

# Students' and teachers' perspectives towards the use of new grade 10 English textbook at a high school in Vietnam

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**Abstract** - The purpose of the study was to investigate the students' and teachers' perspectives on the new 10th-grade English textbook. In order to complete this study, the researcher employs both quantitative and qualitative methods. The investigation was conducted at a high school in Vietnam in which all 200 tenth-graders and five English instructors using the new textbook participated in the study in order to evaluate the textbook using total sampling techniques. Results of the study revealed positive feedbacks of the new textbook in teachers' and students' perspectives and proposed recommendations for the application of the textbook in this particular teaching context.

**Index Terms**- teachers' and students' perspectives, new grade 10 English textbook, high school, Vietnam

## I. INTRODUCTION

Textbooks play a crucial part in a student's learning journey. Textbooks not only act as a syllabus reference but teach students knowledge, skills, attitudes, and values. Textbooks provide both teachers and students with instructions and sources of knowledge so they help them save time and effort while searching for information.

In the case of English teaching and learning, textbooks are more important as the role of English has been more and more highly valued to suit the needs of modernization and integration. As English is increasingly significant, English teaching and learning have been increasingly concerned by the Government in general and The Ministry of Education and Training in Vietnam in particular.

Along with improvements in textbook and curriculum development, Vietnamese English teachers have made commendable strides in their educational backgrounds and communication abilities. Some English teachers in schools are capable of teaching a whole lesson in English. However, in a world where internationalization and integration are unavoidable trends, Vietnam now faces a pressing need for highly qualified individuals who can communicate effectively in English. It was challenging to uphold the current standards for education and use because of this intense political and economic need. Without significant adjustments and substantial contributions to curricula, textbooks, teaching strategies, and assessment, foreign language teaching in general and English language teaching in particular in Vietnam would be unable to adequately meet the expectations placed upon it (Hoang Van Van, 2015).

As being newly applied in Quang Ninh for nearly a year, the textbook of "Tieng Anh 10 (Global Success)" has drawn much attention from the teachers and students. However, no textbooks fit all students and teaching context and therefore, textbooks need to be updated and adjusted to satisfy the needs of teachers and learners. In order to do that, teachers' and students' opinions on the use of the new textbooks are valuable sources for textbook designers to make appropriate adjustments to improve the quality of English teaching and learning. That is also the reason why the researcher would like to put more effort to conduct this study "An Investigation into Students' and Teachers' Perspectives towards the Use of New Grade 10 English Textbook in a high school in Vietnam".

## RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study aimed at investigating the students' and teachers' perspectives on the use of the new grade 10 English textbook. Therefore, the researcher uses a combination of quantitative and qualitative method to complete this study.

The study was implemented at a high school in Quang Ninh. The study applied total sampling techniques whereby all 200 ten-grader students and five English teachers who were using the new grade 10 textbook participated in the study with the purpose of evaluating the textbook.

Based on the theoretical results and the research objectives, the researcher created questionnaire surveys for teachers and students. After asking for permission in conducting the study, the researcher selected the respondents and let them complete the survey questionnaires. All of the responses were synthesized, analyzed, and descriptively presented. Then, the researcher noted down some sections that need

to be investigated deeper and created the questions for the teachers' semi-structured interview. All of the information was transcribed and presented by a descriptive method.

## FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

### 1. Findings from students' questionnaire

#### 1.1. Students' background information

There were 200 ten-graders participating in the questionnaire survey. Most of them (71.5%) studied English for more than five years. The rest learned English for less than five years.

#### 1.2. Students' opinions towards the use of the new grade 10 English textbook

The following table summarizes the students' opinions towards the use of the new grade 10 English textbook.

**Table 1. Students' opinions towards the use of the new grade 10 English textbook**

Opinions	Mean Score	Level of Agreement
<b>Evaluation on the new grade 10 English textbook</b>		
1. The objectives are explicitly laid out in an introduction and implemented in the textbook.	3.9	Agree
2. The layout and design are attractive and easy to read.	3.1	Neutral
3. The instructions are clearly stated.	3.5	Agree
4. The topics and tasks are interesting and motivating.	2.4	Disagree
5. There is a variety of topics and tasks provided for different learner levels, learning styles, and interests.	2.8	Neutral
6. There are periodic review and test sections provided.	4.3	Strongly Agree
7. There is an appropriate balance of the four language skills.	3.4	Agree
8. Pronunciation explanation and practice are suitably presented.	2.9	Neutral
9. Vocabulary explanation and practice are clearly presented.	3.2	Neutral
10. Grammar presentation and practice are clearly presented.	3.6	Agree
11. The textbook provides adequate activities and practice.	3.1	Neutral
12. The textbook encourages learners to develop their own learning strategies and to become independent in their learning.	3.4	Agree
13. The textbook is readily available locally.	4.3	Strongly Agree
14. The price of the textbook is reasonable.	4.4	Strongly Agree
<b>Roles of English textbooks</b>		
15. The textbook serves as a source of homework.	4.3	Strongly Agree
16. The textbook serves as an essential source for learners.	4.2	Agree
17. I use the textbook as the only source of learning materials.	2.3	Disagree
18. I understand the content presented in the textbooks.	3.4	Agree
19. I understand the cultural issues presented in the textbooks.	2.5	Disagree

As demonstrated in Table 1, the students had different opinions on each questionnaire item. In the evaluation of the new grade 10 English textbook section, the students strongly agreed with items 6, 13, and 14, with the average levels of agreement from 4.3-4.4. This result means that the students highly evaluated the organization of the review and test sections of the textbook. Besides, it could be inferred that students could buy the textbook easily where they live and could afford to buy it. In addition, students agreed with items 1, 3, 7, and 10, with levels of agreement ranging from 3.4 to 3.9. Correspondingly, students appreciated the way that the objectives were clearly stated in the introduction and carried out in the textbook. The instructions were made clear, the four linguistic abilities were well-balanced, and the presentation of grammar and practice was comprehensible for the students. The textbook also gained students' recognition as they agreed that it enabled learners to develop their learning strategies and to become independent in their learning. In contrast to the high evaluation of the ideas mentioned above, students did not value the topics and tasks in the textbook. The level of agreement of 2.4 means that the topics and tasks were not appealing to them.

Regarding the layout and design, the variety of topics and tasks provided for different learner levels, learning styles, and interests, the pronunciation explanation and practice, the vocabulary explanation and practice, and the adequacy of activities and practice, students had averaged levels of agreement (from 2.8 – 3.2).

Concerning the roles of the English textbook, students strongly agreed that it served as a source of homework. The results are in accordance with the current fact of teaching and learning as teachers often have students do homework in the textbook.

Besides, students agreed that the textbook was a significant source for them, with a level of agreement of 4.2. Although students also agreed that they understood the content of the textbook, the level of agreement was much lower, only 3.4.

On the other hand, students disagree with items 17 and 19, which means that the textbook was not the only source of learning materials, and the cultural issues presented in the textbooks were not comprehensible to them.

In summary, students seemed to be satisfied with the textbook in terms of objectives, instructions, review and test section, balanced language abilities, grammar presentation and practice, learning strategies development, local accessibility, reasonable price, homework, and content. However, according to students, the textbook should be improved in the topics and tasks and the cultural issues. In addition to the textbook, students have other sources of learning material.

## 2. Findings from teachers' questionnaire

### 2.1. Teachers' background information

Table 2 below illustrates the teachers' background information.

**Table 2. Teachers' background information**

Information	Number (teachers)	Percentage
Qualification		
BA	2	40%
MA	3	60%
Teaching experience		
Less than 5 years	1	20%
5 – less than 10 years	2	40%
More than 10 years	2	40%

According to Table 2, there were two teachers with BA degrees, accounting for 40%; three teachers with MA degrees, equivalent to 60%. In terms of teaching experience, there was one teacher with less than five years of teaching experience, accounting for 20%, two people with 5 to 10 years of teaching experience, making up 40%, and the rest two teachers having more than ten years of teaching experience, taking up 40%.

### 2.2. Teachers' opinions towards the use of the new grade 10 English textbook

The teachers' opinions towards the use of the new grade 10 English textbook were illustrated in the table below:

**Table 3. Teachers' opinions towards the use of the new grade 10 English textbook**

Teacher's opinions	Mean Score	Level of Agreement
<b>Evaluation on the new grade 10 English textbook</b>		
1. The approach recommended in the textbook is educationally and socially acceptable to the target community.	4.6	Strongly Agree
2. The objectives are explicitly laid out in an introduction and implemented in the textbook.	3.6	Agree
3. The layout and design are attractive and easy to read.	3.8	Agree
4. The instructions are clearly stated.	4.2	Agree
5. The topics and tasks are interesting and motivating.	2.5	Disagree
6. There is a variety of topics and tasks provided for different learner levels, learning styles, and interests.	2.8	Neutral
7. The content is clearly organized and graded (sequenced by difficulty).	3.8	Agree
8. The subjects and content are relevant to learners' needs.	2.5	Disagree
9. There are periodic review and test sections provided.	3.8	Agree
10. The language used is authentic	3	Neutral

11. There is an appropriate balance of the four language skills.	3.6	Agree
12. Pronunciation explanation and practice are suitably presented.	3	Neutral
13. Vocabulary explanation and practice are clearly presented.	3.2	Neutral
14. Grammar presentation and practice are clearly presented.	3.8	Agree
15. The textbook provides adequate activities and practice.	3.2	Neutral
16. The textbook encourages learners to develop their own learning strategies and to become independent in their learning.	2.8	Neutral
17. The textbook provides adequate guidance for the teacher; not too heavy a preparation load.	3.2	Neutral
18. The textbook is accompanied by good audio cassettes, CDs, Supplementary materials, and a Teachers' Guide.	4.8	Strongly Agree
19. The textbook is readily available locally.	3.6	Agree
20. The price of the textbook is reasonable.	3.6	Agree
21. The culture presented in the textbook is appropriate for the Vietnamese context.	2.3	Disagree
22. The subject and contents are relevant to the school curriculum.	4	Agree
<b>Roles of the new grade 10 English textbook</b>		
23. The textbook serves as a syllabus.	3.2	Neutral
24. The textbook helps in planning daily instruction.	3.8	Agree
25. The textbook serves as a source of assessment items.	3	Neutral
26. The textbook serves as a source of homework.	4.6	Strongly Agree
27. The textbook serves as an essential source for teachers.	4.6	Strongly Agree
28. The textbook serves as an essential source for learners.	4.6	Strongly Agree
29. The textbook helps teachers to teach English effectively.	3.6	Agree
30. I follow the sequences of contents provided in the textbook.	3.2	Neutral
31. I teach exclusively from the textbook.	4.6	Strongly Agree
32. I rely on the textbook when teaching.	3.6	Agree
33. I use the textbook as the only source of teaching materials.	1.8	Strongly disagree
34. I fully understand the content presented in the textbook.	4	Agree
35. I fully understand the cultural issues presented in the textbook.	3.6	Agree

According to the data in Table 3, we can see that the surveyed teachers gave different opinions on the questionnaire items. In the evaluation of the new grade 10 English textbook section, the surveyed teachers strongly agree with items 1 and 18, with the average levels of agreement from 4.6-4.8, which means that they highly appreciated the suggested strategy which is socially and educationally acceptable to the target community and the provision of good audio cassettes, CDs, supplemental materials, and a teachers' guide included with the textbook.

Besides, the teachers also expressed their agreement with items 2, 3, 4, 7, 9, 11, 17, 19, 20, and 22, with the levels of agreement ranging from 3.6 to 4.2. This means they agreed that the goals were clearly stated and implemented in the textbook in the introduction; the style and layout were appealing and simple to read. In addition, they also agreed with the clear directions, the assignments and subjects in the textbook are stimulating and engaging. And they also claimed that they agree with the fact that there are different topics and tasks offered for various learner levels, learning preferences, and interests; the information in the textbook is categorically arranged and rated (according to difficulty). Teachers appreciate having sections for tests and reviews. In particular, the four language abilities are well balanced, and the comprehensible grammar presentation and practice are also well evaluated. The fact that the teacher received appropriate instructions from the textbook and not having to prepare a lot also received approval from the teachers. The textbook's acceptable representation of culture and its relevance to the academic program of subject matter and contents are well-agreed by the teacher.

However, students strongly disagreed with item 33, which means the textbook was not the only source of teaching materials for teachers. They also disagreed with item 8, which means they thought that the subjects and content were not relevant to learners' needs. In addition, the teachers did not appreciate the cultural section of the textbook as well as its topics and tasks. It seemed that, like the students, the teachers did not find the topics and tasks appealing enough for learners.

The surveyed teachers gave neutral opinions on items 6, 10, 12, 13, 15, and 16, and 17 with a ratio from 2.8 to 3.2. This means that they do not have a clear opinion as to whether the subjects and content are relevant to learners' needs or not. Or whether the language used is authentic or not. Nor did they favorably agree or disagree with whether the pronunciation explanation and practice are suitably presented, whether the vocabulary explanation and practice are clearly presented, or whether the textbook provides adequate activities and practice. They can't even explicitly choose whether the textbook encourages learners to develop their own learning strategies and to become independent in their learning.

When asked to give opinions on the roles of the new grade 10 English textbook. Teachers strongly agree with items 26, 27, 28, and 31, with a ratio of 4.6. This means they appreciate that the textbook serves as a source of homework, an essential source for teachers, and an essential source for learners. They also strongly agree that they can teach exclusively from the textbook.

Besides, they also agree with items 24, 29, 32, 34, and 35 with a ratio of 3.6 to 4. That is, the teachers agree with the textbook helps them in planning daily instruction, it also helps teachers to teach English effectively. They agree that they rely on the textbook when teaching. Fully understanding the content presented in the textbook and the cultural issues presented in the textbook was also concurred by the teachers.

On the other hand, teachers also did not have a clear opinion of items 23, 25, and 30 with a ratio of 3-3.2. They do not specify whether they agree or not with whether the textbook serves as a syllabus, or whether it serves as a source of assessment items or not. They also clearly stated if they followed the sequences of contents provided in the textbook.

### **3. Findings from the teachers' interview**

#### **3.1. Teachers' general opinions of the new grade 10 English textbook**

In general, all of the interviewees had positive feelings toward the new grade 10 English textbook. They also pointed out some strong points of the textbook. Firstly, all of them highly appreciated the textbook package as it had necessary teaching supplementary such as CDs, PowerPoint presentations, and detailed teachers' manuals. Besides, the exercises and activities of the textbook were also mentioned as an advantage of the textbook, as a teacher said "A wide range of detailed exercises help teachers save a lot of time and effort, and even money as there's no need preparing or buying any extra materials."

Another thing that teachers can benefit from the new grade 10 English textbook, as shared by two interviewees was that it serves as a guideline, which helps them understand the framework of each unit, and directs them to make better plans for their lessons.

#### **3.2. Teachers' use of the new grade 10 English textbook**

According to all of the interviewees, the new grade 10 English textbook plays an inevitable part in a lesson because of the education policy. Therefore, they had to refer to the book and follow the order of the lessons/ units. That also means that students have to use the textbook for every lesson as "the textbook is the main source of homework" said the third interviewee.

However, four of the interviewees said that they had to use additional resources or external references. As the first interviewee said, "The large-size class means that students have different interests and levels. That is the reason why teachers need to look for an external source to help students at all levels understand and be interested in the lesson". Interviewee four also added, "As the instructions and explanations are sometimes not clear enough for low-level students, teachers have to find other ways to help them. Similarly, for those who are good at English, the exercises in the textbook are quite easy for them."

#### **3.3. Teachers' difficulties using the new grade 10 English textbook**

Firstly, according to the first and the second interviewees, the subjects of the textbook sometimes are not appealing enough to the students, which makes them spend a lot of effort preparing lesson plans. In terms of cultural contents in the textbook, four out of five teachers said that several topics are not common in Vietnam. Besides, the guidelines for culture sections are sometimes not adequate, which made it hard for them to understand, and then teach their students.

The second difficulty, also mentioned by four out of five respondents, is that the contents of the book make it hard to develop tests and assessments. "While the book was designed to develop the student's communication skills, grammar took up large weight in the tests, which caused the mismatch between what students have learned and what students have done."

In addition, there was an imbalance among the contents of the sections in one unit or among different units. Sometimes, due to the illogical knowledge arrangements, the lesson covers a huge amount of knowledge, which made it hard for teachers to teach the whole content.

Besides, the cultural parts of the books were a concern to all of the interviewees. According to interviewee 1, "Some cultural contents were quite hard for the students to understand as they are completely different from what students have experienced." Interviewee 5 also shared the same concern by saying "It took me a lot of time to explain the cultural parts as the students did not know. However, some students were not satisfied as they just could see so they could not explain how and why there were differences among cultures". Having the same idea as the fifth interviewee, the third interviewee also suggested, "It is better if the cultural section refers to things that were familiar to students and they will have chances to study them deeper, and if possible, they can explain and introduce them to foreigners."

The interviewees also mentioned some indirect problems related to the learners' language abilities, the size of the class, and the continuous changes in textbooks. The teachers pointed out that the average language proficiency of the students was quite low, making the textbook content too difficult for them to comprehend. Despite the interesting nature of the activities, students were unable to complete them, particularly the speaking and writing tasks. Moreover, large-sized classes also caused difficulties for teachers to implement activities in the textbook, i.e., speaking or writing activities. "I would like students to make use of what is provided in textbooks because it is helpful, but I cannot have them all practice at once. I was unable to call them individually to the front of the classroom and request that they speak or share because it is time-consuming", said the fifth teacher. Last but not least, the fact that textbooks often change is also another cause of teachers' difficulties in using them. When teaching a new textbook, teachers need to spend more time learning about it, making teachers spend more time on preparation and investigation.

Despite the difficulties, all of the five interviewees claimed that if they could decide, they would still choose the textbook in the future.

#### IV. CONCLUSIONS

##### 1. Students' opinions toward the use of the new grade 10 English textbook

In general, students have positive attitudes toward the new grade 10 English textbook. Specifically, of all 19 questionnaire items, students agreed or strongly agreed with 11 items. The most highly appreciated items were the organization of the review and test sections of the textbook, the accessibility of the textbook, and its price. Students also thought that the objectives were explicitly presented in an introduction and implemented in the textbook. Another strong point of the textbook is its clear instructions. In addition, they believed that the four language skills are well-balanced. The students also appreciated the grammar presentation and practice because it was understandable for them. Moreover, they thought that thanks to the textbook, their learning strategies were developed, and they could become independent in learning.

The textbook also proved to play a significant role for the students. It is a source of homework for the students. Although students do not consider it the only source of learning materials, it is considered a necessary source for learners. In addition, the content of the textbooks is understandable for them.

However, according to the students, there are still things that should be improved in the textbook. Students did not find the topics and tasks in the textbook interesting and motivating. Moreover, the cultural issues in the textbooks were also hard for the students to understand.

Students had averaged levels of agreement with other aspects mentioned in the questionnaire.

##### 2. Teachers' opinions toward the use of the new grade 10 English textbook

In general, the new English textbook for grade 10 received favorable feedback from the teachers. They also highlighted some of the textbook's excellent qualities. First of all, they all expressed their appreciation for the textbook package, which included useful teaching materials including CDs, PowerPoint presentations, and thorough instructors' guides. A teacher also cited the textbook's exercises and activities as a benefit as they help teachers save a lot of time and effort, and even money as there is no need to prepare or buy any extra materials. Another advantage of the new grade 10 English textbook for teachers is that it acts as a roadmap for lesson planning, directing them to better comprehend the structure of each unit.

Although the teachers did not just depend on the textbook to teach, the textbook was recognized as an essential source for teaching and learning. The teachers agreed that the textbook helps them in planning daily instruction and teaching English effectively. Teachers also used the textbook as a source of homework for their students. Teachers also highly evaluated the textbook approach, objectives presentation and implementation, layout and design, instructions, content, review, and test sections, the balance of four language skills, grammar presentation, and practice, the textbook package, its availability, and price.

However, there were still some difficulties for the teachers when using the new grade 10 textbook. Firstly, although the teachers agreed that the subject and contents of the textbook are relevant to the school curriculum, its contents and subject are not relevant to learners' needs. Students in the big class have a range of interests and academic abilities. Because of this, teachers must search for an outside resource to aid students of all skill levels in understanding and taking an interest in the lesson. Teachers often need to discover alternative strategies to assist low-level students because the directions and explanations are not always clear enough. The tasks in the textbook are very simple for people who are good at English. Besides, according to the teachers, the topics and tasks are not interesting and motivating enough for students. Students frequently find the textbook's topics to be unappealing, which forces teachers to put a lot of work into creating lesson plans.

The development of exams and evaluations is a challenge due to the book's substance. The book was meant to help students improve their communication abilities, but the assessments heavily weighted grammar, which led to a discrepancy between what students learned and what they really did.

Additionally, there was an imbalance in the sectional composition of one unit or across several units. It might be challenging for teachers to teach the entire subject when a lesson covers a large quantity of knowledge as a result of illogical knowledge structures.

In addition, a few of the cultural issues included in the textbook are uncommon in Vietnam. In addition, they sometimes found it difficult to instruct students since the rules for the cultural parts were insufficient. Due to their extreme differences from what the students

had encountered, certain cultural concepts were difficult for the pupils to comprehend. Teachers had to spend a lot of time explaining the cultural aspects because the students were ignorant. Some students, however, were not content since they could just perceive and were unable to describe how and why there were cultural differences. It is preferable if the cultural portion makes reference to familiar concepts so that students may learn more about them and, if feasible, explain and introduce them to foreigners.

Indirect issues with the language proficiency of the students, the size of the class, and the ongoing revisions to textbooks were all brought up by the teachers. The teachers emphasized that the students' average level of language ability was relatively poor, making it too difficult for them to understand the material in the textbooks. Students struggled to finish the exercises, especially the speaking and writing assignments, despite the fact that they were enjoyable. Furthermore, teachers found it challenging to execute speaking and writing tasks from the textbook in big classrooms. Last but not least, the fact that textbooks are often updated is another factor that makes it challenging for teachers to use them. Teachers must spend more time learning about a new textbook before using it in class, which requires more time for planning and research.

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