

## **An Evaluation of EFL Materials Taught at Saudi Universities: Instructors' Perspectives**

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**Abstract.** This study aimed at investigating instructors' perspectives of EFL textbooks, Interactions Series, which have been prescribed for use in the Saudi universities. For the purpose of this study, the researchers developed a questionnaire based on the related literature to identify the instructors' perspective of the Interactions Series. The questionnaire consisted of 13 domains: practical considerations, layout and design, aims and objectives, activities, skills, language type, subject and content, assessment, the teacher's book, appropriateness, flexibility, the availability of English teaching/learning resources, and overall opinion. In addition to these domains, the questionnaire included an open-ended question which asked the respondents to provide their personal suggestions to improve the series. The sample of the study consisted of all 27 EFL male instructors at King Saud University during the first semester of the academic year 2012-2013. The findings of the study revealed that the respondents perceived the Interactions Series as appropriate for teaching English to Saudi EFL university students.

### **Introduction**

English language instruction has many important components, but the corner stone of many ESL/EFL classrooms and programs is the textbooks and instruction materials that are often used by language instructors. As Hutchinson and Torres (1994) suggest: "The textbook is an almost universal element of [English language] teaching. Millions of copies are sold every year, and numerous aid projects have been set up to produce them in [various] countries ... No teaching-learning situation, it seems, is complete until it has its relevant textbook".

Moreover, Brown (1995) indicated that a good textbook should meet learners' as well as teachers' needs. A textbook stands as a link between the English program and the teaching situation. It plays an important role in teaching English as a second or foreign language from the primary stage through university English requirements.

Furthermore, Garinger (2002) said that a textbook can serve many purposes for teachers. They can serve as a core resource, a source of supplementary material, an inspiration for classroom

activities, even as the curriculum itself. Decisions related to textbook selection will affect teachers, students, and overall classroom dynamic.

Kitao and Kitao (1997) emphasized that it is important for teachers to know how to choose the best material for instruction. In addition, they indicated that a good English textbook should have the following qualities:

- It should have correct, natural, recent and Standard English.
- Its vocabulary should be controlled. Otherwise, it should provide information to help learners understand vocabulary that they may not be familiar with.
- Grammar should be controlled for lower-level learners.
- It should have a variety of literary forms, so that learners can learn to deal with different forms.
- The cultural information should be correct and recent and should reflect background cultures of English. It should also include visual aids etc., to help the students understand cultural information.

- Its content should be useful, meaningful and interesting for learners.
- It should be higher in its level of difficulty than the learners' level of English proficiency because materials at a slightly higher level of difficulty than the learners' current level of English proficiency allow them to learn new grammatical structures and vocabulary.
- It should have clear instructional procedures and methods, so that teachers and learners should be able to understand what is expected in each lesson and for each activity.

Sheldon (1988) has offered several other reasons for textbook evaluation. He suggests that the selection of an ELT textbook often signals an important administrative and educational decision in which there is considerable professional, financial, or even political investment. A thorough evaluation of instructors viewpoints of textbooks used enables the managerial and teaching staff of a specific institution or organization to discriminate between all of the available textbooks on the market. Moreover, it would provide a sense of familiarity with a book's content thus assisting educators in identifying the particular strengths and weaknesses in textbooks already in use.

The availability of a highly verified set of standards for instructors to assess textbooks will surely satisfy their need to do this task in a professional way and helps teachers as Ellis (1997) suggest to move beyond impressionistic assessments and it helps them to acquire useful, accurate, systematic, and contextual insights into the overall nature of textbook material. Instructors' textbook evaluation, therefore, can potentially be a particularly worthwhile means of conducting action research as well as a form of professional empowerment and improvement. Similarly, textbook evaluation can also be a valuable component of teacher training programs for it serves the dual purpose of making student teachers aware of important features to look for in textbooks while familiarizing them with a wide range of published language instruction materials.

Talmage (1981) also noted benefits for teachers who review textbooks systematically. These benefits include:

- (a) a clearer view of the role of materials in the larger curricular structures;
- (b) an understanding of the limitations of materials within their individual classroom;
- (c) an in-service function, whereby classroom teachers learn a method they can apply again and again to review materials for class and for individual students' needs.

### Objective of the Study

The present study attempts to investigate instructors' perspectives of the Interactions Series taught at the English departments of the Saudi universities. Therefore, these researchers hope to:

- Identify the points of strength and weakness of this series as seen by the instructors.
- Find out the extent to which the textbooks match the students' EFL needs as perceived by their instructors.
- Suggest ways to improve the TEFL textbooks in general and Interactions series in particular.
- Suggest recommendations to be considered by decision makers at the Saudi universities as well as by textbook designers.

### Questions of the Study

The present study attempts to answer the following questions:

1. What are EFL instructors' perspectives about Interactions Series as manifested in their perspectives to the items of the questionnaire?
2. What are the instructors' suggestions to improve the Interaction series?

### Significance of the Study

This study investigates instructors' viewpoints of Interaction Series, which is an issue previous studies conducted in KSA did not tackle at all. Therefore, it is hoped that this study results in the following advantages:

1. Since, to the best of this researcher's knowledge, Interaction textbooks are not evaluated before, it is an important attempt to find out the extent to which Interaction Series is adequate as well as to show the points of strengths and weaknesses of these textbooks. As a result, this might provide Saudi university English language instructors with valuable information about these textbooks. Therefore, it is hoped that the findings of this study will help in improving these textbooks.
2. It will help researchers involved in the educational process gain insights into the evaluation process in general and on these textbooks in particular.
3. It may encourage further research, which in turn may lead to the enrichment of the field of textbook evaluation.
4. The opinions of the instructors are crucial since they provide the universities with the views of

the customers and the executors of these textbooks concerning the effectiveness of these textbooks.

5. It will help the English departments know if these textbooks really supply the students with the English skills they need.
6. It will help the researcher and the English departments if these textbooks achieve their announced objectives or not.

### **Limitation of the Study**

This study is limited to the instructors of English at the English Departments at King Saud University, so that the generalization of the findings of this study is limited to the population of the study. Furthermore, the study is limited to evaluating textbooks (Student's Book and Teacher's Book).

### **Review of Related Literature**

This study aims at investigating instructors' perspectives of the Interaction Series that is taught at the English language departments at the Saudi universities. Textbook evaluation is a key process for developing educational programs. Therefore, many research studies have been carried out in this field to supply the necessary feedback for programs and textbooks designers for improvement and modifications. The ultimate goal of this evaluation is to develop and improve the quality of the TEFL programs in general and Interaction Series in particular. The researchers reviewed some of the most related studies to the topic of this study.

Kremer and Perlberg (1979) criticized the educational training programs saying that normal educational programs in universities or other settings consisted mainly of lectures and discussions. They claimed that workshops or laboratories were not very common and not very related directly to the teachers' regular work. They recommended that training programs should concentrate on using the model of workshops in which students are encouraged to discover problems and experiences as well.

Al-Marzouq (1992) evaluated the new English for nurses textbooks used for the secondary class in the nursing stream in Jordan. The findings showed that the rationale of the textbook was based on teaching English for the specific purposes and matching the students' needs. The objectives were also stated clearly in general and specific terms. Furthermore, the objectives were relevant to the students' future career. The technical aspects of the textbook were attractive. The content was relevant to

students' specialization; this content was varied, logically ordered, and integrated. It was also found that the vocabulary items were appropriately selected to suit communication at hospitals. The structures were closely related to the selected objectives. In addition, the grammatical exercises and drills were varied and supported by illustrative examples. It was finally found that the teachers and supervisors of English were not at all consulted in selecting the objectives.

Alahen (1994) evaluated the teaching curriculum for gifted schools in Iraq. The study aimed at identifying the positive and negative aspects of teaching curriculum related to gifted schools from instruction staffs' and students' perspectives. The study revealed some positive aspects of this teaching curriculum. Some of these were implementing knowledge and love of science in the gifted students, existence of thinking safety in the content of the approved textbooks, students' participation in the scientific visits and trips, and using written, oral and practical exams. Concerning the negative aspects, the findings revealed that the objectives of the gifted schools were not clear enough and were inaccurate. Furthermore, the content of the enrichment materials did not achieve the objectives of the gifted students' schools. Finally, the study recommended that the objectives of the gifted schools should be reformed again in a way that ensures their accuracy and clarity; it also suggested designing teaching textbooks for gifted students' schools.

Chambliss (1994) evaluated the quality of the textbooks for diverse learners. She attempted to present an evaluation approach that could be used by adopters, selectors, and publishers to improve the design of textbooks for diverse learners, including those with learning disabilities. The researcher presented an evaluation technique that uses graphic organizers to present textbook material that could be evaluated according to familiarity, interest, and cultural coherence. The researcher finally recommended that publishers and responding market forces could use the same evaluation technique to develop textbook material that adaptors would choose, and content area textbook would change accordingly.

Jaradat (1994) evaluated the adequacy of the ESP course ENG 100 for helping science students in learning science courses taught in English. The findings of the study indicated that the course objectives were not extremely relevant to the students' needs. It was also found that teachers may not understand the concepts of science and they may not be familiar with the structural features of

scientific English. The findings revealed that students should be required to take the course in the first academic year to ensure its effectiveness and efficiency. Faculty members were not familiar with the type of English textbook their students study at the Language Center. It was finally found that the students and the ESP instructors seemed to be in agreement when asked to rate the degree this English language course, ENG 100, is helpful to students in six sub-skills related to their subjects.

Al-Momani (1998) evaluated AMRA textbooks for the eleventh and twelfth grades in Jordan from teachers', supervisors' and students' perspectives. The findings of the study revealed that the objectives of AMRA textbooks were suitably graded and they were relevant to students' needs. The findings also showed that the vocabulary items were suitably classified to facilitate communication. The general aspects of AMRA textbooks were suitable. The textbooks were free of misprints. The methods of teaching in AMRA were suitable. It was finally found that the speaking and listening skills were relevant to students' background.

Yuen-Kwan (1998) evaluated four in-service teacher-training courses at the Hong Kong Institute of Education in terms of their usefulness and relevance to the teachers' needs. The findings showed that the participants considered the course aims and objectives to be useful in their work on return to school. The findings of the study also revealed that the course components were considered useful and relevant. It was finally found that the course aimed to help participants to adopt a reflective stance in their own teaching.

Al-Hajailan (1999) investigated the quality of the English third grade secondary textbook, English for Saudi Arabia. The researcher used a questionnaire and an interview to collect data. The questionnaire contained eight criteria: the textbook's appearance, its accompanying materials, the educational goals, academic content, cultural content, teaching methods of the textbook, evaluation techniques, and open-ended demographic questions. The interview used a protocol and running notes to allow freedom in questioning within the specified frame. The results of the study revealed support for the book's appearance, accompanying materials, academic content, cultural content, and evaluation techniques. Disagreements appeared in terms of the national goals and the teaching methods. The implications of the study included merging the textbook, the Workbook, and the Writing Book, stating the educational goals in the Teacher's Manual, inserting pictures in the book's cover to make it attractive, increasing/gaining

grammar, adding free composition, translation, and dictation, putting in model tests, and updating the book's topics every five years.

Clemente (2000) investigated the criteria used by the teachers in selecting the content of the teaching materials for the students in Spain. The findings of the study showed that the psychological domain came in the first place, while the social domain came in the final place. The study also revealed that psychology has become a favorable reference for lots of teachers when choosing the content of the enrichment material. The study recommended that teachers have to be trained on how to select the enrichment materials in a way that ensures achieving the objectives.

Cepon (2002) conducted a study to investigate how Business English (BE) teacher evaluators assess the suitability of the new BE textbooks. The findings of the study showed that BE teachers fully understand the enormity of the textbook evaluation process but do not necessarily use evaluative instruments to assess the propriety of the new BE textbooks.

Hong Xu (2004) investigated criteria for assessing ESL textbooks. She found that there are 80 criteria in 13 categories. These categories are: content, activities, language, culture, format, reliability, supplementary components, literacy, marketability and legal. Of particular importance to the teachers are the following: use of standard English and quality of language in the textbook and good editing, an attractive design and layout, easy access to components and content for organizing instruction, evidence of developmental progression of content, topics that are of relevance and interest to the students, educational validity, an assessment of costs and durability, variety of activities, a sufficient number of practice activities that fit all parts of the learning process, many activities on a similar theme or topic, follow-up questions for all readings, up-to-dateness or reflection of contemporary life and times in the content, activities which promote communication, and activities that meet the needs of multi-level classes.

Sikorova (2004) studied the role of teachers in textbook selection and evaluation in schools. The findings of the study revealed that the processes of the textbook selection and adaptation are not explored sufficiently. The respondents had a great opportunity to participate in the selection process. The study also showed that the teachers were convinced they had a lot of information on textbooks and they mostly relied on the data from commercial leaflets. Moreover, it was found that respondents were more satisfied with the textbooks they had been able to select. Finally, it

was found that it is not always possible to enable every teacher to select the textbooks.

Al-Barakat *et al.* (2006) investigated the effectiveness of the Action Pack Textbook Series (APTS) taught in the Jordanian public schools. The findings of the study showed that APTS content was relevant to the students' lives. The materials were interesting, and the activities helped the students to express their daily needs. They also found that the interesting design of APTS was a significant feature since it may increase the students' oral fluency. The APTS content played in developing the students' vocabulary. The APTS avoided traditional English teaching and learning techniques. The APTS content was designed and ordered to reflect logical organization. A great deal of attention was given to the development of linguistics skills. The size and format of the print was appropriate. Assessment tasks were appropriate for developing the students' linguistics abilities. Finally, the findings revealed that the teacher's book is easy to follow, its directions are clear, not to mention that it is flexible and allows teachers to choose from a variety of activities to use with their students.

Litz (2006) determined the overall pedagogical value and suitability of the English Firsthand 2 (EF2) textbook taught at Sung Kyun Kwan University in Suwon, South Korea. The study showed that the entire textbook package was well conceived and it contains a wide variety of useful supplementary materials. The activities and tasks in EF2 were found to be basically communicative and they seemed to consistently promote a balance of activities approach. On the other hand, it was found that many of the activities were repetitive, failed to encourage truly meaningful practice, and promote realistic discourse. Furthermore, the findings indicated that the inclusion of activities designed to teach students the relevance and importance of prosody as well as the communicative purposes and functions of intonation would have been beneficial.

Jahangard (2007) evaluated four Iranian EFL textbooks. The merits and demerits of the textbooks were discussed in detail with reference to 13 common critical features extracted from different material evaluation checklists. The four EFL textbooks were scrutinized against each one of the features in the checklist. The findings of the study showed that there is an introduction that attempts to clarify the intended teaching objectives. The ultimate goals of the curriculum are not clarified. There is a lack of correspondence between the different senses of the word introduced in the New Words Sections and the senses which are used in the Reading

Comprehensions. This is attributable to the poor contextualization of the new vocabulary in the New Words Sections. The content of the films whose primary goal is assumed to help the users promote their language skills and enhance learning processes is not effectively addressed.

### **Method, Sample, Instrument and Procedures**

The present study was carried out with King Saud University instructors who teach the Interactions Series during the first semester of the academic year 2012-2013. The researchers used a survey methodology which provides the advantage of acquiring the data through a wide range of forced-choice responses which not only are fairly easy to code and analyze, but also enable researchers to obtain the information directly from the respondents themselves rather than from other sources. Furthermore, a questionnaire is less intimidating than a formal interview given the anonymity it allows the respondents.

The population of the study consisted of all 27 EFL male instructors at King Saud University during the second semester of the academic year 2012-2013. Since this study is a survey study, the population itself was taken as the sample of the study. The returning rate of the questionnaire was 100%.

In order to answer the question of the study, the present researchers developed a 86-item questionnaire depending on their collective experience and the related literature—Al-Jarrah (2008), Ababneh (2007), Al-Baraka *et al.* (2006), Litz (2001), Magableh (2000), and Al-Jarrah (1987)—to investigate the instructors' perspectives of Interactions Series. The questionnaire included the following domains: practical considerations (5 items), layout and design (8 items), aims and objectives (9 items), activities (7 items), skills (5 items), language type (6 items), subject and content (5 items), assessment (6 items), teacher's book (11 items), availability of English teaching/learning resources (10 items), appropriateness (6 items), flexibility (4 items), and overall opinion (4 items). The items of the domains were set on a 5-point Likert scale of agree, strongly agree, undecided, disagree and strongly disagree except for the items of the domain concerning the availability of English teaching/learning resources which were set on a 2-point Likert scale of available and not available. The respondents were asked to put an (x) under the option which represents how they feel about the items of the 13 domains of the questionnaire. The mean and

standard deviation of each item in the 13 domains of the questionnaire was calculated using the Statistical Package of Social Science (SPSS). Concerning the domains which were set on the 5-point Likert scale, the options were given values that ranged from 1 to 5 (Strongly disagree = 1, Disagree = 2, Undecided = 3, Agree = 4, Strongly agree = 5). The means were classified as follows: Strongly disagree between 1 and 1.49, Disagree between 1.5 and 2.49, Undecided between 2.5 and 3.49, Agree between 3.5 and 4.49, and Strongly agree between 4.5 and 5. Concerning the domain of the availability of English teaching/learning resources which were set on a 2-point Likert scale of available and not available, the options were given values of 1 (for available) and 0 (for not available). The means were classified as follows: Not available between 0 and 0.49 and Available between 0.5 and 1.

The questionnaire also included an open-ended question in which the respondents were asked to provide personal suggestions to improve the series along the various dimensions, aimed to gain better insights on the instructors' perspectives of the Interactions Series. As for this part, the instructor's responses were tallied and analyzed, then the new ideas were concluded.

The usability of the questionnaire was tested through a pilot study of six instructors who were excluded from the sample. For all parts, the respondents seemed to have no trouble understanding and responding to the sections of the questionnaire. The questionnaire was also given to a jury of six professors at King Saud University, one from the Department of English, four from the Department of Curriculum and Instruction, and one from the Department of Counseling and Educational Psychology, to elicit their views as to

the accuracy, clarity, and appropriateness of the instrument. The instrument was reviewed and modified according to their recommendations. The researchers personally distributed and collected the questionnaire, which enabled them to offer explanations and answer the respondents' questions.

## Findings and Discussion

This study aims at evaluating the Interactions Series currently used for EFL university students at King Saud University from instructors' perspectives. This section represents the findings as guided by the questions of the study.

### The first question

The first question investigates the instructors' perspectives about the Interactions Series. Table 1 shows the rank, means and standard deviations of instructors' perspectives on the 13 domains of the questionnaire.

Table 1 shows that the means of the instructors' perspectives on the 13 domains ranged between 3.07-3.93, respectively with standard deviations that ranged between 0.36-0.89. The layout and design domain was viewed as the best of all domains, whereas appropriateness domain ranked lowest amongst all domains. The following are the findings of the instructors' perspectives on the thirteen domains of the questionnaire.

### 1. Practical considerations

Table 2 shows the rank order, means and standard deviations of the instructor's perspectives of the items of the practical considerations domain.

**Table 1. Rank, means and standard deviations of the instructors' perspectives on the 12 domains of the questionnaire**

Item No.	Rank	Item	Mean	Standard Deviation
2	1	Layout and design	3.93	0.47
5	2	Skills	3.92	0.39
4	3	Activities	3.91	0.39
1	4	Practical considerations	3.88	0.56
6	5	Language type	3.85	0.36
9	6	The teacher's book	3.82	0.43
7	7	Subject and content	3.81	0.51
8	8	Assessment	3.74	0.56
12	9	Overall opinion	3.65	0.59
3	10	Aims and objectives	3.64	0.48
11	11	Flexibility	3.17	0.89
10	12	Appropriateness	3.07	0.53

**Table 2. Means and standard deviations of the instructors' perspectives to the items of the practical considerations domain**

Item No.	Rank	Item	Mean	Standard Deviation
2	1	The textbook is easily accessible	4.15	0.90
3	2	The textbook is a recent publication	4.15	0.80
4	3	A teacher's guide, workbook, and audio-tapes accompany the text book	4.00	1.00
1	4	The price of the textbook is reasonable	3.62	0.96
5	5	Refer to the 'blurb' on the back of the textbook	3.46	0.88

Table 2 shows that the means ranged between 3.46-4.15 with standard deviations that ranged between 0.80-0.96. Table 2 also shows that items 2, 3, 4 and 1 gained mean scores ranging between 3.62 and 4.15. All these items fall within the category "agree" and constitute 80% of the total number of items. Moreover, the table shows that the mean score of item 5 is 3.46. It falls within the category "undecided" and constitute 20% of the total items.

The findings of this domain reveals the textbook is easily accessible and a recent publication, the price of the textbook is reasonable, and a teacher's guide, workbook and audio-tapes accompany the textbook.

## 2. Layout and design

Table 3 shows the rank order, means and standard deviations of the instructor's perspectives of the items of the layout and design domain.

Table 3 shows that the means ranged between 3.39-4.31 with standard deviations that ranged between 0.48-1.14. Table 3 also shows that items 1, 3, 4, 7, 2, 5 and 6 gained mean scores ranging

between 3.69-4.31. All these items fall within the category "agree" and constitute 87.5% of the total number of items. Moreover, the table shows that the mean score of item 8 is 3.39. It falls within the category "undecided" and constitute 12.5% of the total items.

The findings of this domain shows that the respondents view the layout and design of the Interactions Series as appropriate. They agree that the layout and design is appropriate, clear and organized effectively, and the textbook includes a detailed overview of functions, structures, vocabulary list, a guidance about how the textbook be used, review of sections and exercises, and a set of evaluation quizzes. The findings also show that the respondents can't decide if the objectives of the materials are apparent for both teachers and students.

## 3. Aims and objectives

Table 4 shows the rank order, means and standard deviations of the instructor's perspectives of the items of the aims and objectives domain.

**Table 3. Means and standard deviations of the instructors' perspectives to the items of the layout and design domain**

Item No.	Rank	Item	Mean	Standard Deviation
1	1	The layout and design is appropriate and clear	4.31	0.48
3	2	The textbook includes a detailed overview of the functions, structures and vocabulary that will be taught in each unit	4.31	0.85
4	3	An adequate vocabulary list or glossary is included	4.15	0.69
7	4	The teacher's book contains guidance about how the textbook can be used to the utmost advantage	3.92	0.64
2	5	The textbook is organized effectively	3.85	1.14
5	6	Adequate review sections and exercises are included	3.85	0.99
6	7	An adequate set of evaluation quizzes or testing suggestions is included	3.69	1.11
8	8	The materials objectives are apparent to both the teacher and student	3.39	0.96

**Table 4. Means and standard deviations of the instructors' perspectives to the items of the aims and objectives domain**

Item No.	Rank	Item	Mean	Standard Deviation
1	1	The aims and objectives are clearly stated	4.15	0.38
2	2	The objectives of the lessons are closely related to the aims of the units achieving a high level of cohesion	4.15	0.38
8	3	Objectives can be easily measured and evaluated	3.69	1.03
3	4	Aims and objectives describe specific desirable changes in the learners	3.69	0.75
5	5	Aims and objectives target a wide variety of skills, topics, levels and types of learners	3.69	0.95
9	6	Aims and objectives are upgraded with more depth at higher levels	3.46	0.97
6	7	Aims and objectives can easily be attained	3.39	0.77
4	8	Aims and objectives cover all domains of learning: cognitive, psychomotor and affective	3.31	1.03
7	9	Aims and objectives focus on enhancing learners' autonomy and how they can construct their own knowledge, skills and attitudes	3.23	0.73

Table 4 shows that the means ranged between 3.23-4.15 with standard deviations that ranged between 0.38-1.03. Table 4 also shows that items 1, 2, 8, 3 and 5 gained mean scores ranging between 3.69-4.15. All these items fall within the category "agree" and constitute 55.6% of the total number of items. Moreover, the table shows that the mean scores of items 9, 6, 4, and 7 gained mean scores ranging between 3.23-3.46. All these items fall within the category "undecided" and constitute 44.4% of the total items.

The findings of this domain indicate that the aims and objectives are clearly stated; they describe specific desirable changes in the learners, target a

wide variety of skills, topics, levels and type of learners, are closely related, and can be easily measured and evaluated. The findings also indicate that the respondents can't decide if the aims and objectives can easily be attained, cover all domains of learning: cognitive, psychomotor and effective, and focus on enhancing learners' autonomy and how they can construct their own knowledge skills, and attitudes.

#### 4. Activities

Table 5 shows the rank order, means and standard deviations of the instructor's perspectives of the items of the activities domain.

**Table 5. Means and standard deviations of the instructors' perspectives to the items of the activities domain**

Item No.	Rank	Item	Mean	Standard Deviation
1	1	The textbook provides a balance of activities (e.g., there is an even distribution of free vs. controlled exercises and tasks that focus on both fluent and accurate production)	4.00	0.58
2	2	The activities encourage sufficient communicative and meaningful practice	4.00	0.82
3	3	The activities incorporate individual, pair and group work	4.00	0.91
4	4	The grammar points and vocabulary items are introduced in motivating and realistic contexts	3.92	0.64
7	5	The textbook's activities can be modified or supplemented easily	3.92	0.64
5	6	The activities promote creative, original and independent response	3.77	0.60
6	7	The tasks are conducive to the internalization of newly introduced language	3.77	0.60



Table 5 shows that the means ranged between 3.77-4.00 with standard deviations that ranged between 0.58-0.91. Table 5 also shows that all items 1-7 fall within the category “agree” and constitute 100% of the total number of items.

The findings of this domain show that the textbook provides a balance of activities. The findings also show that the activities encourage sufficient communicative and meaningful practice, incorporate individual, pair and group work, can be modified or supplemented easily, and are conducive to the internalization of newly introduced language.

### 5. Skills

Table 6 shows the rank order, means and standard deviations of the instructor’s perspectives of the items of the skills domain.

Table 6 shows that the means ranged between 3.69-4.08 with standard deviations that ranged between 0.28-0.99. Table 6 also shows that all items 1-5 fall within the category “agree” and constitute 100% of the total number of items.

The findings of this domain reveal that the series integrates the practice of individual skill into the practice of other skills, provides an appropriate balance of the four language skills, pays attention to sub-skills, includes and focuses the skills that the teachers and students need to practice, and highlights and practices natural pronunciation.

### 6. Language type

Table 7 shows the rank order, means and standard deviations of the instructor’s perspectives of the items of the language type domain.

Table 7 shows that the means ranged between 3.39-4.23 with standard deviations that ranged

between 0.41-0.96. Table 7 also shows that items 4, 3, 5, 1 and 2 gained mean scores ranging between 3.62-4.23. All these items fall within the category “agree” and constitute 83.3% of the total number of items. Moreover, the table shows that the mean score of item 6 is 3.39. It falls within the category “undecided” and constitute 16.7% of the total items.

The findings of this domain show that the grammar points are appropriate, are presented with brief and easy examples and explanations, and exemplify English that teachers and students will likely use. The findings also showed that the language in the textbook is authentic and at the right level of the students. Moreover, the findings indicate that the language does not represent a diverse range of registers and accents.

### 7. Subject and content

Table 8 shows the rank order, means and standard deviations of the instructor’s perspectives of the items of the subject and content domain.

Table 8 shows that the means ranged between 3.69-4.08 with standard deviations that ranged between 0.60-1.03. Table 8 also shows that all items 1-5 fall within the category “agree” and constitute 100% of the total number of items.

The findings of this domain indicate that the subject and content is realistic, relevant, varied, interesting, challenging and motivating, and the materials are not culturally biased and they do not portray any negative stereotypes.

### 8. Assessment

Table 9 shows the rank order, means and standard deviations of the instructor’s perspectives of the items of the assessment domain.

**Table 6. Means and standard deviations of the instructors’ perspectives to the items of the skills domain**

Item No.	Rank	Item	Mean	Standard Deviation
5	1	The practice of individual skills is integrated into the practice of other skills	4.08	0.28
2	2	The materials provide an appropriate balance of the four language skills	4.00	0.91
3	3	The textbook pays attention to sub-skills—i.e. listening for gist, note taking, skimming for information, etc.	4.00	0.58
1	4	The materials include and focus on the skills that I/my students need to practice	3.85	0.99
4	5	The textbook highlights and practices natural pronunciation (i.e., stress and intonation)	3.69	0.63

**Table 7. Means and standard deviations of the instructors' perspectives to the items of the language type domain**

Item No.	Rank	Item	Mean	Standard Deviation
4	1	The grammar points are presented with brief and easy examples and explanations	4.23	0.60
3	2	The progression of grammar points and vocabulary items is appropriate	4.00	0.58
5	3	The language functions exemplify English that I/my students will likely use	4.00	0.41
1	4	The language used in the textbook is authentic, i.e. like real-life English	3.85	0.69
2	5	The language used is at the right level for my (students)	3.62	0.96
6	6	The language represents a diverse range of registers and accents	3.39	0.77

**Table 8. Means and standard deviations of the instructors' perspectives to the items of the subject and content domain**

Item No.	Rank	Item	Mean	Standard Deviation
2	1	The subject and content of the textbook is generally realistic	4.08	0.76
1	2	The subject and content of the textbook is relevant to my (students') needs as an English language learner(s)	3.77	0.83
4	3	There is sufficient variety in the subject and content of the textbook	3.77	0.60
5	4	The materials are not culturally biased and they do not portray any negative stereotypes	3.77	0.93
3	5	The subject and content of the textbook is interesting, challenging and motivating	3.69	1.03

**Table 9. Means and standard deviations of the instructors' perspectives to the items of the assessment domain**

Item No.	Rank	Item	Mean	Standard Deviation
2	1	Assessment tasks focus on developing the students' linguistic abilities	4.15	0.55
3	2	Assessment tasks focus on language use in real-life situations	3.85	0.55
1	3	Assessment tasks focus on language use in the classroom	3.69	0.85
5	4	Assessment tasks develop students' thinking	3.69	0.85
6	5	The textbook presents a variety of assessment tools	3.62	1.04
4	5	Assessment tasks are appropriate for students' abilities	3.46	1.13

Table 9 shows that the means ranged between 3.46-4.15 with standard deviations that ranged between 0.55-1.13. Table 9 also shows that items 2, 3, 1, 5 and 6 gained mean scores ranging between 3.62-4.15. All these items fall within the category "agree" and constitute 80% of the total number of items. Moreover, the table shows that the mean score of item 4 is 3.46. It falls within the category "undecided" and constitute 20% of the total items.

The findings of this domain reveal that the assessment tasks focus on developing the students' linguistics abilities and thinking and the language use in real life situations and the classroom, and they are varied. It was also found that the respondents cannot decide if the assessment tasks are not appropriate for the students' abilities.

## 9. Teacher's book

Table 10 shows the rank order, means and standard deviations of the instructor's perspectives of the items of the teacher's book domain.

Table 10 shows that the means ranged between 3.31-4.39 with standard deviations that ranged between 0.38-1.19. Table 10 also shows that items 2, 1, 7, 8, 6, 9, 5, 3 and 11 gained mean scores ranging between 3.54-4.39. All these items fall within the category "agree" and constitute 81.8% of the total number of items. Moreover, the table shows that items 10 and 4 gained the same mean score which is 3.31. These two items fall within the category "undecided" and constitute 18.2% of the total items.

**Table 10. Means and standard deviations of the instructors' perspectives to the items of the teacher's book domain**

Item No.	Rank	Item	Mean	Standard Deviation
2	1	Objectives are clearly stated	4.39	0.51
1	2	Detailed directions to lesson procedures are provided	4.39	0.65
7	3	The teacher's book correlates with the student's book and is convenient to use	4.15	0.38
8	4	A variety of learning activities to meet the needs of a wide range of students are provided	4.08	0.76
6	5	Students' enjoyment of learning is emphasized	3.85	0.69
9	6	A variety of assessment tools are provided	3.85	0.80
5	7	Objectives are appropriate to the students' level	3.62	1.19
3	8	Situations, which encourage students' self-expression, are included and capitalized on	3.59	0.88
11	9	A variety of course sequencing options are provided	3.54	0.66
10	10	Enrichment and remediation activities are provided	3.31	1.03
4	11	Students' needs and interests are emphasized	3.31	1.03

The findings of this domain show that the objectives are clearly stated and appropriate to the students' level, and the teacher's book provides detailed directions to lesson procedures, situations that encourage students' self-expression, a variety of learning activities, assessment tools and course sequences options, correlates with the student's book, and emphasizes students' enjoyment of learning. It was also found that the teacher's book does not provide enrichment and remediation activities, and it does not emphasize students' needs and interests.

#### **10. The availability of English teaching/learning resources**

Table 11 shows the rank order, means and standard deviations of the instructor's perspectives of the items of the availability of English teaching/learning resources domain.

Table 11 shows that the means ranged between 0.15-0.92 with standard deviations that ranged between 0.28-0.52. Table 11 also shows that items 2, 3, 6, 7, 9, 10 and 4 gained mean scores ranging between 0.92-0.92. All these items fall within the category "available" and constitute 70% of the total number of items. Moreover, the table shows that items 1, 8 and 5 gained mean scores ranging between 0.15 and 0.46. All these items fall within the category "not available" and constitute 30% of the total items.

The findings reveal that tape transcripts, course cassettes, software and CD-ROM, answer key,

grammar summary, writing help, and assessment materials are available, whereas transparencies, dictionary, DVD, and laserdiscs are not available.

#### **11. Appropriateness**

Table 12 shows the rank order, means and standard deviations of the instructor's perspectives of the items of the appropriateness domain.

Table 12 shows that the means ranged between 2.08-3.92 with standard deviations that ranged between 0.49-1.03. Table 12 also shows that items 2, 1 and 3 gained mean scores ranging between 3.69-3.92. All these items fall within the category "agree" and constitute 50% of the total number of items. Moreover, the table shows that items 4, 5 and 6 gained mean scores ranging between 2.08-2.46. All these items fall within the category "disagree" and constitute 50% of the total items.

The findings of this domain reveal that the material is authentic, topic-centered, and interesting. The findings also show that the textbook does not provide the phonetic transcription of the lexical items, and it does not reflect the values and culture of the Saudi society.

#### **12. Flexibility**

Table 13 shows the rank order, means and standard deviations of the instructor's perspectives of the items of the flexibility domain.

**Table 11. Means and standard deviations of the instructors' perspectives to the items of the availability of English teaching/learning resources domain**

Item No.	Rank	Item	Mean	Standard Deviation
2	1	Tape transcripts	0.92	0.28
3	2	Course cassettes	0.85	0.38
6	3	Software and CD-ROM	0.85	0.38
7	4	Answer key	0.85	0.38
9	5	Grammar summary	0.85	0.38
10	6	Writing help	0.69	0.48
4	7	Assessment materials	0.62	0.51
1	8	Transparencies	0.46	0.52
8	9	Dictionary	0.15	0.38
5	10	DVD and laserdiscs	0.15	0.38

**Table 12. Means and standard deviations of the instructors' perspectives to the items of the appropriateness domain**

Item No.	Rank	Item	Mean	Standard Deviation
2	1	The materials are authentic	3.92	0.49
3	2	The material is topic-centered	3.92	0.64
1	3	The material is interesting	3.69	1.03
4	4	The book provides the phonetic transcription of the lexical items	2.46	0.97
5	5	The textbook reflects the social values of the Saudi society	2.39	0.96
6	6	The textbook reflects the culture of the Saudi society	2.08	0.95

**Table 13. Means and standard deviations of the instructors' perspectives to the items of the flexibility domain**

Item No.	Rank	Item	Mean	Standard Deviation
1	1	The book provides teachers with practical instruments for use in the classroom	3.69	1.11
3	2	The material requires a lot of preparation on the part of the students	3.54	1.20
2	3	The material requires a lot of preparation on the part of the teacher	2.92	1.04
4	4	The material is too rigid in the format and approach	2.54	1.05

Table 13 shows that the means ranged between 2.54-3.69 with standard deviations that ranged between 1.04-1.20. Table 13 also shows that items 1 and 3 gained mean scores ranging between 3.54-3.69. These two items fall within the category "agree" and constitute 50% of the total number of items. Moreover, the table shows that items 2 and 4 gained mean scores ranging between 2.54-2.92. These two items fall within the category "undecided" and constitute 50% of the total items.

The findings of this domain indicate that the textbook provides teachers with practical instruments for classroom use, and the material requires a lot of preparation on the part of the students. It was also found that the material does not require a lot of

preparation on the part of the teacher; and it is not too rigid in the format and approach.

### 13. Overall opinion

Table 14 shows the rank order, means and standard deviations of the instructor's perspectives of the items of the overall opinion domain.

Table 14 shows that the means ranged between 3.15-4.15 with standard deviations that ranged between 0.55-0.99. Table 14 also shows that items 1, 2 and 4 gained mean scores ranging between 3.62-4.15. All these items fall within the category "agree" and constitute 75% of the total number of items. Moreover, the table shows that the mean score of item 3 is 3.15. It falls within the category "undecided" and constitute 25% of the total items.

**Table 14. Means and standard deviations of the instructors' perspectives to the items of overall opinion domain**

Item No.	Rank	Item	Mean	Standard Deviation
1	1	The textbook is appropriate for the language-learning aims of my institution	4.15	0.55
2	2	The textbook is suitable for small medium, homogeneous, co-ed classes of university students	3.69	0.85
4	3	I would choose to teach this text book again	3.62	0.96
3	4	The textbook raises my (students') interest in further English language study	3.15	0.99

The findings reveal that the textbook is appropriate for the language-learning of the aims of King Saud University, is suitable for university students, and they would choose to teach this textbook again. It was also found that the respondents cannot decide if the textbook raises the students' interest in further English language study.

### The second question

The second question asks about the instructor's suggestions to improve the Interactions Series for the EFL learners. The respondents suggested that instructors be provided with Transparencies, Dictionary, DVD and laserdiscs; repetition in some activities be avoided; the number of periods per week be increased; the textbook be modified again to better reflect the Arab, Islamic, and Saudi culture, values, and Saudi life style; and the instructors be involved in writing the objectives. Such suggestions are logical and practical. Involving instructors in selecting curriculum aims, goals and objectives is very important and it should be given a priority because instructors play an important role in the teaching/learning process. The instructors perceive the Interactions Series as appropriate for teaching English for Saudi EFL learners.

### Conclusion

This study represents a preliminary effort to investigate the instructors' perspectives of the Interactions Series that is taught at the English departments at King Saud University in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, and their suggestions to improve this series. Further research is needed for a thorough understanding of these issues and for the confirmation of its findings. This is especially true when conducting research with more variables than those in the present study such as the degree and experience of the participants. It is also recommended that this study be replicated with a larger number of participants and it would be interesting to compare results across gender. Researchers are recommended to conduct studies which involve other participants

such as students. Researchers are further recommended to conduct other evaluation studies especially of the EFL materials available at the English departments at King Saud University. Moreover, it is recommended that using other evaluative instruments such as interviews, clinical supervision and observations instead of questionnaires so that more reliable results can be achieved. Furthermore, instructors are recommended to make a content analysis as well as task analysis of Interactions textbooks so that they can select, omit or make modifications accordingly. The English departments at King Saud University are recommended to give the instructors the opportunities to participate in selecting EFL materials relevant to the learners' future careers, needs, interests, society and culture. The English departments are also recommended to make regular evaluation of their textbooks by the end of each year.

The researchers hope that this study will contribute to the development of teaching English in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and provide EFL university instructors and the Saudi universities, namely King Saud University, with valuable information about this series.

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## تقصي رؤى القائمين بتدريس مقررات اللغة الإنجليزية التي تُدرس في الجامعات السعودية

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**الكلمات المفتاحية:** التقييم، تقييم المقررات الدراسية، مقررات اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية، مدرسو اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية.

ملخص البحث. هدفت هذه الدراسة إلى تقصي رؤى القائمين بتدريس مقررات اللغة الإنجليزية، سلسلة Interactions، والتي تدرس في أقسام اللغة الإنجليزية في الجامعات السعودية. ولتحقيق أهداف الدراسة قام الباحثان بتطوير استبانة للتعرف على وجهات نظر القائمين بالتدريس. وقد تكونت الاستبانة من ١٣ مجالاً هي: الاعتبارات التطبيقية، وتصميم السلسلة، والأهداف، والنشاطات، والمهارات، وأنماط اللغة، والمحتوى والمضمون، والتقييم، وكتاب المدرس، والملائمة، والمرونة، وتوفر مصادر التعليم والتعلم، والرأي العام. كذلك شملت الاستبانة على سؤال مفتوح يطلب من المدرسين تقديم اقتراحاتهم حول تحسين وتطوير السلسلة. وتكونت عينة الدراسة من ٢٧ مدرساً والذين يُدرّسون سلسلة Interactions في أقسام اللغة الإنجليزية في جامعة الملك سعود خلال الفصل الأول من العام الدراسي ٢٠١٢/٢٠١٣م. وأظهرت النتائج رضا القائمين بالتدريس عن هذه السلسلة وملائمتها لتدريس اللغة الإنجليزية للطلاب السعوديين الدارسين للإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية. ويتقدم الباحث بخالص الشكر لمركز بحوث كلية اللغات والترجمة وعمادة البحث العلمي بجامعة الملك سعود على الدعم المالي المقدم لهذا البحث.