



High school teachers' appraisal of *new English grade 10*: A qualitative study

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Abstract

The selection of the best appropriate textbook to a particular context requires a careful evaluation to ensure whether it is suitable to learners and match the teaching and learning purpose. The study was predominantly conducted to identify the strengths and weaknesses of *New English Grade 10* after two years of pilot implementation at An Phuoc high school, Vietnam under six EFL teachers' appraisal. The data were collected via a semi-structured interview with total 40 questions covering different criteria such as aims, attractiveness, language and topics, language skills and language areas, and methodology. In overall, the strengths of this book outweighed its weaknesses.

Keywords: strengths, weaknesses, new English grade 10, Vietnam, appraisal

1. Introduction

Textbooks make a significant role in the teaching and learning process, and they are the key components of imparting the knowledge to the learners. Pertaining to the role of textbooks in English language teaching, Cunningsworth (1995) [6] identifies a textbook as an inevitable resource in presenting the material, an input for learners to practice as well as implement the language activities. Inevitably, the selection of language teaching materials like textbooks can greatly influence the quality of language learning and teaching procedure (Mukundan, Nimehchisalem, & Hajimohammadi, 2011) [20], playing an important role in the learners' success or failure of language learning. In short, textbooks are viewed as an essential component of any English language teaching and learning process, which "will always survive on the grounds that they meet certain needs" (AbdelWahab, 2013, p. 55) [1].

However, "the perfect textbook does not exist" (Grant, 1987, p. 8). For example, the textbooks may be too advanced or too simple or too inflexible for the learners. In the same fashion, particular strengths and weaknesses in textbooks already in use do concurrently present (Cunningsworth, 1995) [6]. Thus, the choice of the best appropriate textbook to a particular context requires a careful evaluation (Fatima, Shah, & Sultan, 2015) [8] to ensure whether it is suitable to learners and match the teaching and learning purpose. These authors also state that "evaluation of textbook is also considered to function as a kind of educational judgment" (p. 79). According to Rea-Dickens and Germaine (1994) [24], evaluation is a dynamic process to investigate the suitability and appropriateness of the currently used textbook. They contend that this action is rightly useful for both language teachers and material developers in the erection of innovations and modifications of the teaching materials embedded within the particular teaching and learning context.

However, despite its pivotal role in improving different aspects of used textbooks, evaluation is not still a well-

articulated section in the realm of language education (Hargreaves, 1989) [12], even in the Vietnamese context. It means that English teachers use textbooks in their language teaching, and therefore, they should be involved in the process of textbook evaluation. It is worthy to note that their views on the usefulness and effectiveness of the currently used textbooks are useful to identify the strong points and challenges in connection to their own teaching situation. In a nutshell, textbook evaluation is a so-called crucial task, which is "widely acknowledged as a powerful means of improving the quality of education" (AbdelWahab, 2013, p. 55) [6].

New English Grade 10, developed by the Vietnamese Ministry of Education and Training (MOET) in collaboration with Pearson Education Limited, has been currently piloted in teaching the English subject at An Phuoc high school, Vietnam for two years. Due to its new advent, this textbook should be carefully evaluated before being widely deployed at high schools throughout Vietnam.

2. Methodology

2.1 Participants

The research sample was defined by convenience sampling technique, in which "participants are willing and available to be studied" (Creswell, 2012, p. 67) [5] and availability at a given time is possible (Etikan, Musa & Alkassim, 2016) [7]. In this study, six English in-service teachers at An Phuoc high school, Vietnam were recruited, including five females and one males; all of them held their Bachelor's degree in English Language Teaching. These teachers' responses were of utmost vitality as they played a directive role in using *New English Grade 10* for their pilot classrooms.

2.2 Research design

The researchers decided to employ qualitative research design, with its descriptive and exploratory functions, typically produces a wealth of detailed data about a much smaller number of people and cases (Creswell, 2012) [5], to

garner data and elucidate the research aim. In specific, the essential purpose of qualitative research in this study was to explore and describe the high school teachers’ understanding and appraisal of the textbook after two years in pilot use.

2.3 Research instrument

Rationale: Interviews are one of the most appropriate ways of investigating people’s opinions and ideas between the interviewer and the interviewee (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009) [16], through which the interviewer can exploit more information given by an interviewee (Mackey & Gass, 2005) [17]. On this account, the researchers united to utilize this tool for the qualitative study.

Description: The semi-structured interview included 40 questions organized into the different categories as distinct textbook evaluation criteria, including aims (Questions 1-3), attractiveness (Questions 4-5), language and topics (Questions 6-10), language areas (Questions 11-20) and language skills (Questions 21-36), and methodology (Questions 37-40). These criteria were developed from Cunningsworth (1995) [6], Hutchinson and Waters (1987), and Nahrkhalaji (2012) [22].

3. Findings and Discussion

3.1 Strengths

Table 1: Strengths relating to aims of the book

Sub-themes	Key findings	Number
Defining the aims of the book (Q1)	1. It aims to help achieve communicative competence	6
	2. It aims to help achieve B1 achievement	3
Corresponding with curriculum aims (Q2)	1. High level (an emphasis on communicative competence)	6
Corresponding with students’ needs (Q3)	1. For entertainment	2
	2. For daily communication	3
	3. For tests, exams	2

First, all six teachers shared the same opinion on the aims of the book, i.e., to develop communicative competence among students. In addition, three interviewees supplemented that *New English Grade 10* was to help students achieve B1 level. It is inferred that the book had its clear objectives. Indeed, a good textbook needs stating goals that learners should achieve.

Secondly, Table 1 shows that all six teachers agreed that the aims of the current book are highly consistent with those of the ELT curriculum prescribed by the Vietnamese MOET. Evidently, the core objective of the ELT program was that high school students are able to “use English as a means for basic communication both in spoken and written channels” (MOET, 2006, p. 5). Clearly, the textbook fitted with the current curriculum, and school’s syllabus.

Thirdly, Table 1 indicates that the aims of the textbook were relevant to the students’ needs and interest for entertainment purposes (2/6 teachers), for daily communication (3/6 teachers), for tests and exams (2/6 teachers). Until the textbook satisfies students’ needs and interest, they become more engaged and motivated in their learning process (Cunningsworth, 1995) [6]. Munkundan and Nimechisalem (2012) state a good textbook should match to the specification of syllabus and should be compatible to the interests of the learners. Clearly, this textbook had met

requirements.

Table 2: Strengths relating to attractiveness of the book

Sub-themes	Key findings	Number
Layout (Q4)	1. Clear	6
	▪ Book map	4
	▪ Specific objectives of each unit	4
	▪ Consistent presentation of sections	3
Visuals (Q5)	1. Attractive	6
	2. Tables, charts, pictures, photos, drawings	6
	3. They are colorful, eye-catching, functional	6

From Table 2, six all interviewees advocated that *New English Grade 10* was highly attractive. In specific, four out of six teachers stated that the book contained a book map, similarly, the clearness of the layout was proven by four out of six teachers that each unit included its specific objectives. Additionally, presentation of sections in each unit was consistent and systematic (4/6 teachers). In principle, Ur (1996) points out that the clear layout is one of the criteria of a book assessment. That is to say, the clear and well-organized layout is one of the most visible strengths of this book. Besides, Table 4.2 indicates that all six interviewees agreed that visuals of the book were attractive with tables, charts, pictures, photos or drawings. They added that these visuals appeared in the textbook with a high density, colorful and functional. Sheldon (1988) [25] advocates that textbooks which have a mix of graphical materials (i.e. visuals) and texts can provide comprehensible input to the students and make them attracted towards the learning process. That is to say, clear layout and attractive visuals assured the merit of the current textbook.

Table 3: Strengths relating to topics and cultures of the textbook

Sub-themes	Key findings	Number
Topic variety (Q8)	1. Yes.	6
	2. Examples: cultures, family, community, education, environment	6
Relevance of topics to students’ Vietnamese culture (Q9)	1. Yes.	6
	2. Examples:	6
	▪ Unit 1: Vietnamese family life	
	▪ Unit 3: health care in Vietnam	
▪ Unit 4: Vietnamese community activities		
▪ Unit 7: Vietnamese Lunar New Year		
Presentation of topics on different cultures (Q10)	1. Yes.	6
	2. Examples: those of ASEAN, USA, UK or Africa	6
	3. Presented at the end of each unit	1
	4. Compared with Vietnamese cultures	1

Topics: As Table 3 illustrates, all six teachers espoused that variation of topics did exist in the textbook. Indeed, some themes were listed by these teachers such as cultures, family, community, education, environment. As Cunningsworth (1995) [6] points out that the content of an instructional material should be appropriate to the personal interests of the learners. He also emphasizes that if the topics and themes expressed in the materials appeal to students’ interests, the motivation level of students would

increase. In general, most of the topics were interesting and in reach to the students’ knowledge and able to be practiced in their daily life. This is viewed as one strength of the target book.

Cultures: In language teaching, cultural elements and linguistic elements shared the similarly important role. The students are encouraged to acquire both linguistic and cultural values and components of the target language (Toohey, 2000) [27]. Interestingly, all six participants supported that the textbook contained topics and cultural aspects relevant to the Vietnamese students’ cultures. Then some examples were given like Vietnamese family life (Unit 1), health care in Vietnam (Unit 3), Vietnamese community activities (Unit 4), Vietnamese Lunar New Year (Unit 7). Similarly, all six teachers agreed that the topics also presented different cultures of other countries like ASEAN, USA, UK or Africa. According to one interviewee, these cultures were presented at the end of the unit in *Communication and Culture* section, and another teacher added these cultures were compared to Vietnamese ones. It is clear that two cultural information types were presented in the book. This knowledge equipped better for students to communicate in situations since language forms can functionalize differently for different cultural backgrounds (Jiang, 2000) [15]. In short, the textbook included valuable cultural aspects of both Vietnam and other countries, which is one strength in application.

Table 4: Strengths relating to language areas of the book

Sub-themes	Key findings	Number
Pronunciation (Q11)	1. Stand in its section: Pronunciation	6
Grammar (Q16)	1. Explicitly introduced	6
	2. Comprehensible taught with simple tasks	6
Vocabulary (Q17, Q18, Q19, Q20)	The presentation of new words (Q17)	6
	1. In Vocabulary section and in other language skill sections	
	The ways of recycling new words (Q18)	5
	1. Adequately recycled	
	2. Recycled in next sections of language skills	3
	Availability of new-word list (Q19)	6
	1. Tagged at the end of the book	
	2. Presented in Alphabet order	
3. Include Vietnamese meanings	1	
Density of new words (Q20)	6	
1. Appropriate to students’ linguistic level		
2. Only a few difficult words in each text	3	

Pronunciation: It is the most difficult element to acquire

for language learners; yet, this language element seems to be naturally neglected by both teachers and learners (Zhang, 2009) [29]. This author also opines that many teachers automatically see pronunciation as a by-product of language skills. Thus, pronunciation does usually exclude in the teaching materials. Advantageously, from Table 4, *New English Grade 10* consisted of one section called *Pronunciation*, emphasizing phonetics of vocabulary needed for language skill practice. This strength was recognized by all six participants.

Grammar: As per Table 4, all six teachers admitted that grammar items were explicitly introduced and taught with a sufficient exposure of simple tasks. The authors of this textbook seemed to realize that the basis for communicating in a foreign language with confidence was an understanding of its structural system. Therefore, in each unit, the grammatical structures were clearly presented in a box with the title grammar focus and practiced in an order of difficulty. In other words, the grammar structures of this textbook gradually increased in complexity to suit the growing proficiency level of students; for example, present tense and then past tense.

Vocabulary: As Table 4 reveals, presentation and tasks of vocabulary were viewed as one of the most salient strengths of this book. First, all six teachers revealed that new words were presented in both *Vocabulary* section and language skill-driven sections. It is clear that new vocabulary embedded in skill sections could facilitate students’ explicit or incidental vocabulary learning. In short, vocabulary of this book was taught and practiced via both language skills development and in its own right in the vocabulary section. It is inferred that vocabulary was both introduced in meaningful contexts and form-focused activities. Secondly, five out of six participants agreed that new words are adequately recycled and consolidated. More specific, three teachers added that these new words are presented and practiced in other sections of the present unit. Theoretically, to improve the students’ vocabulary performance and vocabulary retention, the recycling process of this language element should be expanded. Thirdly, all six teachers opined that there was a new word list tagged at the end of the book. The word list may provide a gateway for the targeted learners to develop vocabulary knowledge, and in turn improve the possibility of understanding and using the target language. Finally, the moderate density of difficult or unknown words was one beneficial feature of *New English Grade 10*. All six teachers acknowledged that the load of new vocabulary was appropriate to the students’ current proficiency levels. Simply, when the vocabulary is too difficult and its density is high, learners may not understand texts, and their motivation can be demotivated. Hence, the book could benefit the tenth-grade students in their English learning due to its sensible unknown word load.

Table 5: Strengths relating to language skills of the book

Sub-themes	Key findings	Number
Listening	1. appropriate listening tasks with well-designed goals (Q21)	6
	2. “Before listening”, “While listening”, and “After listening”: specific aims (Q21)	1
	1. develop listening comprehension skills (Q22)	6
	2. listening for gist, listening for details (Q22)	6
	1. listening tasks efficiently organized and graded (Q23)	4
	2. T/F, completion (Q23)	2
	1. cassettes expose the students to the voice and pronunciation of native speakers (Q24)	6

Speaking	1. speaking tasks have achievable goals: communicative functions (Q25)	6
	1. develop the students' individual response, pair work and group work (Q26)	6
Reading	1. reading tasks have well-determined goals (Q29)	6
	1. reading tasks help students develop their reading comprehension skills (Q30)	6
	1. length and language of the reading texts suitable to the students' ability (Q32)	6
Writing	1. writing tasks have achievable goals (Q33)	6
	1. writing topics interesting (Q35)	6
	1. writing tasks suitable in terms of length and amount of guidance (Q36)	6
	2. the length: 100 words (Q36)	3
	3. clear prompts and instructions (Q36)	1

Listening: Firstly, listening tasks of the textbook had well-designed goals, reported by all six teachers. one teacher clarified the *Listening* section consisted of “before listening”, “while listening”, and “after listening” activities within specific aims. Secondly, all six teachers agreed that listening tasks of *New English Grade 10* were beneficial to develop different reading strategies. The strategies, according to them, were listening for gist, listening for specific information, listening for details, making inferences. Furthermore, all six high school teachers agreed that listening tasks were efficiently organized and graded from simple to rather difficult levels. Two interviewees exemplified the initial task was often T/F and then sentence completion. Thirdly, all the teachers revealed that cassettes exposed the students to the voice and pronunciation of native speakers, which helps students familiar with native speech. In general, Hamouda (2013) showed that listening comprehension could be affected by some sorts of difficulties unfamiliar words, the length of the spoken text, speed rate, a variety of accent, lack of concentration and pronunciation. Luckily, all the teachers agreed that listening tasks were consonant with the students' existing ability, and the listening texts were vocalized by native speakers.

Speaking: Another advantage was positively recognized by all six interviewees that the speaking tasks of the textbook are achievable since they primarily focus on simple and basic communicative functions. Besides, all six teachers reckoned that the speaking tasks of the textbook could develop different communicative patterns among high school students such as individual work, pair work or group work. In theory, Grant (1987) states that a good textbook must provide different communication practice exercises, which are aimed at developing fluency and interactional patterns among learners. Clearly, this book satisfied this condition under the teachers' revelation.

Reading: Table 5 illustrates that reading tasks had well-determined goals, confirmed by all six teachers. Furthermore, reading tasks were effective ways to assist students to develop their reading comprehension skills, unraveled by all six participants. Indeed, an exposure to different task types can bring a lot of advantages for students to acquire reading skills. For example, readers will not be fed up with only one task type. In addition, a variety of task types can challenge these readers' reading comprehension holistically. Positively, all six teachers confessed that the moderate length and simplified language of the reading texts were suitable to the high school students' language ability. In reality, one of the most direct factor causing the high difficulty level of a reading text lies on its length (Anderson, 2000). Luckily, according to the teachers, the texts of the book were feasible regarding their length. This could develop the students' comprehension and motivation.

Writing: It is also positively viewed by all the interviewed

teachers that the book was good device to develop writing skills among high school students to some extent. To begin with, all the teachers agreed that the writing tasks were achievable. In another vein, all six interviewees unraveled that writing tasks were suitable in terms of length and amount of guidance. To elaborate, three out of six teachers demonstrated that the length of essays was by 100 words maximum. Additionally, one teacher reckoned that the writing tasks were attached to clear prompts and instructions. Clearly, these merits above were considered as success of the textbook, especially writing section, since writing tasks were fully conducive to facilitating writing learning of the tenth graders by clarity of specific goals, and suitability of text length. Lastly, from Table 4.5, all six teachers revealed one strength of this textbook that writing topics were interesting to students. Research has proved the positive correlation between students' writing performance and captivation of writing topics. It means that the tenth graders at An Phuoc high school could manipulate these writing topics.

Table 6: Strengths relating to methodology of the book

Sub-themes	Key findings	Number
Defining teaching approaches (Q37)	1. PPP: Presentation-Practice-Production 2. language knowledge, language practice 3. suitable to cognition and language levels	6 1 1
Learner-centeredness (Q38)	1. Yes. 2. different activities for students: pair work, group work. 3. Tasks suitable for different levels	6 2 1
Techniques facilitating students' learning (Q39)	1. collaborative learning activities 2. activities/ tasks are graded ▪ From recognition to production ▪ From controlled to freer	4 2 1 1
Clarity of instructions (Q40)	1. instructions of tasks, activities and exercises enough clear 2. concise and informative 3. bolded and colored	6 1 3

From Table 6, all six teachers identified the main teaching and learning approach of this book as PPP (Presentation-Practice-Production). To clarify the advantage of this approach, one teacher reckoned that PPP could help students develop both language knowledge and language use. In addition, one teacher stated that this approach was naturally suitable to high school students' current cognition and language levels. In principle, Baker (2000) points out that

one of the best ways to help students at intermediate levels to reach the lesson objectives is Presentation-Practice-Production. Indeed, this approach of the target book was suitable to the high school students' existing competence. Besides, as Table 6 illustrates, all the six English teachers agreed that the textbook were learner-centered, in which learners were put in an outweighed emphasis. More specific, two of them described that this good trait of the textbook was reflected in different activities for students such as pair work, group work. Learner-centeredness of *New English Grade 10* was embodied by a set of tasks suitable to different levels of high school students.

Learner-centered approach in teaching and learning process has been a crucial method of teaching in many schools as it makes students involved, active in learning. Through this approach, students can actively interact not only with each other but as well with the teacher in the process of teaching and learning. Clearly, this approach benefited various interactional patterns in classroom such as pair work, group work. Therefore, it can be concluded that this characteristic assured the goodness of this book.

In a similar vein, *New English Grade 10* also equipped effective techniques to facilitate students' learning and short outcomes. Four out of six teachers pointed out collaborative learning activities could fulfill this matter. Meanwhile, the two others expounded that activities and tasks of this book were efficiently graded from recognition to production levels or from controlled to freer types to support high school students' English learning.

Another aspect of methodology is clarity of instruction. Positively, all six teachers highly appreciated that all instructions of tasks, activities and exercises of *New English Grade 10* were enough clear for high school students to follow and do. One teacher made it plain that the instructions were often bolded and colored; moreover, three others highlighted that these instructions were concise and informative. According to Blaich, Pascarella and Roska (2016), instructional clarity and organization plays a key role in building up students' understanding on what to do and how to do. Thus far, this was viewed as a good point of the book.

3.2 Weaknesses

Table 7: Weaknesses relating to the language type of the book

Sub-themes	Key findings	Number
Naturalness of the language (Q6)	1. Yes, little	4
	2. No	2
Communicativeness of the language (Q7)	1. serves communicative functions	3
	2. written forms outweighs spoken forms	3

As per Table 7, it is obvious that the English teachers did not acknowledge naturalness of the language type presented in the current book. In specific, four out of them considered that the language covered in the textbook was a little natural and real albeit it seemed more natural than the previous textbooks due to presence of foreign authors. Contrariwise, the other two teachers denied the naturalness of the language in the textbook. In fact, naturalness of language forms is pertinent to well-contextualized language structures in the native speakers' context in a particular language community, conveying real information (Morrow, 1977).

Until the texts consisting of real language, they become valuable and applicable tools to student readers' future work and life (Fitrisia, Tani & Yusuf, 2015). However, this textbook was only little natural in terms of language types. This negative side was considered as a weakness of this book.

Although the communicativeness of the language of the textbook was recognized since it served basic language functions of communication (3/6), the amount is really limited (3/6). Three latter teachers posited that written forms might outweigh spoken forms.

Academically, written and spoken forms of language perform different functions and values in actuality (Zhang, 2013) [30]. For example, the former usually tends to transmit information, while the latter was prone to express more emotions and personal feelings, perform more functions in smoothing interpersonal relations. However, written language form was a success of teaching reading and writing skills, but failed to teach speaking or listening skills. To enhance the tenth graders' communicative competence, spoken forms should be equalized to written forms.

Table 8: Weaknesses relating to language areas of the book

Sub-themes	Key findings	Number
Availability of phonemic alphabet (Q12)	1. No	6
Contextualization of grammar items (Q13)	1. A little bit	3
	2. Depend on each distinct unit	4
Suitability of grammar examples (Q14)	1. Yes	6
	2. Much suitable, little interesting	5
Form-use balance of language items (Q15)	1. Yes	3
	2. No	3

Pronunciation: From Table 8, all six teachers shared the same view that the phonemic alphabet was not provided in the textbook. This was a failure of this book due to its lack of the phonemic list. In fact, the students can study or check how to pronounce the words by themselves without the presence of their teachers.

Grammar: First, three teachers agreed on contextualization of grammar items in this book; however, they thought that these items were only contextualized at low level. In principle, learning grammar in context allows learners to see how rules can be used in sentences (Thornbury, 1999) [26]. Otherwise, presenting grammar in isolated sentences does not let learners see how grammatical function in sentences. Unluckily, there was low density of contextualized grammar presentation. Thus, teachers should use extra materials to present grammar units embedded to contexts. In addition, all six participants espoused that grammar examples were suitable to students' existing proficiency levels. However, five of them revealed one disadvantage that these examples were much suitable but little interesting and appealing. According to Harmer (2007) [13], uninteresting examples become one of the most direct factors which contributing to the students' demotivation. Besides, these kinds of grammar examples can decrease students' memorization and mastery of the given grammar. That being the case, this side lowered the quality of the textbook. Therefore, the teachers were asked to add joyful examples when teaching grammar items.

While three teachers agreed that there is a balance between

form and use of language items covered in grammar section, three others were skeptical of it. Every language is a formal, structural system that arises in a human community in response to communicative needs (Payne, 2014). Knowing a language is not merely knowing the grammatical rules but also knowing when to say what and to whom, that is knowledge of how the system is put to use in the performing of social actions of different kinds (Harmer, 2007) [13]. Thus, a presentation of grammar points should focus on both these sides. Yet, this book lacked this combination. Therefore, the teachers should integrate specific functions when teaching any grammatical forms.

Table 9: Weaknesses related to language skills of the book

Sub-themes	Key findings	Number
Speaking	Reflecting students' interests (Q27)	
	1. Yes.	3
	2. A little bit	3
	▪ Linguistic accuracy focus	1
	▪ Depend on specific units	1
Naturalness of the model dialogues (Q28)		
	1. No	6
	2. Presented in formal, written forms	1
	3. Real situation, accuracy-focused language	2
	4. Only few models	1
Reading	Reading texts: up-to-date, interesting and meaningful (Q31)	
	1. No	4
	2. Old facts and information	2
Writing	Free writing enhancement (Q34)	
	1. No	6
	2. Accuracy focus > idea development	1
	3. Most controlled practice	3
	4. A few units	1

As depicted in Table 9, while three teachers assumed that speaking tasks reflected students' interests sufficiently, three others were hesitant to advocate it. To the opponents, one teacher traced that some tasks heavily focused on linguistic accuracy; additionally, another explained that the correspondence of speaking tasks with students' interests depended on each specific unit, and the other appraised that some of speaking tasks were attributed to controlled practice. Academically, many theorists reveal that some students are accurate in speaking and writing but hesitate to speak in the target language. Thus, fluency-based activities need to be introduced in the language classes. Clearly, the teachers recognized lack of fluency-based activities as a weakness of the textbook.

Table 9 also reveals one challenge of speaking section that most of model dialogues lacked naturalness, reported by all six English teachers. In specific, one admitted that the language of the textbook was mostly formal and written forms, far away from spoken forms, two others shared the same perception that while many situations of the model dialogues were real, their language was form-focused, and one added that only a few models satisfy naturalness. In reality, to develop the tenth graders' speaking skill, the textbook should introduce both written and spoken forms, natural model dialogues. This helps these students familiarize with what happens in real life.

In Table 9, four out of six teachers denied that the reading texts were up-date, interesting and meaningful. In specific,

two teachers reckoned that the reading texts included old facts and information. Generally speaking, these characteristics of the evaluated textbook could hamper the students' reading comprehension and motivation.

It is seen from Table 9 that most of writing tasks failed to help students develop writing skills freely, approved by all six interviewees. One teacher surmised that writing tasks focused linguistic accuracy rather than idea generation among learners. Three interviewees, in addition, supposed that most of writing tasks involved in *New English Grade 10* required students to work out tightly controlled practice. And, another considered that only a few units were satisfactory to offer students with free writing practice. Clearly, writing approach adopted in the book seemed to be product-oriented in nature. In this way, students are engaged in imitating, copying and transforming models of correct language texts to new writing task. This approach decreases the students' creativity and thinking. Instead, the teachers can replace controlled writing tasks with freer tasks which the students can work collectively to complete.

4. Conclusion

4.1 Strengths

Under the six teachers' appraisal, the strengths of *New English Grade 10* were profoundly clarified in terms of four criteria such as aims, attractiveness, content and methodology. In general, the book had clear objectives relevant to the pre-determined goals of the national ELT curriculum and to the students' needs and interest. In addition, the book included clear, helpful layout and beautiful visual illustrations. Besides, varied, realistic, relevant, interesting and updated topics and texts were also viewed as one strength of the book. Furthermore, another merit of this book was a balanced coverage of language skills areas. Therewith, the book was learner-centered, providing clear instructions and different strategies and techniques to facilitate students' learning process.

4.2 Weaknesses

Notwithstanding the strengths of *New English Grade 10*, some weaknesses of this textbook were found by these teachers in terms of content only. First, the language of the book was insufficiently natural, real and communicative. Secondly, one challenge found related to pronunciation was the lack of phonemic alphabet. Thirdly, grammar items were not much contextualized; in addition, the presentation of grammar items lacked interesting examples; form and use balance seemed to be problematic when the former was much more focused on than the latter. Fourthly, many speaking tasks failed to reflect students' interests due to their linguistic accuracy focus; moreover, the model dialogues lacked naturalness. Fifthly, some reading texts were not interesting and updated. Sixthly, free writing opportunities were not encouraged.

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