & Paul Ma	McGraw Hill		-
				106	Reading	-	<i>A Reading Skills Books (Interactions 1)</i>	Elaine Kirm & P. Hartman	McGraw Hill		-
				103	Grammar and Comp.	-	<i>A Communicative Grammar (Interactions 2)</i>	P. Werner, M. Church & L. Baker	McGraw Hill		-
				104	Oral English	-	<i>A Listening/Speaking Skills Book (Interactions 2)</i>	Judith Tanka & Linda Baker	McGraw Hill		-
				107	Reading	-	<i>A Reading Skills Book (Interactions 2)</i>	Elaine Kirm & P. Hartman			
2.	K.A. Univ	Edu. Madina	3	101	English Language 1	2	<i>Practice &amp; Progress Units 1-24</i>	L.G. Alexander	Longman	1967	1986
				102	English Language 2	2	<i>Practice &amp; Progress Units 25-48</i>	L.G. Alexander	Longman	1967	
				215	Language Practice 1	3	<i>Developing Skills</i>	L.G. Alexander	Longman	1964	

2- Another difference is in the number of study units or credit hours assigned to each course. Some courses are allocated two study units whereas others are given three.

3- Though the English textbooks used at the freshman level differ from each other yet the majority of them are quite suitable for our students. However, some of them are better than others in the sense that they have the least number of words that clash with Saudi Islamic culture. This reflects a good sense of judgement among those who select these books.

4- The textbooks called *Interactions I* and *II* are not suitable for Saudi students. The contents of these textbooks are not only culturally biased but also conflict with Saudi culture and Islamic values all the way through.

## 5.2. Recommendations

On the basis of the above conclusions, and to achieve the avowed goals of this study the researcher puts forward the following recommendations. He hopes that the quality of teaching English at freshman level will improve by following these recommendations.

1- The Ministry of Higher Education may plan a unified program on the national level for the freshman level teaching of English in the Kingdom to overcome the varied problems pointed out above. All universities should abide by the set of chosen textbooks.

2- The series of textbooks entitled *Interactions I* and *II* currently under use at freshman level in some national universities should immediately be replaced with better ones. These books are totally biased and against Saudi and Islamic culture.

3- A panel of educational experts, curriculum planners and textbook writers should be constituted by the Ministry of Higher Education to develop appropriate curriculum and/or to write textbooks in line with our social, cultural and religious values. The proposed panel should also include some representatives from the girls' colleges and Universities. A native speaker having rich experience of writing and editing textbooks of English should also be on the panel of authors specially for creating new versions of the textbooks to sustain the style, the sense of the language and to ensure accuracy. If the same textbooks are to be modified in future, the qualified native speakers representing the publishing houses may be highly recommended to join the team.

4- Though the exercises given in the books are suitable, some further innovative and creative exercises should be added to promote students' creative potentials.

5- The illustrations which conflict with our cultural environment should be replaced with others compatible with our own culture.

6- The freshman level textbooks should remain under the periodic review and scrutiny of experts and teachers. The survey sheet developed by the researcher for the present study can be used to help achieve this goal.

7- A committee of experts and educators may be constituted on the national level to evaluate the newly written English textbooks before they are introduced at any level in all the universities. It would be desirable to try these books through micro-teaching before they are nationally introduced.

exercises with suitable patterns are given to help students review the texts. The exercises provide enough opportunities to students to interact equally and meaningfully among themselves.

#### **4.2. 4.0. Contents**

##### **4.2.4.1. General**

The contents of the books are appropriate to the freshman level students except a few undesirable phrases. They fully fulfil the academic needs of the EFL learners. Moreover, they satisfy the varied interests of our students because they are up-to-date. They are arranged in logical order from easy to difficult which creates a sense of motivation and curiosity amongst the students to read. They help students achieve the goals set in the syllabus for freshman courses. By presenting varied levels of difficulty in the books, the authors have tried to satisfy the individual differences amongst freshman students. Finally, the contents help students to put into practice the ideas they learn in the texts.

##### **4.2.4.2. Culture**

All the books, with the exception of two, are written by non-Saudis and perhaps non-Muslims. Some areas of the contents do clash with Saudi Islamic culture. Certain situations included in the books are alien to the Saudi students using these books. The series *Interactions I and II*, for example, include lots of such topics that conflict with the Saudi and Islamic culture. These topics not only clash with our religious and social culture but they also invite our students to such aspects that are not appropriate to them.

#### **4.2.5. 0. Concepts**

##### **4.2.5.1. General**

The concepts presented in the freshman books are within the range of students' intellectual abilities and they do not find any difficulty in comprehending them in the classroom. The authors have clearly explained these concepts and have included them in a graded order to help students understand them easily.

### **5.0. Conclusions and recommendations**

#### **5.1. Conclusions**

1- There is a great difference among Saudi universities in teaching freshman English. The biggest difference lies in the fact that some English departments teach freshman English courses the whole year as an intensive program while others teach them as normal courses, which means that students also take some courses in Arabic in addition to the English courses.

be appropriate in all the freshman books. The writers of these books have added glossaries of new and difficult words. However, in terms of linguistics, some books do not look suitable to the level of our freshman students. The basic words also often appear in the books.

c) **Syntactic complexity:** In terms of syntactic complexity the books look to be appropriate to the level of our freshman students. The sentence structures are easy to understand. The language patterns used in the books are fully understandable to their readers. The average sentence length is also suitable and appropriate to the level of our students.

d) **Cohesion:** With regard to cohesion almost all the books are found appropriate for the students. The adjoining clauses and sentences have appropriate relationship and are suitable to the level of students. There are close relations between pronouns and their referents. The relationship between clauses and sentences through conjunctions and articles such as and, but, yet, are built explicitly and properly.

e) **Coherence:** In terms of coherence within the reading selections, the books are found appropriate. It seems that the authors have kept this point in mind while developing these books. Such a step makes the text easily understandable to the readers.

#### 4.2.2.2. Culture

Language teaching cannot be separated from the culture of the people speaking that language. However, the question arises, what type of cultural aspects should be chosen for teaching? The answer to the above question is that while selecting textbooks, one may select those books which do not include such aspects that clash with his own culture especially from the religious and sociocultural points of view. Books selected for freshman courses are written by non-Saudis and perhaps non-Muslims and it is difficult to find a single book that does not include words like wine, gambling, boy friend, girl friend, etc. Our social and religious values do not allow us to teach such items. Usually those books which contain the least items which conflict with Saudi Islamic culture are chosen. As an alternative the units that contain cultural aspects against Saudi Islamic culture are skipped and in this way the undesirable language items excluded.

#### 4.2.3.0. Exercises

##### 4.2.3.1. General

The exercises given in the freshman books provide appropriate opportunities to students to practice new words and grammatical structures. These exercises encourage students to recall the texts and provide them opportunities to critically think thereon. The instructions in the exercises are given clearly and explicitly which provide a chance to the students to do them well without facing any sort of difficulties. Varied types of



at the *freshman* level in Saudi universities reflect the *psychological, social, cultural and religious* background of Saudi youth.

To achieve this objective, the researcher developed a textbook evaluation checklist. This checklist was used to evaluate almost all the English textbooks taught at freshman level in the surveyed Saudi universities (Table 1). However, reference books, books of scientific English and books developed in Saudi Arabia were not included in the evaluation process. Tables 2 and 3 explain the criteria for selecting and changing these books respectively. Names of the textbooks reviewed are given in Appendix C in alphabetical order. Table 4 displays a summary of the findings of evaluation of these textbooks by using a five-column rating scale which is explained hereunder:

#### **4.2.1.0. Illustrations**

##### **4.2.1.1.General**

Illustrations are found in most of the books. They are appropriate to the level of university freshman. They portray the text well. They are directly related to the text except for one case where a picture shows some Arabs watching TV near a Nissan car in a desert with the TV antenna on the car. This picture is not related to the text at all. It is also found that by and large the illustrations are clear, simple and attractive.

##### **4.2.1.2. Culture**

Most of the textbooks included in this research paper contained pictures or drawings that clash directly with Islamic and Saudi cultures. This is well understood because the authors are neither Saudis nor Muslims. However, it was one of the objectives of the present research paper to point out this aspect.

#### **4.2.2.0. Vocabulary**

##### **4.2.2.1. General**

a) **Appropriateness:** The vocabulary items included in the textbooks are found appropriate because most of them are familiar to the students whereas unfamiliar items are fully illustrated with contextual clues. The technical words in the books are explained in detail.

b) **Vocabulary control:** Vocabulary control in almost all the books is suitable for the students' caliber. It appears that new words are included in all the books keeping in view their frequency and their usefulness for the students. The new words are presented properly. However, certain words in some of the books used in contextual situations are not in line with Islamic belief and our own atmosphere. The load of vocabulary looks to

5. King Faisal University
6. King Fahad University ( English Language Centre)
7. King Saud University (College of Arts)

During the researcher's visit to the above campuses, some of the survey sheets could not be administered due to certain reasons. Hence, the researcher remained in contact with the Chairmen/Heads of the English Departments/Centers by mail and telephone until he was able to receive all the survey sheets back except the one from Imam Mohammad Bin Saud University. He contacted them several times by phone but failed to receive any information from them. Hence, he had to exclude that university from the study.

The researcher managed to collect the textbooks currently under use in the English Language Departments/Centers, and then survey and evaluate them, keeping in view the items given in the *Textbook Evaluation Checklist and Information Sheet*.

#### **4.0. Analysis of data and discussion of results**

##### **4.1. Survey**

The first objective aimed at finding out the present state of English language freshman courses being taught in Saudi universities from the following aspects:

- 1- Number of freshman English courses taught at both levels as university or faculty requirements at the universities referred to above.
- 2- Number of study units or semester hours assigned to these courses.
- 3- Number of periods allocated per week for these courses.
- 4- Titles of the books presently under use at freshman level.
- 5- Duration of the use of these books.
- 6- Information about the books under use for the last ten years and if they were replaced, the reasons behind their replacement.
- 7- The criteria used for the selection of these books.
- 8- The procedures followed while selecting these books.
- 9- The persons involved in the selection of these books; their nationalities, qualifications and teaching experience.

The following three tables answer the first objective of the study. The results show big differences in the teaching of freshman courses in terms of: number of courses, allocation of study units to each course, the textbooks under use and the criteria followed to evaluate these books for selection in different universities.

##### **4.2. The Textbook Evaluation and Information Sheet**

The second objective of the study aimed at knowing to what extent the books used

educational standards of the readers while evaluating textbooks for schools and colleges. The contents of the textbooks should not conflict with the values of the readers for whom the books are written. To overcome this problem, many researchers and educational experts have developed different criteria to evaluate books before making the final decision to introduce them at a certain level. All authors of checklists and evaluation formulae agree upon evaluating a textbook from the following points of view: philosophy, contents, authorship, organization, instructional aids, readability and cost. They are of the opinion that textbooks must suit the students in terms of their needs, and abilities, and should conform to the curriculum and objectives thereof.

### **3.0. Design and procedure**

#### **3.1. Design**

The research in hand mainly aims at knowing to what extent the EFL textbooks taught at the freshman level in the Saudi universities surveyed reflect the psychological, social, cultural and religious background of the Saudi nation. The design also includes the survey regarding methods of selection of textbooks used at these universities.

#### **3.2. Research instruments**

The following research instruments were devised by the researcher to achieve the objectives of the study:

- 1- A survey sheet for the population study to determine the current state of teaching Freshman English in Saudi Arabian universities. (Appendix A).
- 2- A Textbook Evaluation Checklist and Information Sheet to know to what extent do the EFL textbooks reflect the Saudi context (Appendix B).

#### **3.3. Procedure**

After designing the survey sheet, the researcher presented it to three language consultants to review and check the validity of each statement given in the survey sheet. These consultants suggested some changes which were made accordingly.

When the survey sheet was ready in terms of its utility and validity, the researcher travelled to the following university campuses to administer it personally to the Chairmen/Heads of English Language Departments/Centers.

1. King Abdulaziz University (Faculty of Edu.Madinah)
2. King Saud University (College of Edu. Abha)
3. Umm ul Qura University ( Faculty of Edu. Taif)
4. Imam Mohammad Bin Saud Univ.

about the efficiency and effectiveness of the process; 4- the state level does not appear to have much uniformity, and the textbook commission members frequently do not do the actual reviewing but pass that task onto friends and colleagues; 5- economic factors seem to be a major influence in states keeping statewide adoption practices, and 7- no available evidence indicates the optimum time for the reviewing process.

Many writers like Afifi [24], Hunkins [100], Schubert [101], Muther [46], Al-Moh'd [102], Badr [67] and Cowles [103], maintain to take into consideration the following aspects while developing a textbook :

- 1- The philosophy should be acceptable to the community, department, faculty, and clearly stated, biases and prejudices should be avoided, and it should be acceptable to the community's race, religion and sex.
- 2- The textbook should be divided in proportion according to the significance of the subject matter. Materials should be presented in an interesting and lively manner that is clear and concise.
- 3- The author should have professional experience at the particular academic level and in the content area. The author's general philosophy of education should be compatible with that expressed by the department concerned.
- 4- A unifying theme should permeate the entire text. The text should be adaptable for various types of teaching.
- 5- The textbook should be durable, sufficiently illustrated, and suitable for the grade level being considered.
- 6- The texts should fulfill the purpose of the course.
- 7- The readability should be appropriate to the grade level.

#### 2.4. Summary

Along with the educational experts the researcher also emphasizes the fact that textbooks are the most important instructional materials. Similarly, textbook selection is of paramount importance for curriculum planners and educators because 75% to 95% of students' classroom time is utilized in using textbooks. Most of the experts and textbook writers stress the need for evaluating the instructional material by using the best possible criteria and procedures. The problem of textbook selection is very complicated due to the fact that the textbook selectors and members on the selection committees are appointed on role representation and not on the merit of professional experience. The teachers are not trained to evaluate textbooks before introducing them in schools or universities. Unfortunately, some of the publishers, on their part, do not take into consideration the needs of the students. Most of them produce books of very low quality which do not meet students' needs and adversely affect teaching. Hence, to improve the quality of textbooks, there should be coordination among all concerned people, such as curriculum planners, textbook writers, editors, administrators and publishers. These people should take into consideration the sociocultural background, psychological needs and

pedagogical principles. Moreover, as a guideline for future authors, their checklist includes questions on two categories: a) questions about basic assumptions, like conceptualization, definition, objectives, congruence, naturalism and particularism, inventiveness and language skills; b) questions about shape and design, i.e., length and size, internal format, sequencing/grading, external format, ancillary elements, visual and auditory aids and options.

Some researchers like Daud and Celce-Murcia [92], Maccullough [93, pp. 115-19], and Zaki [94] seem to be unanimous on the criteria of evaluating textbooks. Their checklists comprise the following items for textbook evaluation: aims, language content, vocabulary, illustrations, exercises, teaching and learning methods and physical make up as well as printing of the textbooks. Grant [90] proposes a seven-item criterion to scrutinize the efficacy of English language textbooks and other related materials: a) the maturity level of the students, b) nature of the material to be taught to the students, c) the extent of variance in the instructional materials, d) factors that affect learning, e) cost orientation of the material, and f) idea of appropriateness of materials to the teaching method. Grant [96] also suggests a three dimensional student and teacher related questionnaire to evaluate a course book; a) does the textbook suit the needs and the abilities of students?, b) does the textbook suit the teachers?, c) does the textbook meet the needs of official public teaching syllabuses and examinations?

Stieglitz [97] recommends that the evaluation of textbooks should be done from different angles, i. e., a) background information, b) the skills of reading, and finally c) recommendation for adoption.

William's [26] checklist includes four basic assumptions for this purpose, i.e., a) up-to-date methodology of second language teaching, b) guidance for non-native speakers of English, c) needs of learners, and d) relevance to sociocultural environment.

The checklist developed by Cunningsworth [19] comprises questions on language content, selection and gradation of language items, presentation and practice of new language items, developing language skills and communicative abilities, supporting materials, motivation and the learner, and finally some questions about conclusions and an overall evaluation.

Newman and Eyster [98] recommend that the reading material should be examined or evaluated only by those who fully understand the special abilities and needs of the students and are familiar with the principles, process and rationale for selecting educational materials.

Duke [99] concludes that: 1- the criteria vary widely and appear not always related clearly enough to current instructional practices to be of much value; 2- there exists a lack of appropriate training for evaluators in using specific criteria; 3- the duplication of effort at both state and local levels in evaluating instructional materials raises questions

teachers of English and for those who lack confidence in their own English proficiency. It consists of 25 questions divided into four sections, which relate to the author's assumptions about the teachers' knowledge and experience in lesson planning, implementation and evaluation, and teacher development, and to technical points about the TG.

Ellis [83] applies another criterion for materials evaluation which comprises two phases: a predictive evaluation to decide what material is to be used and a retrospective evaluation to examine the materials after it has been used. He is of the opinion that in the beginning teachers face a difficulty of choosing a proper material suitable to their students. They carry out a predictive evaluation of the available materials to determine which are the best suited to their purpose. Later on, once they have used the materials, they may feel the need to undertake another evaluation to determine whether the materials have 'worked' for them. This constitutes a retrospective evaluation. However, Alderson [84], Weir and Roberts [85] and Lynch [86] are of the opinion that very little published information is available on retrospective evaluation, and the bulk of the published literature on evaluation deals with program or project evaluation. Such evaluations may incorporate materials evaluation but they are necessarily much broader in scope. Otherwise, the only other published work on the empirical evaluation of teaching materials is to be found in accounts of the trialling of new materials [87]. The empirical evaluation can be made practical through micro-evaluations of specific tasks. One way in which teachers can conduct empirical evaluations is by investigating specific teaching tasks. The task evaluations constitute a kind of action research that can contribute to reflective practice in teaching.

Anthony [39] places three significant questions on textbook selection in any EFL context: 1- Do the students expect to be communicators in English, or only listeners, only readers or writers as well, or in face-to-face interaction? 2- In what cultural contexts will the students negotiate communication in English [88]? Are the tasks appropriate for the expected class sizes?

Cotton [89] reports that the items of criteria usually include such areas as: objectives, content, scope and sequence, evaluation procedures, physical characteristics and cost. Hence, an appropriate procedure should be chalked out which considers a textbook in relation to a school program.

Kaufmann [90] applies the following criteria in selecting and evaluating texts: organization, supporting material, and readability. Text organization was assessed by preface material, table of contents, index, and reference. Text material was evaluated by using hard data, soft data, visual aids, and bibliographies. Whereas, text readability was judged by transitions, tone, visual structure, and reading level.

Dubin and Olsthtain [91] base their criteria of scrutinizing a book on four different aspects: a) vital statistics, b) audience, c) language structure and language skills, d)

contains a wide variety of skills and the instructors of remedial study skill courses should have a good knowledge base of the latest research as well as a strong concept of the method they wish to incorporate into their program.

Schumm et al. [75] recommend the use of a modified version of Singer's Friendly Text Inventory to analyze the texts in terms of organization, explication, conceptual density, metadiscourse and instructional devices.

Ornstein [76] observes that although textbooks summarize large quantities of data and have some advantages, they may discourage conceptual thinking, critical analysis and evaluation. Comprehensibility and its elements (coherence, sequence, match, transition and self-monitoring) should be major criteria for textbooks adoption.

For evaluating and selecting school textbooks, Neumark et al. [77] recommend such criteria that include presentation of language skills, vocabulary, grammar, communicative activities and dictionary skills.

Schneider [78] says that to select appropriate textbooks for their classes, teachers should: 1- determine their department's philosophy; 2- look at their students' needs; 3- ask department members for suggestions; 4- review school district guidelines; 5- examine as many textbooks as possible; 6- contact sales representatives for sample textbooks, materials, and presentations; 7- examine the current textbook in use; 8- examine and compare textbooks; 9- teach sample lessons from various texts; 10- find out what other school districts are using; 11- talk to colleagues; 12- observe classes being taught with various texts; 13- discuss possible choices; 14- involve students in the process; and 15- make a selection.

The Text Evaluation Checklist designed by Readence et al. [79] offers teachers a criteria list to use when reviewing nonfiction text to determine its usefulness. Brozo and Simpson offer a checklist for teachers that is used to describe "characteristics that promote active and successful learning" from textbooks [36, p. 26]. Tierney, Readence and Dishner [80] designed a checklist called the Text Structure Strategy "to help students recognize and use expository text structures in order to better understand and recall informational type texts."

Both students and teachers should critically examine textbooks to find their particular worldviews and answers to questions about: 1- who and what was included or omitted; 2- how the book came to be published; 3- author qualifications; 4- content and biases; 5- visuals and their importance to the concepts; 8- value statements; 9- cause and effect statements; and 10- generalizations [81].

Based on the evaluation criteria suggested by Coleman [82] and Cunningsworth and Kusel [19] for teachers' books, Gearing [72] designed a checklist to be used by teachers of English in order to assess the teachers' guides intended for less-experienced

student audience. The multifaceted qualities of high schools warrant our attention and reflection as we try to blend the various multicultural backgrounds and individual differences of students with the various forms of content presentation found in textbooks. Like students, teachers bring many experiences, types of prior knowledge, and values into the learning situation. [29].

Badr [67] found the content material in books relating to culture not compatible with Saudi girl students. However, she thinks that the material and methods of teaching can help develop Saudi girls' cultural and psychological traits provided the books are taught by highly qualified teachers. Similarly, Ali [68] thinks that the contents of the book should be related to Saudi culture.

Ali [68] is of the opinion that: a) contents of the book should be related to Saudi culture, b) the lessons in the book should be interrelated, c) stress should be laid on the quality of English language and not only the quality of lessons, and d) the number of teaching periods per week should be increased.

Afifi [24] stresses the need for a better projection of Islamic and Arab cultures. Hence, it is essential to improve the contents and reorganize the vocabulary and cultural items in the light of the principles of gradation and reinforcement.

### **2.3. Review of some studies related to checklists and formulas for textbook evaluation**

Numerous checklists and guidelines are available to help teachers carry out their own predictive evaluations [19; 69; 70; 37; 66; 21]. Teachers and textbook selectors can evaluate textbooks by using such tools. But these checklists are useful for teachers to some extent especially if they want to make more objective judgements in the words of Hutchinson to be "the single most important decision that the language teacher has to make" [70, p. 37] These evaluation checklists are designed to help teachers make a systematic selection of textbooks. They vary in the extent to which they can be adapted to meet specific circumstances. As an example, Tucker [71] provides a useful method of weighing the importance of criteria on which the evaluation is made so that teachers' priorities and concerns can be taken into account. The checklist presented by Gearing [72] includes ten questions grouped into five sections which focus on: assumptions about the nature of language and learning, material content, implementation, evaluation, and presentation. It provides teachers the opportunity to impose their own priorities during the process of evaluation, which is one of the advantages noted by Chambers [27, p. 34] of introducing management decision making into the coursebook evaluation process.

Criteria for the selection of resource materials included a challenging vocabulary, an interesting plot, compatibility of film and text versions and universal themes [73]. Bryant and Lindeman [74] are of the view that instructors should select a text that



average teacher has never been professionally trained to evaluate or to select materials for use in the classroom. And finally, many districts are not aware that there is a problem in the selection of books. According to Muther [47], in most classrooms “the method of teaching” seems to be assigning pages and answering the questions only.

Todd Clark [48] says that “it appears vital that professional educators and boards of education acquire a better understanding of the value structure of their own communities and make every effort to develop educational goals or alternative programs that recognize these values.”

Macian and Harewood [49] claim that teachers should assess the textbooks in terms of the degree to which they match the students’ learning needs, such as interests, age, previous experience, intelligence, motivation, creativity, sociability, emotional stability, verbal expression, visual perception, auditory perception and motor perception.

Talmage [50] believes that scholars, interpreters of scholarship and teachers must join hands in producing “good” instructional materials for the students.

Armbruster and Anderson [51] argue that an author can increase the comprehensibility of the textbook content through suitable ideas, facts, processes and procedures which are likely to be present in the background of the readers.

## **2.2. Review of some studies concerning the psychological, social, cultural and religious background of students**

A great deal has been written in recent years about the close relationship between language and culture, and about the vital role cultural knowledge should play in the language classroom, both as a necessary aspect of communicative competence as well as an educational objective in its own right [52-61]. Today, it is widely acknowledged that language and culture are complementary to each other and that they cannot be viewed separately. Language is thought to be the purest extract of a people’s culture, their customs, manners, habits, and values, the essence of their thinking and way of life [53; 57; 62-63; 60]. Thus, when the learners learn about language they learn about a culture, and while they learn how to use a new language they learn how to communicate with other individuals from a different culture. In fact, one of the expressed goals in any foreign language curriculum is to develop a cultural understanding of the target language society [60]. Textbooks teach more than subject content. When one considers the political, social, cultural, and economic content, as well as the values and societal beliefs that textbooks convey [64], it is not surprising that they have been a focal point of public attention. Textbooks, therefore, are considered to be one of the most important instructional tools for most language teachers and a central source of information about a foreign culture [65-66].

Individual students are required to use textbooks that are designed for a generic

ensuring a decision is made [27]. On this point, Sheldon [37, p. 245] observes that “it is clear that coursebook assessment is fundamentally a subjective, rule-thumb activity and that no neat formula, grid or system will ever provide a definite yardstick.” It does seem useful to provide “some model for hard-pressed teachers/course planners that will be brief, practical to use and yet comprehensive in its coverage of criteria” [21, p. 53].

A reassessment of the scope of coursebooks should be accompanied by a consideration of their role in relation to that of different types of self-access/reference material, and a reassessment of the potential of the latter as well [38]. Since coursebooks are so central to most EFL teaching, their role and content should be much more central to applied EFL theory [39, p. 283]. Richards [40] concludes that teachers identify the important features of coursebooks as being those that may be expected of reference grammars. Unless coursebooks alter their current orientations, they will neither reflect current EFL theory, nor will they be the agents of change that Hutchinson and Torres [41] argue they can [39].

Goldstein [11] is of the view that “of all forms of instructional materials, the textbook predominates both historically and in the scale of its present use.” Chastain [42, p. 529] says: “By selecting a text with a content which can be personalized to student interests, the teacher can more readily provide opportunities for real language practice... By selecting a text which includes the people, as well as the language, the teacher can more readily help his students to relate to the language. And by selecting a text in which provision is made for daily homework, the teacher can more easily expand the number of student contact hours with the language.” Charles Carpenter [43, p. 278] determines that “within our era the printed text has been supplemented here and there by inventions such as motion pictures, radio, phonograph recordings, and television, and we hear a great deal about these things... As the inventions are, and notwithstanding their impact upon our time, they have made no such decisive headway as an accepted and integral portion of the educational system as to threaten the displacement of the book.”

Maxwell [44, pp. 14, 57] says that the reason for poor selection of textbooks has frequently been due to the lack of justifiable standards of selection. The basis for selection has not been found in the educational needs of school children in a particular city, but it has come usually from extraneous situations of little or no importance. The schools are beginning to appreciate the necessity of having standards to evaluate subject matter and methods of procedures.

Fiske [45] is of the opinion that those who are to select textbooks are often ill-prepared for the task, given too little time to do it and are subject to political pressure which sometimes conflicts with educational goals.

Muther [46] asserts that textbook selection is not always wisely made due to the fact that many methods for selection are outdated because today’s textbook is designed to sell traditional evaluation strategies which may no longer be effective. Secondly, the

changed little throughout the years, particularly in relation to content that addresses higher level cognitive processes. School districts are urged to ensure quality books for their schools through adoption committees and frequent reviews. Confirming the significance of selecting textbooks through evaluation, Woodward [31] recommends that careful evaluation of textbooks before adoption is essential.

Unfortunately, the acquisition of latest edition textbooks every year is not only unrealistic but financially untenable for many schools. Irregular budgeting cycles for textbook adoption can cause delays and result in students using outdated books [32].

Knowledge of different methods used by students to retrieve information should be a primary consideration for authors in structuring textbooks. Teachers should include comprehension strategies for textbook activities to best facilitate student recall and, therefore, learning from content material [33]. Integrated strategies such as K-W-L [34] and study guides can be incorporated into textbooks as well to facilitate student learning. Students would like to see the language used in textbooks include more vocabulary they use in conversation [35].

Students, being consumers of textbooks, can offer suggestions that publishers and authors can incorporate to enhance the relevance and appeal of textbooks to students. This would allow the opportunity for those involved in the process of textbook selection to make decisions based on their particular needs and student population. Chall and Squire report that “procedures used by state agencies and large school districts to select textbooks and other instructional materials... only recently have... been studied systematically” [32, p. 134]. A teacher’s role in helping to understand textbook material is critical. The need to fill in gaps that may occur between students’ background knowledge and text content is a major responsibility of the teacher [7; 36; 5].

Defining students’ roles as decision makers in the adoption of books. Julie and Earl [29] say that they are experts in this field because they have constantly been exposed to textbooks as an integral part of their learning process. Therefore, if a moan emanates from your secondary classroom at the mention of a textbook project, ask the experts why. It is a fact that all of the suggestions offered by students cannot be incorporated into classroom activities; however, some of them could be given serious consideration. It is critical to view your students as decision makers in this collaborative process. Their ideas incorporated with yours will result in a more productive learning environment. Similarly, Guzzetti, Hynd, Skeels, and Williams [35] believe that serious consideration of their opinion might help textbook selectors in evaluating the textbooks.

Any decision making process must obviously ensure that a decision is reached, but we have to try to ensure that the decision is as wise as possible. For example, we could reach a decision about which text to use simply by voting and accepting the majority decision. That, however, would not ensure a consensus. Those outvoted could resent the decision. A good decision making process will help lead to consensus, rather than just

classroom teachers, curriculum experts and educators will be provided with sufficient information and criteria to help them select the English textbooks. Moreover, the present study will provide useful guidelines for prospective research workers, teachers and evaluators in this area.

### **1. 7. Limitations of the study**

This study is limited only to evaluate the textbooks in English under use at the freshman level in six Saudi universities to determine to what extent they are compatible with Saudi Islamic culture. Also, this study is limited to the chairmen/heads of English language departments/centers in the six Saudi universities.

## **2.0. Review of literature**

The literature relevant to this study has been divided into three main parts. The first part reviews such studies which are related to the selection and adoption of English language textbooks. The second part comprises those studies which discuss the books from the psychological, social, cultural and religious background of a specific atmosphere. Whereas, the third part deals with a review of some evaluation criteria and checklists developed by various researchers and writers to check the suitability of English language books.

### **2.1. Review of some related studies on textbook selection and adoption**

This study is designed to evaluate the EFL/ESL textbooks that are under use at the freshman level in six Saudi universities. The purpose of reviewing the related literature is to identify the factors influencing textbook selection and its procedures, involving recommendation and adoption by educational experts and other curriculum developers from time to time.

We have to bear in mind not only the construct validity or “the extent to which a reviewer thinks that a book will or will not be useful to a specified audience” [20, p. 82], but also the materials already in use. Whether or not the texts are good—not just theoretically sound, but proven in the classroom [21, p. 79]. The options to choose teaching materials may vary from totally free to extremely circumscribed: “the ability to evaluate [them] effectively is a very important professional activity for all ELT teachers” [21, p. 63].

Shutes and Peterson [6] are of the view that curriculum practices that will compare and give relevance to the issues of concern to students at the local level should be incorporated to enhance textbook content.

A part of the responsibility for inadequacies in textbooks can be attributed to current marketing practices [29]. Denman [30] observes that math textbooks have

nationalities, qualifications and teaching experience.

2- To what extent do these books meet the psychological, sociocultural and religious needs of Saudi freshmen studying at university level?

## **1.5. Definition of Terms**

### **1.5.1. Textbook**

According to Good [25, p. 605] a textbook refers to "a book dealing with a definite subject of study systematically arranged, intended for use at a specified level of instruction and used as a principal source of study materials for a given course."

### **1.5.2. English textbooks**

Books that are used to teach English courses in Saudi universities (freshman level).

### **1.5.3. Freshman courses**

Courses which are offered to those students who are in their first year of study in the college.

### **1.5.4. Evaluation of an English language textbook**

"Analysis of an English Language Textbook in order to find out whether the organization of materials is consistent with the objectives of a given English curriculum. Evaluation includes the examination of vocabulary and structures given in a textbook and the way the textbook presents the reading material" [26, p. 254].

## **1.6. Significance of the study**

The textbook is an essential component used in classrooms. Hence, it is imperative that the textbooks should be selected only on a merit basis keeping in view the larger interests of both the students and the teachers as well as their cultural atmospheres. But "selecting a suitable coursebook is not a simple task, since many people may be involved, and resistance can be strong. Thus, it is preferable for this decision to be made jointly by the whole teaching team" [27]. Joint evaluation of coursebooks is essentially a decision-making technique from the world of business [28], adapted to help in the evaluation and selection of ELT materials. The process is simple, transparent, leads to clear decisions, and can be used by individuals or groups.

The present study is significant because it will assist those who are responsible for evaluating and selecting textbooks in English for freshman courses in all six Saudi universities, keeping in view the pressing needs of our students, our teachers and our own social and cultural values. One can hope that through its recommendations, the

cultural and religious values. To improve the quality of instruction in English at all levels of education, Afifi [24] is of the opinion that "evaluation of textbooks made along scientific lines is all the more important. Reliable criteria for evaluation of textbooks should be developed by teachers and experts together, in order to ensure the validity of the teachers' judgement."

### 1.3. Objectives of the study

1- The study aims at finding out the present state of English language freshman courses being taught in Saudi universities from the following viewpoint:

- a. Number of freshman English courses taught at both levels as university or college requirements at the universities referred to above.
- b. Number of study units or semester hours assigned to these courses.
- c. Number of periods allocated per week for these courses.
- d. Titles of the books presently under use at the freshman level.
- e. Duration of the use of these books.
- f. Information about the books under use for the last ten years, and if they were replaced, the reasons behind their replacement must be stated.
- g. The criteria used for the selection of these books.
- h. The procedures followed while selecting these books.
- i. The persons involved in the selection of these books; their nationalities, qualifications and teaching experience.

2- The study also aims at knowing to what extent the books used at the freshman level in Saudi Universities reflect the psychological, social, cultural and religious background of the Saudi nation. To achieve this goal, the researcher developed a Textbook Evaluation Checklist (Appendix B).

### 1.4. Study questions

Based on the above study objectives, the following questions were posed:

1. What is the present state of the textbooks which are taught at freshman level in six universities in the Kingdom in terms of the following?
  - a. Number of freshman English courses taught at both levels of the university or college requirements at the universities referred to before.
  - b. Number of study units assigned to these courses.
  - c. Number of periods allocated per week to these courses.
  - d. Titles of the books presently under use at the freshman level.
  - e. Duration of the use of these books.
  - f. Information given about the books under use for the last ten years and, if they were replaced, the reasons behind their replacement.
  - g. The persons involved in the selection of these books; their

The evaluation of textbooks has always been of crucial concern to all educators. Most of the researchers are of the view that textbooks leave a great impact on the quality of educational outcomes because they play a vital role in determining what is taught and how teaching is conducted [13]. Researchers uphold that textbooks shape and direct the content and methods of presentation used by teachers [14-17]. Al-Ahaydeb [18, pp. 1-2] maintains that "English in Saudi Arabia is becoming more important than ever before." But due to the declining standards of students' achievement, he concludes that "evaluating the English programme at both the intermediate and secondary stages is necessary to find out which aspects of the programme need reform." Hence, their selection must be made through proper evaluation. But the evaluation of course materials is a cumbersome and difficult process and it demands that we establish their relative merits among a wide range of features like the age group, cultural appropriateness, methodology, level, quality, number and type of exercises, skills, teacher's book, variety, pace, personal involvement, and problem solving [19-21].

The quality of both teaching and learning basically depends on the standard of textbooks. In terms of their importance, the curriculum developers and educators are of the unanimous opinion that a textbook must represent the curriculum at large and stand for the syllabus developed for a certain level of educational hierarchy. Also, it is an undeniable fact that as the quality of textbooks increases so does the quality of instruction and learning. In contrast, as the quality of textbooks decreases, teaching and learning become adversely affected. Under the circumstances, it is essential that English textbooks written by foreign writers be evaluated through reliable criteria. In this way their quality and standard of proper utilization can be ensured. Moreover, the textbooks which are written by foreign authors should remain under constant review and evaluation by the educators and subject experts.

## 1.2. Statement of the problem

There are hundreds of books available in the market today for teaching English as a second or foreign language. Lots of these books are used as textbooks in Saudi universities. The fact still remains that though some of the books under use may not fit the Saudi context, especially from the religious and cultural point of view, little attention has been given to the careful evaluation of their appropriateness for our social and cultural setup. Zubeidah [22] concludes that in the English language textbook prescribed for the first year girls of intermediate schools little attention is paid to the utility criterion. The communicative exercises need more emphasis to improve the communicative competence of the language learners which is the ultimate goal of language learning. Similarly, Surur [23] makes a critical analysis of the *First Year Intermediate English Pupils' Book* which remained under use at Saudi Arabian intermediate public schools during the years 1980-89. The main point of his analysis and evaluation is claims of the publishers. He finds both the *Teachers' Book* and *Pupils' Book* inadequate from different aspects. He stresses that steps should be taken by the Arabs to develop their own textbooks of English keeping in view our own social,

**publishers. Prior to being adopted at the university level of education, the imported EFL books are supposed to be evaluated properly keeping in view our own social, cultural and religious norms as well as the academic needs of our college-bound students.**

**It is a well known fact that textbooks provide the base for the avowed educational infrastructure. They are the most essential components of curriculum which play a vital role in our instructional program. They work as instructional guides for the teachers and provide useful orientation to the students. It is a truism that the contents of the textbooks leave indelible impressions on their readers' minds from psychological, social and cultural points of view. Therefore, the textbooks should be consistent with the established psychological, social, cultural and religious values and norms of the society. Hence, it is essential that the subject teachers and curriculum planners minutely review the textbooks prior to their introduction at any specified level of education.**

**The importance of textbooks has been fully recognized throughout the history of education. Textbooks are central to the educational process in many respects. They define ideas and information to be presented to the learners. They are important since there is no single, universally accepted body of knowledge that all students learn, and since providing students with all available information in any subject areas is not feasible [1; 2]. The textbook is described as "the core of the curriculum in most schools" [3, p. 436]. Textbooks are also distinguished as "predominate ... highly visible instructional tools" [4, p. 968]. Curriculum at the secondary level is often set up to reflect textbook information as a major component of instruction in U.S. public schools [5]. One of the primary reasons for having and using textbooks is to enhance the learning potential of the students who use them. There are some secondary education teachers, particularly those with insufficient expertise, who have come to view the textbook as the "expert" on subject matter. For these practitioners, the textbook defines the curriculum purpose, as well as the instructional guidelines followed to meet content goals [6]. Alvermann and Moore [4, p. 968] state that in secondary education, "teachers emphasize factual textual information" regularly in reading practice in the classroom. Students rely upon the textbook to offer a coherent presentation of the material that will activate prior knowledge and result in comprehension [7].**

**Deightan [8, p. 214] says that "the textbook is the dominant tool in teaching the school and college subjects." Similarly, Soloman [9, p. 43] maintains that "textbooks provide the source of ninety percent of instruction and they hold powerful influence, both cognitive and affective upon individuals, families, communities and the nation." According to English [10, p. 275], "eighty percent of the information to which students are exposed in a given subject is found in the textbooks at elementary and secondary schools." Goldstein [11] observes that "of all forms of instructional materials, the textbook predominates both historically and in the scale of its present use." Haycraft [12, p. 24] is of the view: "It is something concrete that gives a measure of progress and achievement as lessons are completed one by one until finally the book is finished. In schools where students are enrolled at various levels, it is also a means of standard." [12].**



## **The Compatibility of Freshman EFL Textbooks Used by Saudi Universities with Islamic Culture\***

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**Abstract.** The study aimed at getting more information about the state of teaching freshman English in Saudi universities. Also, the study aimed at knowing to what extent are the freshman English textbooks used in the English language departments or centers in Saudi universities compatible with Saudi Islamic culture. To achieve these goals, the researcher used two instruments. A Survey Sheet was distributed amongst the department chairmen to seek complete information about freshman English. Besides this, a Textbook Evaluation Checklist Information Sheet was used by the researcher himself to evaluate the freshman textbooks (illustrations, contents, vocabulary and exercises) regarding their compatibility with Saudi Islamic culture.

The conclusions drawn included variation among the Saudi universities in the selection of the books and the allocation of study units. The study showed good awareness of the selection of textbooks according to Saudi culture. However, a series of books entitled *Interactions I and II* were found culturally biased and against Saudi Islamic culture.

Among the recommendations made was the suggestion that a unified program for the selection of textbooks should be instituted. The books entitled *Interactions* should be immediately replaced with better ones. A committee at national level may also be constituted to evaluate the foreign books on a periodic basis. The Ministry of Higher Education should constitute a team of experts, curriculum planners and book writers to develop indigenous freshman course books keeping in view Saudi Islamic culture.

### **1.0 Introduction**

#### **1.1. Background of the problem**

English is taught as a foreign language both at school and university levels in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. At school level, the Ministry of Education supervises the production of EFL materials whereas at university level, educators, curriculum experts and professors are free to select the curriculum materials published by foreign

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