

# The Evaluation of the 4<sup>th</sup> Grade English Coursebook in Terms of Teachers' Views\*

Kader Yağız<sup>1</sup>, Şehnaz Nigar Çelik<sup>2</sup>

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## ABSTRACT

The role of teaching materials in English language teaching classes is relatively high. Among the teaching materials, the importance of textbooks cannot be denied. Textbooks play a fundamental role in a wide variety of materials. Despite different views about textbooks and differences of opinion about their use, they are still used by most teachers. This study aims to evaluate the 4th grade English textbook in line with teachers' opinions. In this study, a mixed research method was used. The study was conducted with 115 English teachers working in Edremit, Tuşba, and İpekyolu, the central districts of Van province, in the academic year 2021-2022. "Textbook Evaluation Questionnaire" and "Semi-structured Interview Form" were used to collect data. Within the scope of the research, 12 English teachers were also interviewed. The teachers who participated in the study think that the visuals used in the book, the general appearance of their book, and the font size are reasonable. Most teachers think the book's content is appropriate for learning outcomes and teaching principles. It was determined that the teachers agreed with the items related to the exercises and activities of the book at a moderate level. Teachers think that exercises and activities should motivate students, and the exercises used in the book should be diversified. Textbooks are one of the most essential materials in the teaching process, and the process of preparing a textbook should be done by considering the curriculum, learning outcomes, and student and teacher needs. In addition to the exercises and activities used in the content of the book, the formal features of the book should also be given importance. The exercises and activities used in the textbooks prepared for young age groups should encourage students to learn and entertain them simultaneously.

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## INTRODUCTION

In many countries, there is a tendency to start language teaching at an early age. In our country, foreign language teaching was not included at the primary school level until 1997; in other words, English language teaching began in secondary school. In 1997, English lessons took place in the 4th grade. In 2006, with the updating of the curriculum, English language teaching continued to be delivered starting from the 4th grade, and in 2013, it was decided to start teaching English from the 2nd grade. Today, English is perceived as "the passport of global communication" (Arnold & Rixon, 2008), and learners of this language contribute to a new perspective towards English (Akkaya & Zabitgil Gülseren, 2016). Learning English at a young age brings some unique features to learning contexts. When we compare and contrast adults and young learners, there are some points to be considered regarding the different learning styles of both age groups. Although there are standard features for each age group, each child learns at a different pace. Teachers of young learners should observe students and provide a suitable environment for learners. Compared to adults, young learners are more eager to learn. If teachers are particularly aware of what students are interested in, it will be easier to attract their attention. However, the attention span of young learners is quite short, and it is essential to keep their attention alive (Scott & Ytreberg, 1990). For this reason, when children can do tasks appropriate to their development and when learners' interests and tastes are considered, interest and learning will be easier (Linse & Nunan, 2005).

There are many reasons why children should learn languages at an early age. One of the most important of these is that the early language teaching process develops intellectual flexibility and agility in listening skills in the learner. Early language teaching enables the child to communicate with people more efficiently by improving his/her ability to understand his/her mother tongue. The presence of a foreign language enables the learner to recognize different cultures and understand people in other countries. Mzali (2011) states that starting to learn a language provides the opportunity to learn the culture of that language. In this way, the child reaches worldviews similar to or different from his/her culture.

It has been revealed in some studies that the child who has passed the development process in the first language or the foreign language, whose learning starts at an early age in parallel with the first language

<sup>1</sup>Ministry of National Education, orcid.org/0000-0002-0146-4227

<sup>2</sup>Van Yüzüncü Yıl University, Faculty of Education, orcid.org/0000-0001-9949-0668

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development, has a higher level of cognitive or cognitive retention (Haznedar, 2003; Karakoç, 2007; Lopriore, 2002; Moon & Nikolov, 2000; Nikolov & Curtain, 2000). In this context, according to Haznedar (2003), learning a foreign language at an early age will enrich the child's perception of events from a broad perspective, enabling him/her to be respectful and tolerant of differences, as well as enabling him/her to get to know his/her own culture more in-depth and better by engaging in a comparison situation in different cultures. In the 2000s, most countries configured their foreign language education systems or made educational improvements in terms of the implementation of English as a second foreign language or English as a foreign language program for students at an early age (Bayyurt, 2006, 2010, 2012; Bayyurt & Alptekin, 2000; Enever, 2011; Garton et al., 2011; Haznedar, 2012; Kırkgöz, 2007, 2008; Lopriore, 2002; Nikolov & Curtain, 2000). Considering the early age group, language teaching enables the learner to learn the language quickly until age 5-6. Krashen (1973) states that the beginning of the language development process in children is two years old and continues until adolescence. Starting to learn a language at this age enables the child to learn a foreign language as quickly as a native language. According to Lambert (1972), if the child has completed his/her mother tongue education and starts to learn a foreign language before the end of the critical period, this situation keeps the child one step ahead in every subject. At the same time, this situation contributes to children's cognitive development better than their peers.

In Turkey, language teaching at an early age has recently gained more importance. In 2012, the Ministry of National Education (MoNE) started implementing the 4+4+4 system. According to this system, primary, secondary, and high school education lasts 12 years, four years each (Bayyurt, 2014; Kırkgöz, 2014). In Turkey, the age of learning a foreign language was reduced from Grade 4 of primary school, i.e., 9 years old, to Grade 7 or Grade 2. In Turkey, the minimum age for foreign language acquisition has been revised from the fourth grade of primary school, which corresponds to nine years of age, to the seventh or second grade. (Demirezen, 2014). Beginning in the academic year 2013–2014, English classes began for two hours per week for students in the second grade. The utilization of the "communicative approach" in English language teaching has emerged as a means to facilitate students' expression of their evolving needs, desires, thoughts, and beliefs. This method is grounded in a teaching paradigm that emphasizes the communicative acquisition of the language. Accordingly, pair or group work, role-play activities, drama, and games are included in the teaching, and it is recommended to use materials such as songs and films as close to reality as possible.

English lesson hours were decided to be two hours for the first three years and four hours for the next four years. As in European countries such as China and Japan, as well as in Hungary and Spain, primary school students can learn a new foreign language earlier (Nunan, 2003). With such an innovation, new curricula were developed for Grades 2 and 3 and updated for Grades 4 to 8 (Güngör, 2016). With this renewal (MoNE, 2013), speaking and listening skills were mainly emphasized in the 2nd and 3rd grades, while reading, writing, and grammar teaching were included in the following grades. Grade 5 and Grade 6 include more controlled writing activities and short texts, while in Grades 7 and Grade 8, learners are asked to read simple texts and write short paragraphs.

### **Materials in Foreign Language Teaching**

The use of materials has an important place, especially in foreign language courses. There are many materials used in foreign language teaching. These materials can be used verbally, visually, and in written form, leading to students' active participation in the lesson. Numerous instructional tools utilized in foreign language education facilitate the engagement of students' multiple senses. This kind of learning increases the permanence of learning and enables students to participate actively in the lesson. During language acquisition, students must be provided with course materials that encompass auditory, kinesthetic, authentic, and visual elements to facilitate their learning. According to Dale (1969), a broader range of stimuli that activates many of the senses throughout the learning process results in accelerated learning and prolonged memory. In foreign language textbooks, it is essential to have a balanced approach to developing each skill. A teaching style based on communication is part of the modern language teaching approach today. The emphasis on grammar rules in language instruction might potentially detract from the primary objective of facilitating effective communication, which serves as the basis of target language teaching. Foreign language instruction in Turkey has adhered to this methodology for a long time, and as of 2013, there have been changes in both foreign language methods and curricula. English textbooks have transformed to adapt to diverse learning styles, promote practical and interactive instruction, include songs and games to enhance long-term retention, integrate technology for support, and encompass language skills together with vocabulary and grammar.

Many views have been expressed regarding the definition of a textbook. Cunningsworth (1995) defines a textbook as "a resource whose aims and objectives are determined in advance to determine the needs of students." Tomlinson (2003) states a textbook is "the main element of a lesson." According to Sheldon (1988), textbooks are "commercially orientated books whose main task is to enhance students' communication skills and linguistic knowledge." There may be various reasons for teachers to use textbooks in language classrooms, and various advantages can be observed in the relevant literature (Chou, 2010; Kayapinar, 2009; Williams, 1983). In these studies, several factors emphasize the potential benefits of foreign language textbooks, which are the presence of well-defined program objectives for learners, the use of consistent topics and genres across all skills, the provision of ready-made activities, beneficial for inexperienced teachers, the presence of achievement tests, the inclusion of teacher's manuals for guided instruction, and the cost-effectiveness of using textbooks as a means of providing learning materials for language teaching. A high-quality textbook has the potential to simplify the tasks of teachers. Nevertheless, it is essential to realize that language-teaching textbooks have certain limitations and may cause drawbacks for some people. According to Hutchinson and Torres (1994), using well-structured textbooks can potentially render teachers unqualified. Therefore, choosing an ideal textbook for a language classroom has always been an essential goal for language teachers and researchers.

### **The situation of the Problem**

The importance of textbooks as teaching materials cannot be denied. The more diverse impulses the textbook's material activates during the teaching process, the more excellent retention in learning occurs. Textbooks are essential because they help students stay on track with their studies and save time. It is also expected that the activities in the textbooks help to teach the four language skills (reading, writing, listening, and speaking). At the same time, the book's physical structure (font size, variety of activities, appropriate use of visuals) should be appropriate for the age and level of the student. Using a good textbook by the curriculum within the curriculum will benefit both the teacher and the student. Therefore, this study is essential in evaluating the appropriateness of the fourth-grade primary school English textbook in terms of teachers' views and suggesting solutions if it is not appropriate. It is an important issue for this study to prepare textbooks by considering what should be considered in textbooks' writing and printing processes. This study differs from other studies (Tekir & Arıkan, 2007; Özeş, 2012; Yaşar, 2013; Ulum, 2016), using mixed research (qualitative and quantitative) methods. In addition, it is thought that the study will contribute to the literature in terms of the development of the questionnaire for the evaluation of the English textbook and the fact that the 4th grade English textbook, which is the subject of the study, has not been evaluated before. The Ministry of National Education distributes textbooks free of charge at schools. Any course material not approved by the Board of Education cannot be used in schools. For grade 4, the book distributed by the Ministry of National Education in Van province is "Learn with Bouncy." Considering that the book is used as a primary material, it is essential to evaluate it.

### **Aim of the Study**

This study aims to evaluate the 4th-grade English textbook, "Learn with Bouncy", approved by the Ministry of National Education, in line with the views of English teachers. In order to achieve this aim, the following research questions were investigated:

1. What are the opinions of English teachers about the physical properties of the 4th-grade English textbook?
2. What are the opinions of English teachers about the content of the 4th-grade English textbook?
3. What are the opinions of English teachers about the exercises and activities of the 4th grade English textbook?
4. What are English teachers' suggestions for improving the 4th-grade English textbook?

### **METHOD**

This research has been designed in the survey model. Survey models aim to describe a situation that existed in the past or is still ongoing as it exists (Karasar, 2013). A mixed method was used in this study, which was designed in a descriptive survey model. In mixed-method research, qualitative and quantitative data are collected and analyzed, and the data obtained are integrated and presented (Creswell, 2009). Researchers use mixed methods to use quantitative and qualitative methods to increase research reliability. Mixed research collects, analyzes, and interprets qualitative and quantitative research data in a study (Leech & Onwuegbuzie, 2009). The purpose of mixed research methods is to eliminate the deficiencies that may arise in a single qualitative or quantitative research (Greene, 2005). The mixed method acts as a bridge between quantitative

and qualitative methods. The most significant advantage of the mixed research method is to obtain more reliable results from the research and to reach meaningful results by establishing a connection between both methods.

Creswell (2003) classifies design types as follows: sequential exploratory, sequential explanatory, sequential transformative, simultaneous variation, simultaneous nested, and simultaneous transformative. Furthermore, the short names of these designs are triangulation, exploratory, embedded, and explanatory (Creswell, 2009; Creswell & Plano Clark, 2007). This study embarked on an embedded mixed design because the data were collected simultaneously, and quantitative and qualitative data were interpreted together in an integrated manner. The embedded design mixes different data sets at the design level, and one type of data is mixed into a methodology framed by the other type of data (Caracelli & Greene, 1993).

#### **Study Group for Quantitative Data**

The study group of this research consists of English teachers working in primary schools in the central districts of Van Province (İpekyolu, Tuşba and Edremit) in the academic year 2021-2022. According to the information obtained from Van Provincial Directorate of National Education, 125 English teachers are employed in primary schools in the central districts of Van Province (İpekyolu, Tuşba and Edremit). In this study, 120 English teachers were accessed, but due to the data loss of 5 teachers, the data of 115 teachers were considered in the evaluation. In this context, almost all of the population was reached in the study. Demographic characteristics of English teachers in the quantitative study group are presented in Table 1.

**Table 1. Demographic information of the teachers who participated in the quantitative study**

| <b>Year of experience</b>       | <b>N</b>   | <b>%</b>   |
|---------------------------------|------------|------------|
| 1-3                             | 32         | 36.8       |
| 4-6                             | 32         | 36.8       |
| 7-10                            | 21         | 24.15      |
| 11 - +                          | 30         | 34.5       |
| <b>Program</b>                  | <b>N</b>   | <b>%</b>   |
| English Language Teaching       | 72         | 82.8       |
| English Language and Literature | 27         | 31.5       |
| English Linguistics             | 3          | 3.45       |
| American Culture and Literature | 2          | 2.3        |
| Others                          | 11         | 12.65      |
| <b>Total</b>                    | <b>115</b> | <b>100</b> |

As can be seen in Table 1, the participating teachers' demographic information is distributed according to the two variables of interest. The number of teachers was likewise evenly divided in terms of their variable years of experience. When the distribution of teachers by graduation program is examined, the number of teachers who graduated from English language teaching is greater than the number of teachers who graduated from the other graduation program.

#### **Study Group for Qualitative Data**

The qualitative data of the study were collected simultaneously with the quantitative data. In the qualitative dimension of the study, the criterion sampling technique, one of the purposeful sampling methods, was used. Criterion sampling is used when a situation requires the researcher to identify specific types of case studies for in-depth analysis (Neuman, 2007). In this context, 12 teachers who had previously used a 4th-grade English textbook in their lessons and participated in the book evaluation questionnaire were interviewed. Out of 12 teachers, 5 of them work in İpekyolu district, 4 of them work in Tuşba district, and 3 of them work in Edremit district.

#### **Data Collection Tool**

The researcher developed data collection tools. The 4th Grade English Textbook Evaluation Questionnaire" was used to collect quantitative data, and a semi-structured teacher interview form was used to collect qualitative data.

### **The 4th grade English Textbook Evaluation Questionnaire**

The questionnaire development process was conducted as follows:

(i) literature review, (ii) creating the item pool, (iii) taking expert opinions, (iv) examining the trial form with stakeholders, (v) conducting the application processes are followed. After the item pool was created, two curriculum and instruction experts, two Turkish language experts, and one English Language Teaching expert examined the items, and unclear expressions were changed. After the items were organized, three English teachers were asked to read them, and it was determined that there was no unclear item. The "4th Grade English Textbook Evaluation Questionnaire," prepared in line with the opinions of the aforementioned experts, was administered to 120 teachers as an online and written questionnaire, and 115 data were obtained. As a result of the application, it was seen that the dimensions of the questionnaire had high reliability. In addition, the consistency coefficient for all questionnaire items was found to be 0.96. As a result of the results obtained, it is seen that the questionnaire has high reliability.

### **Semi-structured Teacher Interview Form**

During the development of the interview form, the draft interview form was sent to two curriculum development experts, two English teachers, and a Turkish language expert for expert opinion, and the interview form was finalized in line with the experts' feedback. Within the scope of the pre-testing of the interview form, three English teachers were interviewed, and it was tested whether the questions in the interview form were understood correctly and whether the form was suitable for the purpose; it was determined that the questions in the interview form were understandable by English teachers.

### **Data Analyses**

SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences) program was used to analyze the quantitative data. In this study, the arithmetic averages were analyzed to determine the opinions of primary school teachers to evaluate the 4th-grade English textbook. These values were interpreted as very low between '1-1.79', low between '1.80-2.59', medium between '2.60-3.39', high between '3.40-4.19', and very high between '4.20-5.00'.

A descriptive analysis technique was used to analyze the data obtained from the interviews with English teachers. The researcher used direct quotations to reflect the views of the participants. The primary purpose of descriptive analysis is to present the findings to the reader by interpreting or summarizing them (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2003). In order to express the views of the teachers strikingly, the data were presented with direct quotations. Teachers were given codes as "T1, T2, T3...".

### **FINDINGS**

The quantitative and qualitative findings obtained from the research data are given in the order of the sub-problems. The study's first sub-problem is about the textbook's physical properties. The arithmetic mean, percentage, and frequencies of the items related to the physical properties of the English textbook are provided in Table 2.

**Table 2. Descriptive Statistics on Physical Properties of English Textbooks**

| Physical Properties  | Strongly disagree |      | Disagree |      | Neutral |      | Agree |      | Strongly Agree |      | $\bar{X}$ |
|--|-------------------|------|----------|------|---------|------|-------|------|----------------|------|-----------|
|  | f                 | %    | f        | %    | f       | %    | f     | %    | f              | %    |           |
| 1- The general appearance of the textbook encourages students to learn   | 10                | 8.7  | 19       | 16.5 | 19      | 16.5 | 46    | 40   | 21             | 18.3 | 3.42      |
| 2- The textbook is designed to make it easy to use   | 10                | 8.7  | 26       | 22.6 | 16      | 13.9 | 54    | 47.0 | 9              | 7.8  | 3.22      |
| 3- The font size and format used in the textbook are at a level that students can read easily                      | 5                 | 4.3  | 10       | 8.7  | 11      | 9.6  | 58    | 50.4 | 31             | 27   | 3.86      |
| 4- Main and subheadings in the textbook are used in appropriate places   | 8                 | 7.0  | 11       | 9.6  | 11      | 9.6  | 62    | 53.9 | 23             | 20   | 3.70      |
| 5- At the beginning of the textbook, a "table of contents" section fully meets the book's content                  | 6                 | 5.2  | 14       | 12.2 | 15      | 13   | 47    | 40.9 | 33             | 28.7 | 3.75      |
| 6-The visuals (pictures, tables, graphs, charts, and figures) used in the textbook can attract students' attention | 10                | 8.7  | 24       | 20.9 | 13      | 11.3 | 45    | 39.1 | 23             | 20   | 3.40      |
| 7- The visuals in the textbook were used in appropriate places   | 6                 | 5.2  | 14       | 12.2 | 18      | 15.7 | 52    | 45.2 | 25             | 21.7 | 3.66      |
| 8- The instructions in the textbook are clear and understandable   | 10                | 8.7  | 18       | 15.7 | 17      | 14.8 | 50    | 43.2 | 20             | 17.4 | 3.45      |
| 9- There are additional audio materials (listening texts) supporting the textbook                                  | 10                | 8.7  | 13       | 11.3 | 15      | 13   | 37    | 32.2 | 40             | 34.8 | 3.73      |
| 10- Additional audiovisual materials (such as video and film) support the textbook                                 | 23                | 20   | 26       | 22.6 | 16      | 13.9 | 34    | 29.6 | 16             | 13.9 | 2.94      |
| 11- The textbook has a "dictionary" section that can be a resource for students and parents.                       | 36                | 31.3 | 22       | 19.1 | 14      | 12.2 | 30    | 26.1 | 13             | 11.3 | 2.66      |
| 12- The textbook is designed interactively by digital platforms (such as smart boards)                             | 13                | 11.3 | 19       | 16.5 | 24      | 20.9 | 40    | 34.8 | 19             | 16.5 | 3.28      |

When Table 2 is examined, it is observed that the majority of the teachers (73.9%) believe that the main and subheadings in the textbook are used in appropriate places. There is a "table of contents" section at the beginning of the textbook which fully meets the content of the book. Also, the visuals (pictures, tables, graphs, charts, and figures) used in the textbook are of a quality that can attract students' attention. Moreover, it can be said that Item 10 and Item 11, regarding the additional materials such as audio-visual (video-film) and dictionary, have lower averages than other items. When the qualitative findings are analyzed, it is clear that almost all of the participants noted that the textbook was suitable for students in general (T1, T4, T6, T7, T8, T9, T10, T11); some of the participants stated that the cover of the book and the colors used were attractive (T11, T8, T7, T5, T4, T3); some of them uttered that the font size, size, and visual design were sufficient (T3, T5, T6, T7, T8, T10). However, 4 participants stated that the auditory materials were not suitable for the age and level of the students. There were deficiencies in the visual materials (T1, T3, T5, and T8). One participant said that in the activities in the book, primary school children had difficulty fitting the words into the gaps because they wrote bigger (T1). Some participants argued that the absence of a dictionary in the book prevented individual learning (T3, T5, T7, T8, and T11). In addition, (T11) expressed that "stickers" for

vocabulary activities in the book would be more remarkable for children. Some teachers' opinions on the formal features of the book are as follows:

*"I think the textbook does not attract the students' attention stylistically. I think it is insufficient for English language teaching, neither it is cover design nor paper quality (T2)."*

*"Formally, the textbook is generally suitable for students to use. However, in our activities, primary school children have difficulty fitting the words in the spaces given because their writing is large. The spaces given should be wider. In some auditory sections, children have difficulty understanding the expressions. Shorter and clearer expressions should be used (T1)."*

The study's second sub-problem is about the content of the textbook. The arithmetic mean, percentage, and frequencies of the items related to the content of the English textbook are given in Table 3.

**Table 3. Descriptive Statistics on Content of English Textbooks**

| Content  | Strongly disagree |      | Disagree |      | Neutral |      | Agree |      | Strongly Agree |      | $\bar{X}$ |
|--|-------------------|------|----------|------|---------|------|-------|------|----------------|------|-----------|
|  | f                 | %    | f        | %    | f       | %    | f     | %    | f              | %    |           |
| 1- The content has been developed in alignment with the learning outcomes specified in the curriculum.     | 7                 | 6.1  | 12       | 10.4 | 16      | 13.9 | 52    | 45.2 | 28             | 24.3 | 3.71      |
| 2- The content can meet the needs of the students.   | 10                | 8.7  | 25       | 21.7 | 23      | 20   | 40    | 34.8 | 17             | 14.8 | 3.25      |
| 3- The content is useful in real life.   | 13                | 11.3 | 21       | 18.3 | 24      | 20.9 | 41    | 35.7 | 16             | 13.9 | 3.22      |
| 4- The content has been developed in alignment with the teaching principles                                | 11                | 9.6  | 17       | 14.8 | 17      | 14.8 | 54    | 47   | 16             | 13.9 | 3.40      |
| 5- There are sufficient elements /content related to the culture of the target language                    | 16                | 13.9 | 32       | 27.8 | 24      | 20.9 | 32    | 27.8 | 11             | 9.6  | 2.91      |
| 6- The textbook contains sufficient items /content related to different cultures in which English is used. | 23                | 20   | 28       | 24.3 | 19      | 16.5 | 35    | 30.4 | 10             | 8.7  | 2.83      |
| 7- The textbook has been prepared for effective individual use in EBA.                                     | 9                 | 7.8  | 13       | 11.3 | 33      | 28.7 | 50    | 43.5 | 10             | 8.7  | 3.33      |

As seen in Table 3, the majority of the teachers agree that the content of the textbook is prepared in accordance with the learning outcomes in the curriculum and the content of the textbook is prepared in accordance with the teaching principles. Teachers partially agree that the content used in the textbook can meet the needs of the students, that the content of the textbook is helpful in real life, and that the textbook is prepared for effective individual use in EBA (Education Content Network, founded by the Ministry of National Education). EBA is an online network whose purpose is to integrate technology into education when required, and the network gives online access to course materials to teachers and students. In addition to these results, teachers showed moderate agreement with the item expressing that the textbook has sufficient items/content related to the target language's culture (40.7%). In comparison, more than half of the teachers (54.3%) think the textbook has sufficient items/content related to different cultures in which English is used. However, compared to the other items, Item 5 and Item 6 in the content section have lower averages. When the qualitative findings are analyzed, some participants think the content should include information that can be used in daily life (T3, T4, T6, T8, T9, and T10). Nevertheless, three participants stated that the information learned by students was not functional and, therefore, they could not use this information in real life (T2, T5, and T7). 2 participants think that the subjects are too much for children and the subjects should be simplified and given (T6 and T2) and that the content is given using a heavy language (T6 and T7) and the subjects are compressed into a single unit (T8) cause negative emotions in children. In addition, 3 participants expressed that the difficulty of the subjects and the high information load in the unit were not enough for 2 lesson hours (T7, T9, and T11). Some participants said that the content did not meet the needs of the students (T3, T7, T8) and that the student's level of readiness was not considered in the content selection (T11). Moreover, one of

the participants noted that grammar topics were emphasized in the content, and this caused it to be a teacher-centered course (T7). While some of the participants stated that there was no content related to the culture of the language taught (T1, T5, T7, T8, T9, and T11), three participants uttered that the content was more focused on the elements of local culture (T1, T10, and T11). Some teachers' views on the content of the book are as follows:

*"In terms of content, there are good topics that can be useful for children in daily life, but they are presented to children using heavy language. This situation makes it difficult for children to look and understand alone and negatively affects their attitude towards the lesson. I think the subjects should be simplified more (T6)."*

*"The book does not include different cultures and traditions and does not meet the interests and needs of the students. The topics are too many and demotivate the students. The content is emphasized grammar. This leads to teacher-centered lessons and makes the lesson boring (T7)."*

The study's third sub-problem is about the exercises and activities of the textbook. The arithmetic mean, percentage, and frequencies of the items related to the exercises and activities of the English textbook are given in Table 4.

**Table 4. Descriptive Statistics on Exercises and Activities of English Textbooks**

| Exercises and Activities   | Strongly disagree |      | Disagree |      | Neutral |      | Agree |      | Strongly Agree |      | $\bar{X}$ |
|--|-------------------|------|----------|------|---------|------|-------|------|----------------|------|-----------|
|  | f                 | %    | f        | %    | f       | %    | f     | %    | f              | %    |           |
| 1- Exercises and activities support the development of student's communication skills in real situations   | 11                | 9.6  | 21       | 18.3 | 20      | 17.4 | 47    | 40.9 | 16             | 13.9 | 3.31      |
| 2-The activities are suitable for students' interests and needs.   | 10                | 8.7  | 23       | 20   | 30      | 26.1 | 38    | 33   | 14             | 12.2 | 3.20      |
| 3- The activities support creativity   | 11                | 9.6  | 29       | 25.2 | 30      | 26.1 | 33    | 28.7 | 12             | 10.4 | 3.05      |
| 4-The activities are suitable for the age and developmental levels of the students.  | 8                 | 7    | 17       | 14.8 | 24      | 20.9 | 50    | 43.5 | 16             | 13.9 | 3.42      |
| 5- Activities support students in establishing meaningful communication  | 12                | 10.4 | 19       | 16.5 | 30      | 16.1 | 42    | 36.5 | 12             | 10.4 | 3.20      |
| 6- There are enough activities /exercises to support the development of students' speaking skills.   | 12                | 10.4 | 26       | 22.6 | 19      | 16.5 | 35    | 30.4 | 23             | 20   | 3.26      |
| 7- There are enough activities /exercises to support the development of students' listening skills.  | 12                | 10.4 | 22       | 19.1 | 17      | 14.8 | 35    | 30.4 | 29             | 25.2 | 3.40      |
| 8-There are enough activities /exercises in the textbook to support reading development appropriate to the student's readiness level.  | 18                | 15.7 | 35       | 30.4 | 19      | 16.5 | 29    | 25.2 | 14             | 12.2 | 2.87      |
| 9- There are enough activities /exercises to support the development of writing skills appropriate to the students' level of readiness.  | 17                | 14.8 | 31       | 27   | 23      | 20   | 32    | 27.8 | 12             | 10.4 | 2.92      |
| 10- In the textbook, different activities support the learning of words in meaningful relationships (for example, classification/association according to their synonyms and antonyms, verb, adjective, and noun forms, or frequency of use with different words). | 14                | 12.2 | 38       | 33   | 23      | 20   | 25    | 21.7 | 15             | 13   | 2.90      |
| 11-Grammar structures in the textbook are given in accordance with the context used  | 11                | 9.6  | 18       | 15.7 | 21      | 18.3 | 49    | 42.6 | 16             | 13.9 | 3.35      |
| 12- The activities support students' "language acquisition" rather than language learning.   | 19                | 16.5 | 29       | 25.2 | 28      | 24.3 | 25    | 21.7 | 14             | 12.2 | 2.87      |



As seen in Table 4, the teachers agree that the exercises and activities are appropriate for students' age and developmental levels and that there are enough activities/exercises to support the development of students' English listening skills. The teachers express a moderate level of agreement regarding the efficacy of the activities in fostering students' communication skills in authentic contexts. They also find the activities suitable for addressing students' interests and individual needs. Furthermore, the teachers acknowledge that the activities in the textbook facilitate creativity and promote meaningful communication. They also believe the textbook provides adequate activities and exercises to enhance students' English-speaking abilities. Finally, the participants observe that the grammatical structures offered in the textbook are suitably congruent with the contextual circumstances in which they are employed. Besides, the teachers express a moderate agreement regarding the adequacy of activities and exercises in the textbook for enhancing students' English reading skills at their respective levels of preparedness. They also concur that the textbook provides sufficient activities and exercises for fostering students' English writing skills at their readiness level. Additionally, the teachers acknowledge the presence of diverse activities in the textbook that facilitate the comprehension of words within meaningful contexts. Lastly, they assert that the activities included in the textbook promote students' acquisition of language rather than mere language learning.

Upon the analysis of the qualitative data, it was detected that every participant expressed the view that the activities did not yield enduring learning outcomes. According to the participants, the students expressed boredom due to the high intensity of the listening activities (T5, T6). It was suggested that the activities should be restructured in order to engage more senses (T7). Additionally, it was noted that the activities lacked sufficient repetition (T1, T2, T3, T8, T11) and that the allocated time for carrying out the activities was inadequate (T9). Furthermore, specific topics were not effectively solidified in the students' understanding (T10). Two shortcomings discovered were the absence of collaborative activities (T12) and the insufficiency of textbook activities that promote hands-on and experience learning. (T4). Moreover, it was observed that the current approach primarily focuses on teaching vocabulary rather than fostering meaningful communication among students (T12). Some participants' opinions about the activities/exercises are as follows:

*"The exercises and activities in the book are all in the same style. It should include a variety of exercises such as gap-filling, multiple choice questions, and end-of-unit assessments. There are project assignments at the end of the units and students are willing to do these projects. The listening texts are not at the right level for the students' English readiness level and are difficult to understand. The book should appeal to more sensory organs to ensure permanent learning (T7)."*

*"If we evaluate the exercises and activities in the units according to the 3P (presentation, practice, and production) method, I think that the "production" part of the exercises and activities is incomplete; it is prepared with an approach more aimed at evaluating and practicing what already exists. The role play part, where students can use the language freely, is missing. This prevents permanent learning (T4)."*

The study's last sub-problem is about suggestions for improving the textbook. As a result of the interviews conducted with the participants for this sub-problem, the participants expressed their suggestions for enhancing the textbook. They proposed including reading texts after units (T1, T6, and T7). Additionally, they recommended the provision of a student workbook as supplementary material alongside the textbook for units (T5, T10, and T11). They emphasized the importance of interactive utilization of the book for units (T5, T7, and T12). Furthermore, they recommended that instructions should be presented in both English and Turkish for units (T2 and T3). They also highlighted the need to diversify unit homework activities (T4 and T6.) To reinforce listening comprehension, they recommended incorporating videos with visual aids for units (T7, T8, T9, and T12). They proposed the inclusion of a picture dictionary at the end of the book to facilitate vocabulary acquisition for units (T7 and T8). The participants also suggested improving the paper and printing quality for units (T5 and T11). Finally, it was suggested that the learning goals within the curriculum for units be simplified. (T5, T8, and T11). One participant expressed concern regarding the font size being insufficient for the age group of the children (T11). In contrast, two participants highlighted the significance of providing appropriate short tale books for each unit (T8, T11). Two participants (T4 and T7) highlighted the need for more engaging conversations in the books, while some (T10 and T11) suggested extending the lesson hours. Three participants (T4, T8, and T11) expressed the opinion that the program should be streamlined, while two participants (T8 and T11) suggested including subject-specific narrative books after each unit. According to the given statement, it was recommended to incorporate various activities promoting cooperation and creativity, explicitly concerning T5 and T6. Additionally, it was suggested to include materials such as puppets, flashcards, and posters that are compatible with the smart board for instructional purposes, as

mentioned in T5. Two individuals agreed that writing activities should be accorded greater significance (T6 and T7), while two other participants advocated including activities focused on grammar topics (T4 and T11). The viewpoints expressed by certain individuals regarding the topic are as follows:

*"An interactive version of the book would benefit teachers and students." Including audio-visual components in the book, such as videos and listening texts, will help youngsters understand what they hear. Children can learn by doing, experiencing, and having fun together if cooperative and creative activities are incorporated (T12)."*

*"In addition to the textbook, digital resources should be provided, audio and visual material support should be increased, it should be considered that fewer acquisitions in themes will result in more permanent learning, stories containing target words and grammar should be added to the book's content at the end of each unit, a dictionary should be created at the beginning of the unit, and questions about these words should be added at the end of the unit (T8)."*

## RESULTS, DISCUSSION, AND SUGGESTIONS

There are no other studies in the related literature on the "Learn with Bouncy" fourth-grade English textbook reviewed within the context of this study and provided to schools by the Ministry of National Education. There are studies on books at different grade levels prepared by the MoNE (Ministry of National Education). In order to contribute to the writing process of the books prepared by the MoNE, the results of the present study will be evaluated together with other studies on English coursebooks prepared by the MoNE.

In this study, the participants thought that the formal features of the Grade 4 English textbook were appropriate and the visuals in the book were used appropriately. Similar to the results of this study, in the evaluation of the Grade 4 *Time for English* textbook by Özdemir (2007) and the evaluation of the Grade 2 *Fun with Teddy* textbook by Yaşar (2015), the participants thought that the textbooks were appropriate in terms of formal features. Among the stylistic features, the font size and format are especially important for young learners. Within the scope of the study, the font size and format of the book were deemed appropriate for the participants. Doyran (1997) stated that inadequate textbooks prepared for children in terms of creativity and aesthetics weaken effective learning and comprehension in children, while books that are well prepared in terms of formal features and robust in terms of quality accelerate learning. For the early age group, the cover of the book and the visuals in the book must be attractive for this age group.

Some participants stated that the auditory materials were unsuitable for the student's age and level. Also, there were deficiencies in the visual materials, and the book should have a dictionary. Some participants also stated that many listening materials are available in the textbook, and visual materials are used appropriately. English lessons are given for 2 hours weekly at the primary school level. In order to utilize this time efficiently, it is recommended that the teacher should apply a communicative language teaching method by focusing on listening and speaking skills (MEB, 2013; Demirel, 2003). The prerequisite for speaking in a foreign language is listening. Therefore, students should be allowed to speak a foreign language in the lessons. These skills are very important and encouraging in a foreign language because children enjoy speaking in a foreign language (Moon, 2000). In Grade 4, two basic skills are listening and speaking. In this respect, including listening texts in the book supports these views.

In this study, the average of the items related to the content was found to be 3.24, which shows that the textbook's content received a "medium" score. The majority of the teachers state that the content is appropriate for the objectives of the curriculum, and a great majority of them think that the content is prepared in accordance with the teaching principles. At the same time, teachers note that the textbook's content can meet the student's needs, the book's content is useful in real life, and the textbook is prepared for effective individual use in EBA. However, the teachers moderately agree that the textbook contains sufficient elements related to the culture of the target language and sufficient content related to the different cultures in which English is used. Content is one of the most essential elements of a textbook, and how we present content is related to teaching situations. The presentation of the content should be effectively conveyed for the students to learn efficiently. The most important feature that attracts the student's attention and facilitates learning in the teaching process is to make an effective content presentation (Ur, 1996). For this reason, it is possible to put forward that the content in the book is generally well-prepared and includes themes that students can use in daily life. The result of this study supports this fact. However, the teachers moderately agreed that the textbook contains sufficient elements related to the culture of the target language and sufficient content related to the different cultures in which English is used. Foreign language textbooks significantly impact learners' understanding of English varieties and cultures (Tajeddin & Pakzadian, 2020.). Incorporating cultural

elements in these textbooks can help to reduce cultural biases towards certain countries and promote a more inclusive approach to teaching English as an International Language (EIL). Analysis of ELT textbooks from the standpoint of English varieties and cultures can provide valuable insights into teaching practice. Additionally, a reflective approach to the instruction of culture in EIL teaching can help to expand an ethos of interculturalism (Tajeddin & Pakzadian, 2020). For the book's content, the results also reveal that it has been developed in alignment with the teaching principles. The activities in the textbook are also suitable for the age and developmental levels of the students. It is especially necessary to teach grammar and vocabulary by teaching principles such as from known to unknown, from simple to complex, and from concrete to abstract, to include texts appropriate to the age, interest, and level of the student, to present the four language skills with a holistic understanding, and to have exercises and activities that will ensure the participation and creativity of the student (Tandlichova, 1995). In the interview form conducted with the teachers in this study, the teachers think the content should include information that can be used daily. However, the teachers stated that the information learned by the students was not functional and, therefore, they could not use it in real life. The main goal of language learning is communication. Therefore, the exercises and activities in the book should provide the necessary environmental conditions for communication. Not only teacher-student interaction but also activities that include student-student interaction can be done.

For the exercises and activities of the book, results show that the exercises and activities used in the book are insufficient to develop students' four language skills; furthermore, it is also clear that there are not enough different activities that support the learning of words in meaningful relationships. It is crucial to understand that learners frequently have different strengths and weaknesses regarding their language abilities. For instance, some students might be excellent at reading and writing but have trouble communicating and listening, while others might be the opposite. Nevertheless, true language fluency necessitates a high degree of competence in all four skills—listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Therefore, to promote efficient language acquisition and growth, foreign language textbooks should include all four language skills. The accuracy of language examinations can be increased by including all four skills, as testing only specific skills may give an incomplete or erroneous picture. Furthermore, the participants want more classical exercises such as cutting and pasting, coloring, filling in the blanks, completing missing letters, and game-style activities that will motivate students more. Apart from this, the participants stated that the textbook should have more practical exercises, games, and animation activities that make students more active and suitable for using the target language for communication purposes. Games, songs, stories, puzzles, drama, and drawings make students physically active, and they are motivating. These activities also involve students in the learning process and develop their imagination (Halliwell, 1992). Early learners mostly like to have fun and learn by having fun. Visuals, puppets, videos, and songs play a significant role in children's learning. Scott and Ytreberg (1990) argue that teachers can teach anything with the help of games. Similar results were also found in different studies analyzing the 4th-grade primary school English textbooks (Çakıt-Ezici, 2021; Haznedar, 2019). In particular, the studies reveal that the irregular order of the activities and exercises in the book in each unit will make it difficult for students to adapt, and the activities and exercises are also insufficient to attract students' interest.

When the study's results on the improvement of the textbook were analyzed, some teachers stated that it would be appropriate to provide a workbook in addition to the textbook. The book should be prepared for interactive use. The instructions should be given in both English and Turkish. Some teachers emphasized that increasing and diversifying the homework activities and including videos to reinforce what they listen to with visuals would be appropriate. The others stated that the presence of a picture dictionary at the back of the book would facilitate vocabulary learning and that the quality of the paper should be increased. Similarly, in Özdemir's (2007) study, paper quality had the lowest average. It was stated that the paper used in the book should be reviewed. Again, it was concluded that paper quality is essential for durability and student motivation and is insufficient. Some participants noted that the gains in the curriculum should be simplified. Similarly, Tekir and Arıkan (2007) set forth that the units are overloaded, and sometimes there is no time left to teach them. It is also stated that improvements should be made in the font size and that it would be beneficial to distribute appropriate storybooks for each unit. More exciting dialogues should be made to improve speaking skills and the lesson hours should be increased due to insufficient time. The activities prepare students for real-life situations. Therefore, "conformity to reality" should encourage students to learn through classroom activities, homework, movie analysis, mail, or the Internet (İnal, 2006).

In this study, the participants expressed that there were too many listening texts, the students had difficulty understanding while listening, and the listening texts were not suitable for the level of the students, while in Korur's (2018) study, the teachers argued that the abundance of listening texts attracts the attention of the students and is one of the strengths of the book. Listening skills are the first step in language learning and acquisition. Therefore, foreign language teachers must provide effective listening methods for their students. Sharpe (2001; cited in Şevik, 2012) is at the center of thoroughly learning all the lessons in the primary school program, encouraging students' speaking and listening skills. Thus, the main goal is to develop listening skills of students. The English textbook that Maden and Önal (2020) examined in their study includes exercises covering stories, poetry, and informative text types for speaking and listening. In addition, the methods such as talking on the phone, role-playing, creative speaking, and cooperative learning stand out in the book. Vygotsky (1962) states that children are a part of the social environment, so pair or group work will be fun for those in this age group. Hence, it is a must to prepare activities that require social interaction, such as games, songs, team projects, and arts and crafts, for early learners (Meddings & Thornbury, 2009). These activities seem to be suitable for teaching skills. Therefore, this textbook is vital in developing speaking and listening skills with these methods and features. In the study of Kalaycı and Durukan (2019), in which they compared Turkish and English textbooks as a foreign language, it is noteworthy that the English textbook contains more content.

### **Suggestions**

Based on the findings of the present study, the participants conveyed a critical viewpoint about including supplementary resources, such as audio-visual materials, in the textbook. Furthermore, a participant expressed dissatisfaction with the physical attributes of the book, deeming them unstimulating and inadequate for facilitating English language acquisition. Other participants have raised concerns regarding the font size, which they perceive as insufficient for young learners. The paper quality has also been criticized, and the audio materials have been deemed incomprehensible for students. Moreover, there have been observations regarding the deficiencies in the visual materials, and it has been detected that the textbook lacks a supplementary dictionary. In order to enhance the learning experience, it is crucial to incorporate supplementary elements, such as audio-visual content (e.g., videos and films), into the textbook before its completion. In addition to auditory engagement, visual and auditory elements, such as videos and movies, can enhance students' comprehension and retention of subject matter. Moreover, it is essential to integrate a brief video or film about the subject matter within the textbooks, as these materials possess a greater capacity to stimulate students throughout the learning process and keep their attention. In addition, it is recommended that efforts be made to enhance the book's visual appeal, such as by incorporating captivating design elements. Moreover, a modest increase in font size might enhance the legibility of the text. Besides, the use of glossy paper could enhance the overall visual appeal of the book. It is also recommended to ensure that the listening materials are understandable and clear. In conclusion, adding a dictionary after the course book would prove advantageous. In the study, the paper highlights that the teachers have expressed an opposing viewpoint on the adequacy of cultural elements/content about the target language in the textbook. When acquiring proficiency in a foreign language, it is of utmost significance to familiarize oneself with the cultural aspects of the target language. The participants argue that the knowledge acquired via textbooks lacks practical application in everyday situations, fails to cater to the specific requirements of pupils, and neglects to consider their prior knowledge when selecting the content. One recommendation is to incorporate topics and tasks that embody the cultural aspects of the target language within the course material. This approach aims to enhance the practicality of the content and activities, ensuring their ability to cater to the student's interests and requirements. Additionally, the content selection should be guided by assessing the student's preparedness.

The research findings indicate a deficiency in the availability of activities and exercises that align with the student's readiness level to enhance their reading and writing skills. Furthermore, it has been asserted that the exercises and activities provided are inadequate, necessitating the inclusion of a wider range of activities. Additionally, it has been argued that the current activities are not suitable for the age group of the students and fail to foster the generation of novel ideas. It has been uncovered that the activities do not facilitate enduring learning outcomes, while an excessive emphasis on listening activities leads to student disengagement and boredom. The study's findings indicated that the allocated time for students was deemed inadequate, certain subjects remained abstract, and there was a lack of cooperative activities. Insufficient assistance was provided for active learning and experiential engagement. While it is crucial to prioritize

listening and speaking abilities in the curriculum designed for young learners, it is advisable to incorporate brief reading passages that are comprehensible to pupils and activities that involve constructing concise sentences. The exercises should be designed at a level of complexity that ensures the kids remain engaged while also catering to various sensory modalities. Furthermore, it is advisable to consult the synonyms or antonyms of the aforementioned nouns or adjectives. One possible suggestion is to incorporate diverse exercises tailored to the student's age to avoid monotony. Additionally, it may be beneficial to present the subjects tangibly and incorporate group work, as this approach can facilitate active learning and experiential engagement. Furthermore, simplifying the learning objectives or increasing the course duration in proportion to the subject matter can be considered potential strategies.

The study revealed that it is beneficial to incorporate reading materials after completing the modules. The incorporation of a workbook in combination with the textbook would result in favorable outcomes. The optimal technique for the presentation of the book would involve integrating interactive elements, including instructions provided in both English and Turkish. Furthermore, increasing the number of homework assignments to ensure their alignment with each unit is imperative. There is a need to broaden the dissemination of short story books by including more stimulating discussions within the exercises and extending the course duration.

#### **Declarations**

#### **Conflict of Interest**

No potential conflicts of interest were disclosed by the author(s) with respect to the research, authorship, or publication of this article.

#### **Ethics Approval**

The formal ethics approval was granted by the Social and Human Sciences Research and Publication Ethics Committee of Van Yüzüncü Yıl University. We conducted the study in accordance with the Helsinki Declaration in 1975.

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#### **Research and Publication Ethics Statement**

The study was approved by the research team's university ethics committee of the Van Yüzüncü Yıl University (Approval Number/ID: 23/03//2022-07 Hereby, we as the authors consciously assure that for the manuscript "The Evaluation of the 4th Grade English Coursebook in Terms of Teachers' Views" the following is fulfilled:

- This material is the authors' own original work, which has not been previously published elsewhere.
- The paper reflects the author's own research and analysis in a truthful and complete manner.
- The results are appropriately placed in the context of prior and existing research.
- All sources used are adequately disclosed.

#### **Contribution Rates of Authors to the Article**

The authors provide equal contribution to this work.

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