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تقويم نصوص القراءة وتمارينها في كتاب الطالب وكتاب التدريبات للسف التاسع لمبحث اللغة الإنجليزية

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ملخص: هدفت الدراسة إلى تقويم نصوص القراءة وتمارينها في كتاب الطالب وكتاب التدريبات للسف التاسع في مبحث اللغة الإنجليزية بناء على معايير واضحة يتم إعدادها من مصادر متنوعة بهدف تحديد مواطن القوة و الضعف في هذه النصوص و التمارين. ولتحقيق أهداف الدراسة تم إتباع طريقة البحث الوصف التحليلي واستخدام أداتين لجمع المعلومات وهما بطاقة تحليل المحتوي ومقابلة منظمة لخمس عشرة مدرس ومدرسة من مدرسي ومدرسات اللغة الإنجليزية للسف التاسع في مدينة رفح وذلك من أجل أخذ رأيهم في نصوص القراءة وتمارينها من أجل إثبات أو رفض النتائج التي تم الوصول إليها من خلال عملية التحليل. ولقد أظهرت نتائج التحليل العديد من نقاط القوة والضعف والتي في ضوؤها تقديم بعض المقترحات العملية والمناسبة لواقع الطلاب و المعلمين.

Evaluating English for Palestine Grade 9: Reading Texts & Exercises

Abstract: This study aimed at evaluating the reading texts and exercises in student book (SB) and workbook (WB) of English for Palestine-Grade 9 in order to identify the areas of weaknesses in these reading texts and exercises. To fulfill this aim, the descriptive analytical approach was used. A content analysis card and a structured interview were used to collect the required data. The main results show that the reading texts and exercises of English for Palestine-Grade 9 have a few weaknesses but many strong points. Identifying the main weaknesses and offering practical suggestions would be useful for teachers, supervisors, administrators and students.

Key words: English for Palestine-Grade 9, evaluation criteria, reading texts and exercises.

Introduction:

Although great efforts have been exerted to develop the first English language Palestinian textbooks grades 1-12, several complaints about their effectiveness and suitability to the learners' level and interests have been expressed, specially that these textbooks have been implemented without any real piloting attempt.

These impressionistic complaints necessitate conducting several systematic and objective evaluative studies to specify the problematic points in the 12-level textbooks called English for Palestine – Grades 1-12. In line with Brown's (1989 cited in Weir and Roberts 1994:4) comprehensive definition of evaluation quoted below:

The systematic collection and analysis of all relevant information necessary to promote the improvement of the curriculum, and assess its effectiveness and efficiency, as well as the participants' attitudes within a context of particular institutions involved.

this study aims to evaluate the reading texts & exercises in the 16-unit textbook English for Palestine-Grade 9. The evaluation includes both the Student Book (SB) and Workbook (WB) and is based on clear list of criteria and teachers' perspectives.

One of the goals of analysing and evaluating such English as a Foreign Language (EFL) textbooks is to objectively identify the points of strengths and weaknesses for the purpose of enhancing the process of teaching English. Providing teachers with reliable and objectively analysed data about the textbooks would enable them to teach English with more professional competence and confidence. Such useful data would also provide supervisors, syllabus designers and educational administrators with concrete evidence regarding strong and weak points of the evaluated textbooks and to conduct any possible modifications or supplementations to these textbooks to overcome their weaknesses (Riffe, et al. 1998). In brief, the ultimate purpose of such evaluation is to offer suggestions, modifications and enrichments to the textbooks in use to overcome their weaknesses and enhance their strengths. These purposes apply to this study. To achieve such purposes several methods can be used as discussed by Richards (2001:299-303), Graves (2000:215) and Weir and Roberts (1994:29). These methods include: systematic observation, feedback, questionnaire, dialogue, document analysis, Delphi technique, self assessment checklists, journals, ranking activities, tests, diaries, interviews, peer appraisals, student log, case study, student's evaluations, and audio and video-recording. One method may be more suitable in one specific context than in another one. Some of the various suitable and effective instruments commonly used in empirical studies conducted to evaluate textbooks are analysis cards (Al-Madany 2005, Al-Yousef 2007, Barzaq 2007, Hassan 2004, Janhangard 2007, Litz 2001, Al-Mazloum 2007, Mahmoud 2007, Ranalli

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2002 and Razmjoo 2007); questionnaires (Al-Yousef 2007, Barzaq 2007, Kayapinar 2009, Kırkgöz 2009, Mankide & Lawyer 2008 and Masri, 2003); and interviews (Al-Yousef 2007, Hassan 2004, Kırkgöz 2009 and Yilmaz 2005).

Such textbooks analysis and evaluation can be conducted by using one or a mixture of several criteria checklists that were proposed by several educationalists such as (Al-Masri 2008, Al-Jarf 2007, Barzaq 2007 and Miekley 2005). These checklists include different points related to all aspects of EFL textbooks including the four language skills (reading, writing, listening and speaking), the layout and visuals, etc.

Here is a brief summary of the main points related to both reading texts and exercises which represent the concern of this study.

Criteria for Evaluating Reading Texts

- 1. Interest:** The most important factor in selecting a reading text is the level of interest of the reading texts. Williams (1986:42) claims that ‘in the absence of interesting texts, very little is possible.’ Jordan (1997:145) adds that interest is vital because it increases motivation, which in turn is a significant factor in the development of reading speed and fluency.
- 2. Lexical Knowledge:** New lexical items are defined by Day (1994 in Calixto, 2004:74) as words and idioms or compound phrases. There is evidence that too high a density of unknown words in a text has a negative effect on comprehension and vocabulary learning .
- 3. Authenticity:** Harmer (1991:185) defines authentic texts as ‘those which are designed for native speakers’, e.g. the articles in a newspaper or a magazine whereas non-authentic texts those which have been changed, most often simplified to suit the requirements of a foreign language curriculum. Al-Masri (1993:36) lists the advantages of authentic texts:
 - They provide proper representation of the linguistic forms occurring in a particular text.
 - They heighten the learners' awareness of grammar in real use.
 - They train the learners to deal with real English without feeling inhibited.
 - They promote the learners' confidence and motivation and, therefore, their overall learning performances are promoted.
- 4. Variety:** Variety means the reading texts deal with a range of different topics that include science, education, culture, etc. Day (1994:27) states that

the variety of topics used in the reading texts helps to maintain students' interest and motivation.

5. **Cultural Background Knowledge:** Brown (1994:163) states that culture is the context within which we exist, think, feel and relate to others. Al Masri (1993:58) points out that a lack of immediate connection between the learning materials and the learners' contemporary reality, interests and purposes is likely to weaken the learners' drive for learning English and slow their achievement.
6. **Text Layout:** Many factors related to text layout affect the speed and the legibility of a reading text. Among these factors are: size of spaces (between words, lines, and paragraphs), font type, font size, width of margins, the nature of ink used for printing and the texture, colour and reflective qualities of the paper (Lunzer and Gardner, 1979:76).
7. **Text Visuals:** Visuals may range from simple hand-made realia, charts and pictures to electronic and digital materials. According to Griffiths, (1995:52) pictures and other visual materials can activate students' prior knowledge. Students usually react more favorably to bright, colourful, interesting and well-illustrated material.
8. **Values:** A value is a belief which needs not rely upon facts or evidence. Ryle (1994) talks of values as 'dispositions' which incline us towards specific structures, tasks and patterns of behavior. According to Litz (2005:8), values represent the third basic component of a syllabus. He states that the materials selected for reading should reflect the needs of the learners, the aims, the methods and values of the teaching program.

Criteria for Evaluating Reading Exercises

1. **Coverage of reading sub-skills:** The reading exercises in any textbook should develop several reading skills that enable the students to practice: skimming, scanning, summarizing, distinguishing fact from opinion, making inferences, making predictions, recognizing pronoun references, developing awareness about synonyms and antonyms, deducing meaning of unfamiliar words from context and inferring mood and author's attitude or tone.
2. **Variety:** Variety in exercises refers to using different kinds of questions that cover all several thinking skills mentioned in ELC (such as making predictions, inferences, summarizing, guessing, interpretation, synthesizing information and analysis). Developing such skills can be achieved by employing not only wh-questions but also using open questions, multiple-

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choice questions, right or wrong questions, etc. Grellet (1981:9) and Garinger (2002) state that reading comprehension exercises should be suited to the texts and to the reasons for reading them. They declare that keeping students motivated and interested as they work through a textbook is much easier if the students see something different in each unit.

- 3. Purity:** In reading exercises, purity refers to the fact that the answers of these exercises depend mainly on reading and comprehension. The pure reading exercises measure how much students understand from the reading text. They do not take into consideration other language skills; writing, listening and speaking or language aspects; pronunciation, grammar, spelling and vocabulary.

Methodology:

Instrumentations:

Following some of the commonly used tools used to evaluate textbooks mentioned above, two tools are used in this study: content analysis card and a structured interview. Both methods are used to identify the main strengths and weaknesses in the reading texts and exercises available in the 16 units of English for Palestine –Grade 9.

Content Analysis Card

The content analysis card has 49 items grouped into six domains shown in Appendix (1). Table (1) below shows only the 6 domains to be evaluated.. To get reliable and objective results, three workshops were held to train two other colleague researchers to conduct the analysis using the content analysis card.

Table (1): Number of Items in Domain of Analysis Card

No.	Domain	No. of items
1.	The Reading Texts	6
2.	Reading Text Vocabulary	5
3.	Reading Text Visuals	4
4.	Reading Text Layout	3
5.	Reading Exercises	19
6.	Workbook Exercises	12
Total		49

Structured interview:

To enhance the study objectivity, a structured interview was held with fifteen 9th grade teachers in Rafah City (in southern Gaza Strip). Every teacher was asked nine questions related to possible problematic areas in the reading texts

and exercises of English for Palestine-Grade 9. The questions in the interview handle different topics as shown in the interview card in (Appendix 2).

The population consists of all 9th grade teachers of English in Rafah City. It consists of (30) teachers; (14) male teachers and (16) female teachers. The sample consists of (15) teachers; (6) male teachers and (9) female teachers. The sample represents 50% of the population.

Findings and discussions

Due to the limited space available here and due to the many points used as evaluation criteria/items, only the most important results will be highlighted. This means that the main strengths and weaknesses as well as the most interesting and suitable reading texts and exercises are presented. These results are summarized in Tables (2), (3) and (4) reflecting three categories: main strengths, main weaknesses and most interesting and suitable reading texts. All these categories will be discussed below.

I) Main strengths of the reading texts and exercises:

Table (2) below shows 15 positive results related to the reading texts in the 16 units that English for Palestine-Grade 9 has. These are the results of the content analysis card completed by the researchers and 2 other school teachers who teach English for Palestine- Grade 9 and who have been familiarized with systematic analysis in 3 training workshops. As the 2-domain Table (2) shows, only the items that got the highest percentages (75% or more) are considered positive. All the items under each domain are sequenced in a descending order. The mean of frequency is the average of the results got by the three researchers.

Table (2) Main strengths in SB

No.	Criteria	Mean of frequency	Percentage%
The reading texts in SB			
1.	enrich students' general knowledge about different topics	16	100%
2.	help students to read intensively.	16	100%
3.	use colours to highlight new/unknown vocabulary	16	100%
4.	have sufficient margins on sides and sufficient spaces between text lines	16	100%
5.	contain suitable number of new/unknown vocabulary (not more than 2% -5% from the whole number of the text words)	15.6	98%

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6.	include guessable words	15.6	98%
7.	are divided into paragraphs	14.6	91.6%
8.	have visuals relevant to the topic of text	14.3	89.5%
9.	have colourful and attractive visuals	13.3	83.3%
10.	Have clear visuals to 9th graders.	13	81%
The reading exercises in SB &WB			
11.	present clear instructions that can be understood by 9 th graders	16	100%
12.	activate students' background knowledge before reading the text through questioning, picture reading, word clustering	16	100 %
13.	require students to make predictions about the reading text	15	94%
14.	WB exercises reinforce the ones in the SB	14	87.5%
15.	include a variety of questions	13	81 %

Discussion of the main strengths:

1. Reading Texts: enrich and varies learners' knowledge

Table (2) shows that all 16 reading texts employ a wide variety of topics that cover different disciplines. This means that every unit presents a new and different topic. Such advantageous knowledge variety not only enriches students' general knowledge but also meets their varied needs which would heighten learners' motivation to read the texts with stronger interest. Such positive affective factors are vital for developing learners' reading comprehension skills.

It is worth mentioning that there is a full correspondence between the topics of the reading texts in English for Palestine 9 and those proposed in ELC (1999:44-45) as shown in Table (3) below. Such positive match and harmony shows that the texts are selected and presented in consistency with the Palestinian ELC and not haphazardly.

Table (3): Topics correspondence between textbook and ELC

Unit	Title of reading text	Suggested Topics in ELC
1.	Gaza, ancient and future city of trade	History of Gaza-Palestinian refugees.
2.	Introducing Istanbul	Cultural Heritage, historical landmarks and figures in Istanbul, national events, customs.
3.	Home is a special place	Cultural Heritage, customs.
4.	How to be fit and safe	Health & welfare, personal hygiene, medical care.
5.	Finding the way	Science & Technology: media, computers , great scientists and inventions.

6.	Building a modern city	Environment & Ecology: pollution, services in a city, running water and electricity.
7.	Salah Al-Din: a leader ahead of his time.	Cultural Heritage: history of Islamic leader
8.	A great man and a great Muslim	Cultural Heritage, religious man Abu Bakr
9.	Our friends, the forests	Environment & Ecology: Deforestation and reforestation, carbon cycle.
10.	Quiz: Could you look after your home and family	Personal: daily routine, inter-personal relations.
11.	Reaching out to others	Society & Social Problems: voluntary work
12.	The United Nations at work	International Organization: UN, its services in Palestine
13.	Help, World!	Personal: daily problems, dealing with feelings and emotional states
14.	An email from China	Cultural Heritage, Chinese culture, lifestyle, customs, national events.
15.	Science Magazine Talks To	Science & Technology, great scientific inventions, scientific research, bionic arms.
16.	Beautiful New Westhill Community Garden Opens	Society and Social Problems, cooperation, voluntary work

2. The reading texts help students to read intensively

The results reveal that all the reading texts are meant to be read intensively whereas extensive reading is ignored completely though the students have been studying English for 9 scholastic years. Further discussing about absence of extensive reading and its importance will be discussed in the weaknesses part later.

3. The reading texts use colours to highlight new/unknown vocabulary

The results in Table (2) show that using colours to highlight the new (unknown) vocabulary has been consistent in all 16 units. This means that in all the reading texts, the new vocabularies are highlighted by using the yellow colour. In fact, colouring new vocabulary indicates to the teacher and to the learners which vocabulary should be focused on and thus to be learned and retained in the long-term memory.

4. The reading texts have sufficient margins and spaces between text lines

Both content analysis card and the interview have confirmed that there are sufficient margins on both sides and spaces between text lines in all 16 units. This advantage indicates that no problems are found in the layout of the reading

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texts. Such advantage has its positive impact on easing and speeding the process of reading comprehension.

Regarding the sufficiency of margins on sides, the results of both content analysis and teacher interviews revealed that suitable and sufficient margins are found in all the 16 reading texts. The same results are also found for the spaces between text lines.

5. The reading texts contain suitable number of new/unknown vocabulary (not more than 2-5% from the whole number of the text words)

The results in Table (2) above are based on an objective analysis of the number of new words included in each reading text as Table (4) below reveals. As the number and ratio of new vocabularies play a vital role in supporting or slowing reading comprehension, the results show a suitable number of new (unknown) vocabularies have been presented in every text. The average number of new words in each text is less than 10 words representing an average of less than 3% of the total words in each text as shown in Table (4). The only exceptional units are 8 and 16 which contain only three new vocabularies as they are revision units where students need not be taught new vocabularies but to revise the previous ones.

Such result is consistent with several studies that examined the role of vocabulary knowledge in reading and the percentage of unknown words that might affect comprehension. Lui and Nation (1985) suggested that 95% coverage is needed for sufficient comprehension and Hirsh and Nation (1992) indicated that reading will be laborious if the number of new vocabulary is below 95-98% of the lexical coverage of the reading text. Moreover, Hsueh-Chao and Nation (2000) stated that a vocabulary size around 98% of text coverage would be necessary to achieve a very good comprehension of it.

Table (4): Number of new words in reading text

Unit	Number of text words	Number of new vocabulary	Ratio of new vocabulary %
1.	338	11	3.2 %
2.	361	10	2.7 %
3.	359	10	2.8 %
4.	357	12	3.3 %
5.	399	11	2.7 %
6.	354	10	2.8 %
7.	383	10	2.6 %
8.	302	3	1 %
9.	351	15	4.2 %
10.	275	10	3.6 %
11.	374	10	2.6 %
12.	364	13	3.5 %
13.	378	9	2.3 %
14.	342	9	2.6 %
15.	365	8	2.2 %
16.	289	3	1.1 %
Average	350	9.6	2.75 %

6. The reading texts include guessable words

One of the main thinking skills promoted by the reading texts is guessing the meaning of unfamiliar words. The results of the card analysis show that 98% of the new words are easy to guess by 9th graders. Such skill is vital for developing reading comprehension.

7. The reading texts are divided into paragraphs

Fourteen out of sixteen reading texts are divided into paragraphs, representing 91.6% with a frequency of 14.6. Indeed the two reading texts which are not

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divided into paragraphs are found in Units 10 and 13. Unit 10 is a reading text with a different text structure. It is a quiz; a group of multiple-choice questions where students are put into personal situations and they have to choose what to do in these situations and Unit 13 is about a group of letters and replies.

It is believed that the appearance of the reading text is the first thing that students notice. Whenever the text is divided into paragraphs, it means it is divided into points or ideas. Every paragraph is usually about one point or idea. The researchers agree with Lunzer and Gardner (1979) that the layout affects the legibility of the reading text and is beneficial for students' motivation to read. If the text is attractive and well-designed, it will be more motivating than sloppy-hard-to read texts.

Concerning the results of the 9th grade teachers interviewed who were asked: 'Throughout your experience as a teacher, in which reading texts do you face any problems concerning the font type & size used in the reading texts?', all the 15 teachers interviewed confirmed that the font type & size are suitable for 9th graders. They declared that they never face any problems in the font type and size. This proves that the layout of the reading texts has no problems. The font size in the reading texts is 12-point and this indicates that 12-point is a suitable font size for 9th graders. The font type is Times New Romans.

8. Reading Text Visuals: relevance

With reference to the relevance of visuals to the text topic, results indicate that almost (89.5%) of all visuals used in the reading lessons are relevant to the reading texts with the exception of only one found in Unit (13) where no visuals are used at all.

9. Reading Text Visuals: attractiveness

Visuals attractiveness got 83% with 13 frequencies. This indicates that about 13 out of the 16 reading texts visuals are coloured and attractive with the exception of 3 Units. These Units are 2, 6 & 13. In Unit 2 the picture used is a very small: a picture of the city of Istanbul which does not clearly show where the Blue Mosque and Aya Sofya. In fact, students are asked to look at the picture and guess which building is the Blue Mosque while the picture does not show any marks and it is a very small picture. Colours are not clear in this picture although they are important for determining the places in it. Also in Unit 6, the pictures used are two pictures of the old city of Manchester. They are neither colourful nor attractive and above all not clear at all as well. Students have to refer to the pictures to answer some questions about them but they cannot as

these pictures are very old and unclear. Unit 13 has no visuals as mentioned before

10. Reading Text Visuals: clarity

Clarity got 81% with a frequency of 13. This indicates that 13 out of 16 visuals used are clear to 9th graders and there are 3 unclear visuals (in Units 2, 6 & 13) for the same reasons mentioned above. The teachers' interview gave similar results where most teachers confirmed the suitability and purposefulness of all the text visuals except for two; those which are used in Units 2 and 6. This general agreement on the relevance, attractiveness and clarity of the visuals to the texts would ensure better understanding of the concepts and ideas expressed in the reading texts and appreciating the importance of using visuals in conveying meaning.

The reading exercises in SB & WB

11. The reading exercises present clear comprehensible instructions

As noted in Table (2) above, the criterion of including clear instructions that can be understood by 9th graders got 100% with a frequency of 16. This shows that all the instructions used in the reading exercises are clear and can be understood easily by the 9th graders. This result goes with the results of Barzaq (2007) who evaluated English for Palestine- Grade 6 and 7 and found that instructions supplied are relevant, easy to understand, adequate and unambiguous.

12. The pre-reading exercises activate students' background knowledge

The item 'activate students' background knowledge before reading the text through questioning, picture reading and word clustering' got 100% with a frequency of 16. This means that all the pre-reading exercises activate students' previous knowledge about the reading texts. Having more prior knowledge exercises develops some thinking skills such as prediction, anticipation, remembering and synthesizing and also helps students to be motivated and involved in fully comprehending the text better. As Grabe (1997) states when readers have sufficient knowledge of a given text, they discover their own strategies to understand the meaning of text.

13. The reading exercises require making predictions

The exercises requiring students to make predictions about the reading text got 94% with a frequency of 15. This reveals that almost all the pre-reading activities require students to make predictions before reading the text. Referring to the importance of practicing prediction skill, Hassan (1994) and Day (1994)

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mention that prediction exercises will get learners' mind closer to the theme of the text to be read and increases understanding of the text.

14. WB exercises reinforce SB activities

Using exercises that reinforce the ones in the SB got 87.5% with a frequency of 14. This indicates that in 14 out of 16 units, the reading exercises reinforce the ones in the SB. The exception is found in Units 8 & 16 as they are revision units where the WB exercises are presented in the form of a test which has different reading texts from those in the SB. This result confirms the results of Barzaq (2007) who concludes that the reading exercises in the WB reinforce what students had already learned.

15. The reading exercises include a variety of questions

The results of analysis indicate that a great deal of variety in questions is found in the reading exercises in 13 units. However, some units do not have a variety of questions. In fact, units 1 and 9 have 6 exercises in SB whereas units 4, 6 and 12 have only 3 ones. This means that less reading skills are covered in these units than others. What is also noticed is that throughout reading texts, the same types of questions are repeated and limited to these types which are repeated in every unit:

- Read and complete the notes.
- Read and mark the sentences true or false. Correct the ones that are false.
- Write a short summary.
- Collect pairs of nouns and adjectives.
- Choose the best way to complete the statements.
- Read and answer the questions.
- Find phrases with similar meanings in the text.

This limited variety does not cover all the skills needed to be acquired by 9th graders as mentioned in the ELC (1999) as all the following reading skills are absent:

- distinguishing between fact and opinion
- working out answers in pairs and groups
- inferring the author's attitude
- finding meanings of new vocabulary in contexts
- recognizing pronoun references.

The researchers agree with Grellet (1981) that there must be a variety in the range of exercises. This result goes with Barzaq's study (2007) who concludes

that the exercises in the textbook analyzed are varied and challenging. This keeps students motivated and interested as they work through the textbook.

II) Main weaknesses of the reading texts and exercises

Table (5) below shows 9 weaknesses related to the reading texts and exercises. These content analysis card results include only the items that got 25% or less. To present a clear picture of these items, they are sequenced from the lowest percentages to lower ones.

Table (5) main weaknesses in SB

No.	Criteria	Mean of frequency	Percentage %
The reading texts in SB			
1.	help students to read extensively	0	0%
2.	are authentic	0	0%
3.	present topics related to the Palestinian reality & culture.	4	24%
Reading exercises in SB & WB			
4.	require students to recognize pronoun references.	0.3	2%
5.	require students to distinguish between fact and opinion.	0.3	2%
6.	require students to infer the author's attitude	0.7	4.2%
7.	require students to work out answers in pairs and groups.	1.3	8%
8.	require students to find meanings of new vocabulary in contexts.	1.7	10.4%
9.	require students to relate the text to their personal experience.	2.3	14.6%

1. Reading Texts: Absence of extensive reading skill

The study results show that almost all reading texts develop intensive reading. This reveals that the reading texts in English for Palestine-Grade 9 are meant to be read intensively. Such result means that extensive reading is not included though it has a significant impact on the learners' reading skill development. The absence of gradually introducing extensive reading may be due to the main objectives of teaching reading in English for Palestine-Grade 9 which is reading intensively as mentioned in the Teacher Book (TB) (2008:21).

In fact extensive reading is introduced in Grade 11 and 12 only. Such complete absence of extensive reading after 10 years of studying English has a serious negative impact on producing learners with weak reading abilities. According to Nuttall (1996), Day & Bamford (1980) and Hafiz and Tudor (1985), reading

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extensively breaks down the artificial barriers that conventional reading instructions create. Richards and Renandya (2002) argue that not only can extensive reading improve reading ability; it can also enhance learners' overall language proficiency (e.g. spelling, grammar, vocabulary and writing). In addition, extensive reading encourages learners to read self-selected, large amounts of meaningful texts and develops a good habit of reading.

2. Reading Texts: Absence of authentic texts

None of the 16 reading texts in English for Palestine- Grade 9 is authentic. This result was confirmed by emailing Michael Macfarlane and Gavin McLean, the authors of the textbooks (2010). Both confirmed that the reading texts in English for Palestine 9 are not 'authentic' in the sense that they are original unedited texts from different fiction and non-fiction (artificial) sources. They are, however, designed to appear authentic to the reader, in the sense that they are stylistically identical to authentic texts. They mentioned that it is normally necessary to control the language level so that students can cope with.

The researchers agree with the textbook author and Ur (1996) that beginners might be frustrated if they have to tackle an authentic text because it might turn out to be far more difficult than the ones they can understand properly. It is true that authentic texts are motivating and interesting and they are more suitable for more proficient students. However, Al-Masri (1993) emphasizes the need to expose the learners to authentic language input that deals with a variety of topics, which are relevant to the learners' interests, reality and ability. He adds that this can be done through gradually exposing Palestinian children to authentic learning materials written for native children. Such materials would be simple and related to students' interest and level. Similar authentic texts should also be introduced gradually to prepare learners for real life language situations.

Concerning using authentic pictures, it is found that half of the visuals used are authentic. The authentic pictures are used in Units: 2, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 12, 14 & 15. This is confirmed by referring to the cover page in the SB of English for Palestine 9 in which all the authentic visuals are mentioned and cited

3. The reading texts present topics related to the Palestinian reality & culture

The results show that this item got 25% with a frequency of 4. This indicates that only 4 reading texts are related to the Palestinian culture and reality as shown in Table (6) below. Williams (1999) points out that successful reading is

affected by the way the subject matter relates to the pupils' existing cultural and general knowledge or to subject-specific knowledge. Students will be helped in their reading if some of the information is already understood. It is strongly believed that cultural background is an important factor in comprehension. The texts that are not related to the students' culture and reality are not motivating and thus more difficult to comprehend than the culturally related ones.

Table (6): Topics related to the Palestinian culture and reality

Unit	Title of the Unit	Reason
1	Gaza, ancient and future city of trade	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It talks about Gaza, one of the Palestinian cities, its history, economy and lifestyle. • Related to students' society, culture & history.
7	Salah Al-Din : A leader a head of his time	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It is related to the students' history and religion.
8	A great man and a great Muslim	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It talked about Abu Bakr Al-Siddiq. • A related topic to students' history and religion.
12	The United Nations at Work	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It is related to the Palestinian reality as it talks about the Palestinian refugees and the various services provided by the UN.

Discussion of weaknesses in the reading exercises in SB & WB

4. Reading Exercises: absence of recognizing pronoun references

The study results show that the item 'require students to recognize pronoun references' got 2 %. This means that only one of the reading exercises in the whole textbook require students to recognize pronoun references. This example is found in Unit 13 Lesson 3

Example (1): Unit 13 Lesson 3&4 Ex.1

Vocabulary

Understand what pronouns and other words refer to. Choose the correct reference-(a) or (b).

Upset's letter/Line 5: Although I love my family very much, I feel bad about this. (=.....)

(= my family) (b) (= the situation)

Fuad's letter/Line 9: ... and now they pay me just as much attention as they give the little ones. (=.....)

(= their other small problems) (b) (= the young children)

Rosa's letter/Line 3:I don't agree that your parents are the whole of it. (=.....)

(= the problem) (b) (= the family)

Rosa's letter/Line 10: If you do that, I'm sure they'll (=.....) be really happy.

(= the children) (b) (= your parents)

5. The reading exercises require students to distinguish between fact and opinion

Concerning the criterion 'require students to distinguish between fact and opinion', it got 2% with 0.3 frequencies. This shows that exercises that require students to distinguish between fact and opinion is absent.

6. The reading exercises require students to infer the author's attitude

This item got 8.33% with a frequency of 1.33. This means that exercises that require students to infer the author's attitude are found only once in all the reading exercises in SB. Although inferring the author's attitude and mood is considered one of the main objectives of teaching reading to the 9th graders, it is neglected and not given any degree of importance. The only example of this criterion is found below.

Example (2): Unit 13: Lesson 3, Ex.3b P79

Read the replies and complete the table:

Tick the boxes for replies which tell 'Upset'

Replies: 1 2 3

a) that the writer understands the difficult situation.

-	-	-
---	---	---

b) about the writer's own experience of the same situation.

-	-	-
---	---	---

c) to see things the way his parents see them.

-	-	-
---	---	---

d) that it is right for 'Upset' to control his feelings.

-	-	-
---	---	---

e) a way to improve the situation.

-	-	-
---	---	---

f) that he is doing the wrong thing at the moment.

-	-	-
---	---	---

7. The reading exercises require students to work out answers in pairs and groups.

In regard to the item 'require students to work out answers in pairs and groups', it got 8.33% with a frequency of 1.3. This illustrates that one of the exercises in SB & WB requires students to work out answers in pairs and groups. The only example of this criterion is found below.

Find the names of sports:

Swap with a partner. Work out the sport names, and read out each other's statements.

b- Now report your partner's statement to the class. (Name likes.....better than)

Example (3): Unit 4: Lesson 3, Ex.1 P. 22

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8. Reading exercises require finding meanings of new vocabulary in contexts

This item received 10.4% with a frequency of 2. This indicates that the exercises that require students to find meanings of new vocabulary in contexts are found twice in Unit. The absence of these types of exercises is one of the serious weaknesses in English for Palestine-Grade 9. Such absence of these important skills slows student's comprehension of the reading text and affects their motivation to read.

9. Reading exercises require relating texts to Students' personal experience

Concerning the criterion 'require students to relate the text to their personal experience', it got 14.58% with a frequency of 2.33. This shows that exercises that require students to relate the text to their personal experience are found only twice in all the reading exercises in SB. Asking students to relate the text to the students' personal experience is important in order to get students involved personally and thus react positively. This indeed will encourage students to read with motivation as they will reflect on their personal experiences. This skill is exemplified in only two exercises found in (Unit 3: Lesson 3, Ex.2 and Unit 4: Lesson 3, Ex.1). Below is an example:

Example (4): Unit.3: Lesson.3, Ex.2b P. 13

2- Read the title and answer these questions.

- a- Do you see a difference between the words house and home?

III) Most interesting & suitable reading texts

Table (7) below shows the five most interesting reading texts in 5 units (7, 8, 1, 12 and 10) which 7 or more of the 15 interviewed teachers perceived as interesting and suitable in an answer to this question: Throughout your experience as a teacher, which reading texts do you think are the most interesting for students? Mention 2-3 texts.' Again, the results of the teachers' evaluation of the reading texts are sequenced in a descending order

Table (7): Most interesting & suitable reading texts

Unit	Title of the Reading Text	Frequency	Percentage	Reasons given by teachers
7	Salah Al-Din: a leader ahead of his time.	13	86.6	-About a great leader who is Salah Al-Din. -A topic related to the students' history and religion. -Students have previous background knowledge about it.
8	A great man and a great Muslim	10	66.6	-About Abu Bakr Al-Siddiq. -A familiar topic that students have background knowledge about. -The text is full of values and good manners
1	The United Nations art work	8	53.3	- About the aims of the UN and its services in Palestine. -A related topic to the students' situation in Palestine.
12	Gaza, ancient and future city of trade	7	46.6	About Gaza in the past and its future as a city of trade. -A topic related to the students' culture, society, tradition and history
10	Quiz: Could you look after your home and family	7	46.6	About how students react if some problems happened. -It deals with everyday activities and problems. -Related to Students' daily life routine.

Table (8) below shows the 4 most boring reading texts in 4 units (2,6,15 and 5) which 7 or more of the 15 interviewed teachers perceived as not interesting and unsuitable in an answer to this question: Throughout your experience as a teacher, which reading texts do you think are not interesting for students? Mention 2-3 texts.' Again, the results of the teachers' evaluation of the reading texts are sequenced in a descending order.

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Table (8): Most boring & unsuitable reading texts

Unit	Title of the Reading Text	Frequency	Percentages	Reasons given by teachers
5	Finding the way	10	66.7%	-About GPS which is modern technology. - Pure scientific text. -Some figures used in the text are very complicated. -Unfamiliar topic that students do not have previous background about.
6	Building a modern city	7	46.7%	-It talks about Manchester, a city in the north of England. -Not related to the students' society or culture.
15	Science Magazine Talks to	7	46.7%	-It talks about the new developments in medicine. -A pure scientific text. -Not related to the students' culture or society.
2	Introducing Istanbul	7	46.7%	About Istanbul and its history -Not related to the students' culture, society or history. -Full of unfamiliar names of places in Istanbul.

IV) Promoting Values and manners

One of the important advantageous points that should be emphasized in a separate part is promoting values and good manners in consistency with promoting different values in English textbooks as stated in ELC (1999:20):

The English language curriculum aims to reinforce the concepts of love, peace, equality, freedom, human rights, democracy, tolerance, respect for oneself and others, as well as to maintain positive attitudes toward good and virtue. In addition, the English language curriculum aims to help students to analyze, clarify, judge and acquire values of civil society in the areas of global concern, environmental concern, social responsibility, etc.

Concerning the values and good manners expressed explicitly or implicitly in the reading texts, it is found that 9 out 16 units addressed several values with a percentage of 58%. These values and good manners are listed in Table (9) below.

Table (9): Values and good manners in the reading texts

Unit	Title of the reading text	Values Expressed
1.	Gaza, ancient and future city of trade	Freedom - love - peace
2.	How to be fit and safe	Respect of oneself and others
3.	Building a modern city	Peace - equality - environmental concern
4.	Salah Al-Din: a leader ahead of his time	Respect of oneself and others – tolerance – democracy – love
5.	A great man and a great Muslim	Tolerance - democracy – love - equality
6.	Quiz: Could you look after your home and family	Social responsibility – co-operation
7.	Reaching out to others	Social responsibility – co-operation- tolerance – love
8.	The United Nations art work	Human rights- global concern. – love – peace – equality – democracy - tolerance
9.	Help, World!	Love – respect of others – co-operation - tolerance
10.	Beautiful New Westhill Community Garden Opens	Social responsibility - co-operation – love - peace

Conclusions

Conclusions are divided into four main categories as follows:

A) Conclusions related to the main strengths of the reading texts and exercises:

1. The textbook employs a wide variety of topics.
2. In all the reading texts, colours are used to highlight new vocabulary which is helpful for both teachers and learners.
3. All the reading texts have sufficient margins and spaces between lines.
4. The number of new vocabulary is between 2-5% which is suitable for 9th graders.
5. Approximately all the reading texts are divided into paragraphs and use indentation.
6. Almost all the visuals accompanying the reading texts are relevant to them with the exception of two which are found in units 2 & 6.

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7. Approximately, all of the used visuals are colourful, attractive and clear.
8. All the instructions in the reading texts are clear and comprehensible.
9. A great variety in questions is found in the reading exercises in WB but throughout the textbook, the same types of questions are repeated.
10. In all the reading texts, students' background knowledge is activated before reading the text through questioning, picture reading and word clustering.
11. Almost all the exercises in the WB are based on and relevant to the ones in the student book and they reinforce them.

B) Conclusions related to the main weaknesses of the reading texts and exercises:

- 1- Extensive reading is not included in Grade 9.
- 2- No authentic reading texts are found.
- 3- Only 4 reading texts are related to the Palestinian culture and reality
- 4- Some reading sub-skills are not included in the SB and WB exercises that develop recognizing pronoun references, distinguishing between cause and effect, distinguishing between fact and opinion, inferring author's attitude and finding meanings of new vocabulary in contexts.

C) Conclusions related to the most interesting and suitable reading texts:

- 1- Only 5 reading texts out of 16 are very interesting for students as they are about topics related to the students' culture, society, tradition and history. Also they are about familiar topics that students have previous background knowledge about.
- 2- Almost all reading texts considered very interesting are those that are suitable for students' comprehension level and vice versa.

D) Conclusions related to promoting values and manners:

- 1- The reading texts promote several values and good manners.
- 2- The values and manners promoted are consistent with some of the main aims and values mentioned in the Palestinian ELC (1999)

Recommendations

- 1- The Ministry of Education and UNRWA are recommended to hold workshops in order to evaluate the newly implemented English textbooks in an objective and systematic way and not to depend on impressionistic evaluation.
- 2- In light of such evaluation, competent supervisors and teachers of English are recommended to prepare enrichment material for the reading exercises which cover all missing reading sub-skills.

- 3- Teachers are recommended to gradually introduce extensive reading into the classroom through encouraging students to read interesting topics related to the ones dealt with in the curriculum and giving them choices of texts.

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	related words.																		
45.	require students to recognize pronoun references.																		
46.	require students to distinguish between cause and effect.																		
47.	require students to distinguish between fact and opinion.																		
48.	require students to make a summary of the reading text.																		
49.	require students to infer the author's attitude																		

Appendix (2)

Consultation Form of an Interview Card

'Evaluating the Reading Texts & Exercises in SB & WB of English for Palestine 9'

1. Throughout your experience as a teacher, which reading texts do you think are interesting for students?

No.	Unit	Why
1-		
2-		
3-		

2. Throughout your experience as a teacher, which reading texts do you think are not interesting for students?
3. Throughout your experience as a teacher, which reading texts do you think are suitable for 9th graders comprehension levels?
4. Throughout your experience as a teacher, which reading texts do you think are not suitable for 9th graders comprehension levels?
5. Throughout your experience as a teacher, which visuals do you think are not purposeful?
6. Throughout your experience as a teacher, in which reading texts do you, face any problems concerning the font type & size used in the reading texts?
7. Which reading texts do you think need more time than is allocated?
8. Any other comments related to the reading texts.
9. Any other comments related to the reading exercises.