

Motivational Effect of The Design of The Coursebook “Scope” On University Students: A Case Study in Tishk International University Language Preparatory School

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Abstract: English coursebooks have been the most basic sources of English teaching in the modern age. There are a number of reasons that make these books so popular. First of all, the processes that start with the determination of the students' levels continue with the preparation and presentation of materials suitable for their level. In addition, because the methodology and strategy that will be useful to teachers are presented in a certain way in the textbooks, they are very attractive for everyone. However, there are also criticisms of the textbooks. The effect of presenting the same design in all the units of the book "Scope", which is discussed in this study, on the students is handled. Besides being educational and informative, this design has been found to be boring after a while for the students.

Keywords: English Coursebooks, English Teaching, Scope

1. Introduction

Textbooks are very effective resources for teachers as well as students. In the modern era, the development of textbooks has turned into a professional occupation. In addition, redesigning these books by following social and technological developments offers some advantages. In addition, there are aspects of criticism of these books. These criticisms arise in the form of cultural content as well as the design of activities. In this study, the effect of presenting all the units of the course book with the same design on the students is discussed.

2. Literature Review

2.1 English Coursebooks

Coursebooks, which provide learners with very effective methods of learning a foreign language in the modern world can be considered as the most basic reference sources on this subject. The remarkable aspect

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of these resources is that they include activities to develop all the skills necessary to learn a language. Reading, listening, writing and speaking, which are the four most basic skills in learning a foreign language in a coursebook, are effectively designed and put in front of the learners.

In addition, grammar and vocabulary, which are the most basic reference sources in foreign language learning, are given actively. Expectations from a coursebook are not limited to these. In addition, there is a function that shows pronunciation and how to use phrases in appropriate context (Tomlinson, 2011).

Modern coursebooks contain many functions necessary for language learning. One of the most important reasons that force people to learn foreign languages in the modern world is the need for communication. In order to meet this need, coursebooks are designed effectively (Howard & Major, 2004). In addition, an important aspect of these books is that they offer content suitable for the level of students. In language learning, the maximum content that students can learn most effectively is offered step by step (Rubdy, 2003). While the age factor is taken into account in the preparation of these books, the cultural differences of the learners, who are the target audience, are also taken into consideration. In fact, many coursebooks are prepared for any purpose that learners aim to learn. In other words, it is possible to find coursebooks for special purposes. In the preparation of these books, a certain curriculum is taken into consideration and the topics are presented in a certain order. In addition, the difficulty level of the language used is determined according to the level (Hu, 2016).

Coursebooks, which have content that takes all these into consideration, make foreign language learning very easy. In some cases, it even offers very attractive content for students according to the way the activities are designed.

2.2 Some Features of Coursebooks

Coursebooks are an effective reference resource not only for students but also for teachers. Modern textbooks give many details of what teachers can do during a lesson. Due to the professional preparation of these books, the content is suitable for the level of the students and includes the methodology, strategy and tactics and exercises necessary for the teachers. In addition, developments in education and technology are instantly used by textbook designers and the content is made more attractive. Although there are some criticisms about content and design, textbooks are indispensable resources for teachers and students in every aspect. While it is possible for teachers to do activities outside of the book, this is not always the case. A teacher mostly teaches his lesson based on the textbook. Therefore, textbooks are as beneficial to the teacher as to the student (Vettorel & Lopriore, 2013).

An important feature of modern textbooks is their effort to personalize learning. Thus, content that will interest students and relate to their real lives is presented. By this means, students encounter topics that are directly proportional to their own lives and needs within the topic they study and are more motivated. In addition, the reading passages presented to the students are also related to other activities. For example, the words in the reading text are used in the vocabulary study, and the grammar is extracted from the same text and processed as seen in the text. Thus, students see the grammar in a meaningful context. Undoubtedly, it provides useful content for other activities as students have an idea about a topic having

increased their knowledge. Coursebooks usually shape listening activities around the unit's focus within the same unit and make them more attractive (Tomlinson & Masuhara, 2013).

Determining the levels of proficiency of students in foreign language teaching, preparing appropriate content and teaching new content to students at every stage is a very difficult situation for a teacher to plan. In fact, we can say that this is almost impossible. In addition, it is an issue that needs to be calculated separately that students both feel challenge and stay in the zone of proximal development (Lee, 2012). When we look at the content of the textbooks, we see that all these are tried to be given in an appropriate way. In addition, developing content in this way depends on long experiences and studies. It is impossible to achieve all this by a teacher. However, textbooks give all these in the necessary order and provide the most effective content for students. In fact, many changes that occur over time are included in the textbooks by designers (Antić, 2009).

2.3 Critical Approaches to Textbooks

It should be stated that the textbooks have been exposed to some criticism about their undesirable content in addition to the useful content they offer. First of all, there are criticisms that textbooks reflect a certain dominant culture in terms of their content. It is seen that liberalism, which is the ideology of the developed West, and the values shaped around it in the modern world are tried to be given to the students together with the content of the textbooks. In fact, the value judgments and assumptions defended in the content of the textbooks in the last 40 years have been adapted to a large extent according to the requirements of liberal ideology (Copley, 2018).

In addition, there are those who think that it is wrong to present textbooks as the only reference source in foreign language teaching (Thornbury, 2013). As such, textbooks are a good source of reference, especially for passive students and teachers who have not trained themselves well (Long, 2015).

In addition, it is stated that textbooks have turned into a huge market in the world and the companies that prepare these books earn huge amounts of money. For this reason, there are some who think that the concerns of making profit are at the forefront rather than the educational aims in modern textbooks (Jordan & Gray, 2019).

Even though humor and fun activities that will attract students' attention are satisfactorily placed in the content of some textbooks, we see that some sections are handled much more emphatically than others. For example, some books focus so much on grammatical content that students' affective and cognitive engagement decreases considerably. In addition, although extensive reading is an important method in language learning, it is not included in the content of textbooks. In addition, it seems to be an important deficiency that the activities are mostly handled on an analytical plane and that it does not address students with a kinesthetic aspect (Tomlinson & Masuhara, 2013).

There are different criticisms for different textbooks handling with one dimension. While some criticize textbooks from one perspective, others criticize from another. Even more design of the activities is changeable, and some of them were the focus of attention and more criticism. In general, different aspects of the textbooks have been criticized very commonly in the literature.

2.4 Design of the Coursebook “Scope”

This book is made up of four levels starting from 1 to 4. The main design of the book proceeds just the same in every unit in all four books. There are three starter units at the beginning of every book, and this section reviews some grammar vocabulary topics of previous books. After that, every unit has the same layout although the content is different. On the first page of the unit, there is a reading passage with Word check part in which the highlighted words in the passage are asked. The definitions of the words are given, and the students are asked to match the definitions with the highlighted words in the passage. It is also accompanied by extra exercises that include sentences and the students are asked to fill in the blanks in the sentences with suitable words. There are also comprehension questions of the text, and there is a relevant video of around 5 minutes to the topic of the unit. The next two pages are also designed as vocabulary study and grammar. In the next two pages, there is a listening activity with comprehension questions and vocabulary study related to listening. There is also the continuation of the grammar topic from the previous grammar section in the unit, or sometimes, it is another grammar topic. In grammar parts, the sample sentences are taken from reading or listening activities in the unit, and the rules are given with the blanks for the students to fill in by looking at these sample sentences that they covered and saw in the unit in meaningful contexts. The grammar exercises are in the form of blank filling. The last two pages are allocated for speaking and listening. In speaking, there is a dialogue about any function of language, and it also teaches some fixed expressions to be used in daily conversations. In writing, there is a text about the given topic and some exercises. Then the students are given a layout for similar writing, and they are asked to write based on the topic given in parallel with the layout. This design of one unit is applied to 10 units in the book, and even it is the same in all four books (Bradfield et al., 2015).

3. Methodology

3.1 Research Model

The coursebook “Scope” has the same design throughout ten units in the book and all four levels include the same design. The students in preparatory school in Tishk University in Erbil cover “Scope 1” and “Scope 2” for one year. Since the same design is repeated, some students complain about the drudgery the books reveal. To see how common these complaints, we administered a questionnaire to the students. In this Likert-scale questionnaire, we divided the ideas of the students into two parts. The first one is about the students’ ideas about how informative and educative the content of the book is, and the second one is about if they really feel bored with the same design throughout the book.

3.2 Sampling

The preparatory school students at Tishk International University were used in this survey. Total number of the participants to the survey was 36. These students are between 18-21 ages, and the gender difference was not taken into consideration. These students are at different proficiency levels according to their marks they got throughout the year. There are five different classes in the preparatory school, and these students are from different classes. We gave this questionnaire all the students, and 36 of them responded.

3.3 Data Collection

The data was collected through a Likert-scale questionnaire, and it was divided into two parts. In the first part of the questions, the students were asked to answer how informative and educative the content of the book. As for the second part, they are asked if they feel bored with the same design in the book. The results were evaluated accordingly.

4. Findings

It is not the only point to reveal if the students are bored with the same design of the units in the coursebook, but we also measured if they find the book informative and educative enough. In the first part of the questionnaire, we measured if they learn well from the book.

4.1 Educative Side of the Coursebook

Firstly, we asked them about reading passages in the book because the units start with a reading passage and the theme of the unit is given there.

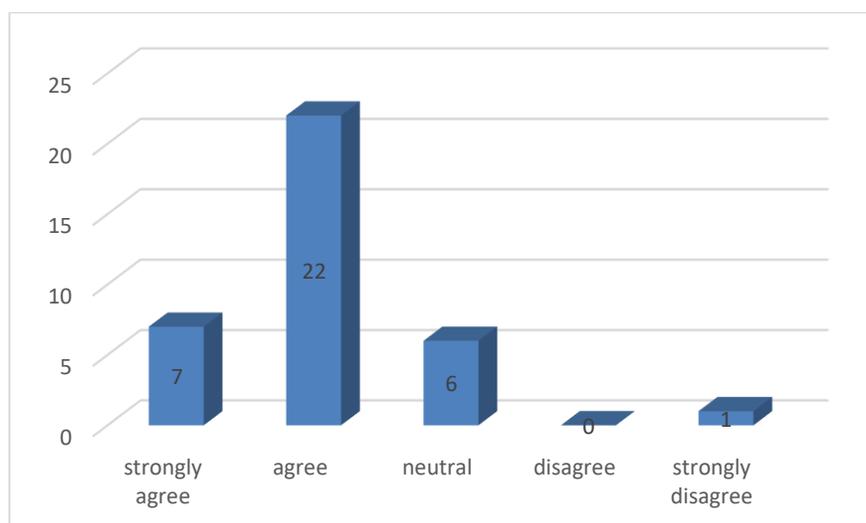


Figure 1: Do the reading passages help you understand the other parts in the unit?

29 students (81%) think that the reading passages help them to understand the other parts in the unit because when they cover the reading, they get ready for the other parts like vocabulary and grammar as they are closely related to the reading. Only 1 student think that they are not helpful.

After reading the passage, the book gives a vocabulary study in which the explanations of the highlighted words in the text are given, and they are asked to match them. We asked the next question to see how useful they find this part.

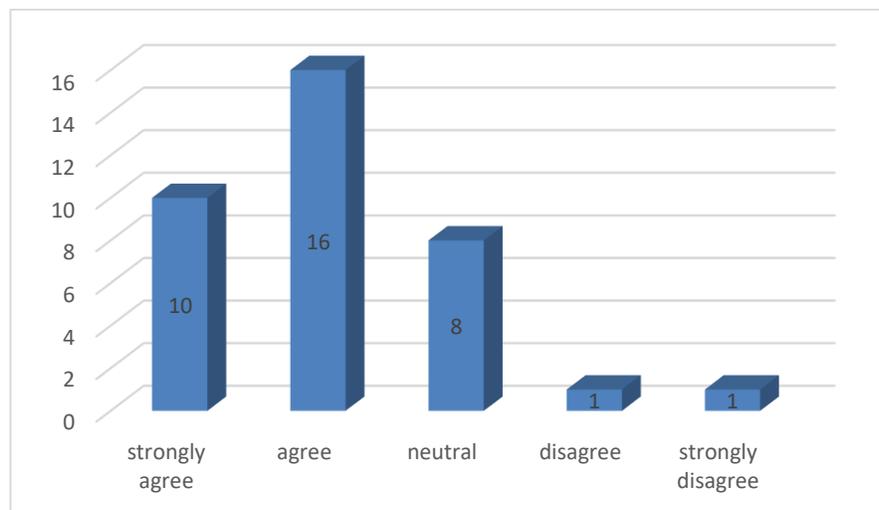


Figure 2: Is the word check part helpful to you?

26 students (72%) state that this word check part is helpful to them to learn new vocabulary. There are 8 (22%) students who remained neutral about it. It seems that these exercises are not found as useful by some of them. It may be because of the reason that they get uninterested in the course of the time because of repetition of the same type of exercise.

There are also two other pages in which the book offers vocabulary study. This repeats with the similar designs in all units. The first thing we should focus is if they find these parts informative enough.

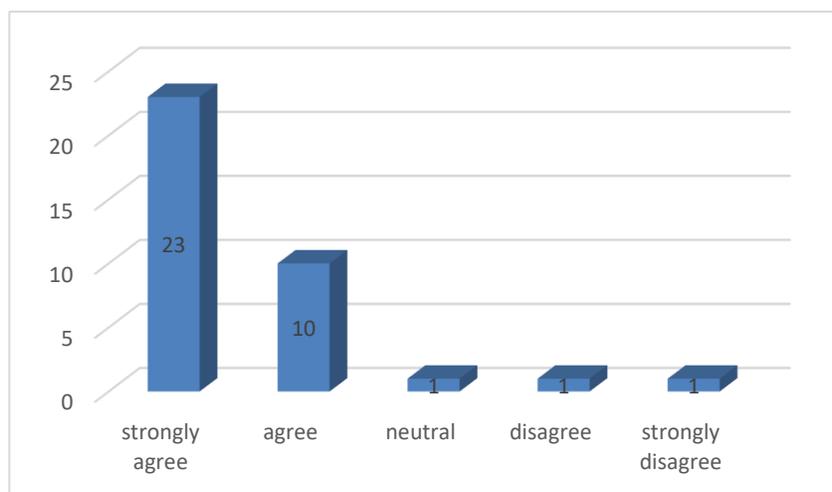


Figure 3: Do you learn new words in vocabulary parts?

A great majority of the students agree on this statement. 33 of them (92%) learn new words from these parts. The reason why the students find these vocabulary parts more informative than the first vocabulary exercise mentioned above may be because of the reason that there is a variety of exercises in these parts, and they are more visual and easier like matching the words and pictures. However, the previous

vocabulary part includes dictionary definition of the words. Moreover, these vocabulary parts that students find more interesting also contain some questionnaires that appeal to their level and correspond to their interests.

The next point is about grammar parts. There are two grammar pages in every unit and they come after vocabulary and listening parts. The sample sentences are generally taken from the vocabulary or listening parts. Then, there is a study with the rules based on the sample sentences. We measured how effective they find this type of designing.

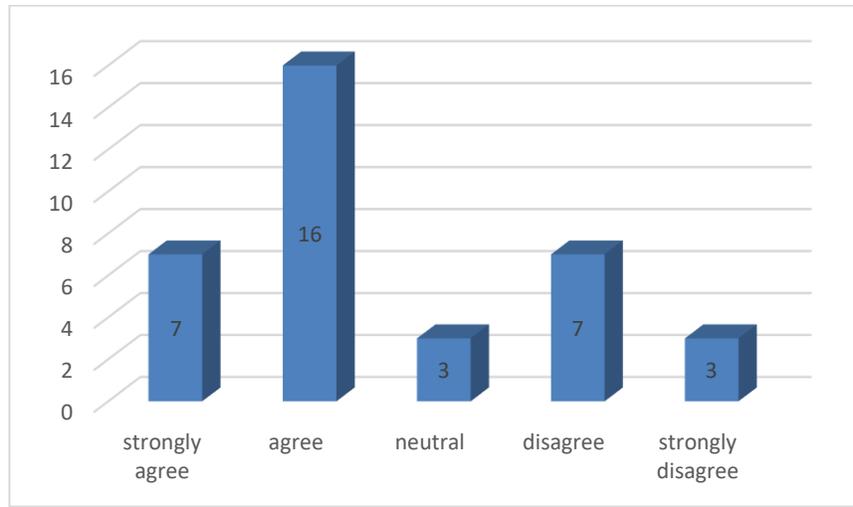


Figure 4: Are the explanations in grammar parts satisfactory for you?

Although the number of students who find the explanations satisfactory is high enough with 23 of them (64%), the percentage slightly falls in relation to the satisfaction level of the students of the vocabulary parts. It could be because of the reason that the explanations and exercises are quite similar in all units, and they are relatively short.

We asked the same question for listening parts that come after the second part of grammar in every unit.

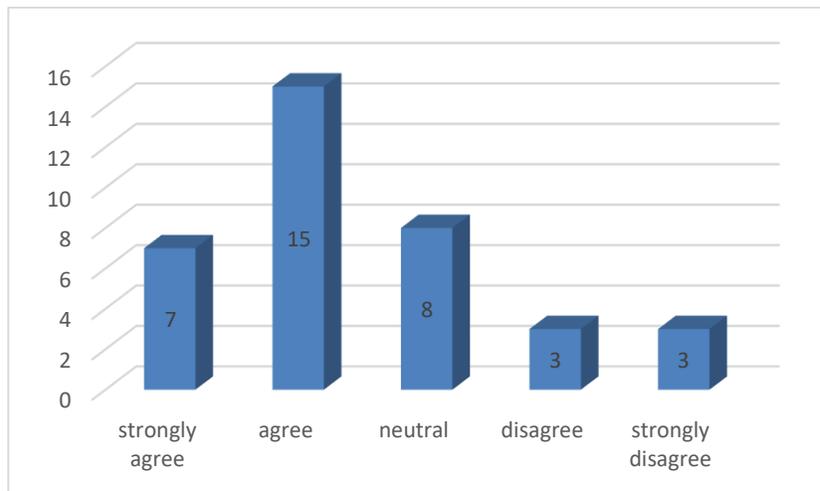


Figure 5: Do you find listening exercises informative?

Listening parts can be said to be more demanding than vocabulary and grammar parts because the others contain visuals and relatively easier questions. Moreover, teacher assistance is more effective in vocabulary and grammar. As for listening, it is generally their duty to listen and understand. Furthermore, the teacher has less to help them in listening. For these reasons, the figures went down in this question. 22 students (61%) find the listening exercises informative. Even 6 of them (17%) think that they do not inform them.

The last point to ask is about speaking part. We asked if they learn new things in this part.

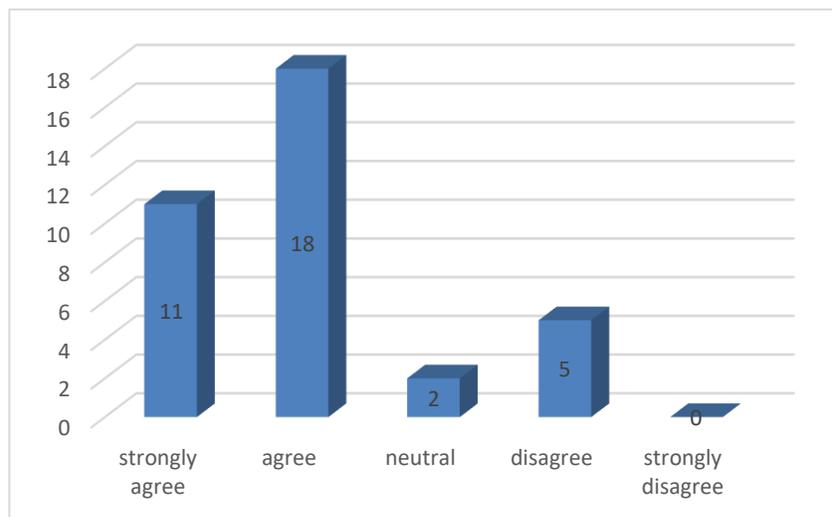


Figure 6: Do you think you learn new things in speaking part?

29 students (81%) think that they learn new things from speaking part. It is especially useful for them to teach some functions and introduce them real-life situations. For this reason, students may have found this part the most useful for them.

As for writing that is the last part of the book, we did not ask any questions to them because they do not cover this part in the lessons, and they have a separate course with a different teacher for writing. Even more, they also do not follow this book there. They have a different curriculum that is determined by their teacher.

In general, it is clear that this book is informative and educative enough for the majority of the students. In other words, they generally find the book positive in terms of educative dimension. As for the same design of the book, we will investigate in the next part.

4.2 Affective Engagement of the Students with the Coursebook

On this part, we will ask them about how interesting they find the same design of the exercises in the book. Although there are different exercises and they get harder at every unit to teach them extra and keep them in the zone of proximal development, the same or similar design that repeats in all units and in all books may be boring for them after a certain while. To investigate this point, we asked next questions to see their affective engagement with the book and the exercises.

The first thing we asked was about the reading passages. Although the content of the passages changes, the exercise types are almost all the same in the book. To check their engagement, we asked the next question.

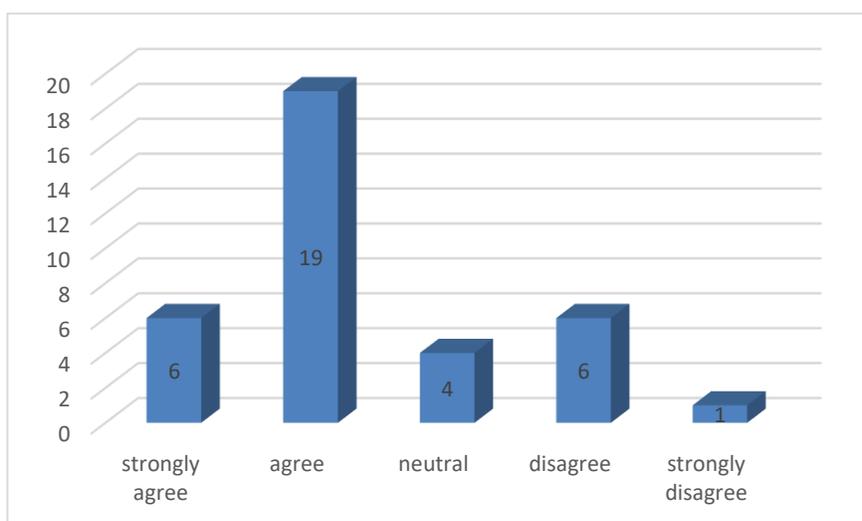


Figure 7: Do you find the reading passages at the beginning of every unit uninteresting?

Seemingly, majority of them complain about the repetition of the same type. 25 of them (69%) think that the same type of exercises is boring for them. They do not like the repetition of the same type.

The next question is about the word check part that follows the reading passage. We investigated the point if they find the same type of exercise uninteresting.

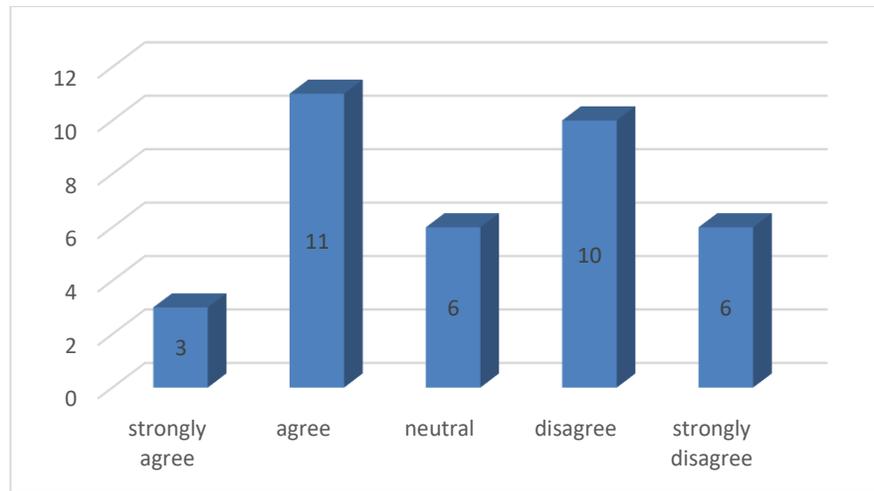


Figure 8: Do you find the repetition of the same part of word check uninteresting?

Only 14 students (39%) find it uninteresting, and the percentage fall dramatically in relation to the previous question. It means although they find the repetition of reading passage and related comprehension questions dull, the vocabulary part does not seem so. 16 students (44%) already disagree with the statement.

In vocabulary part, there is relatively the same type of exercises albeit with some variations. The students already found this part informative enough, but as for the point of attraction of the exercises, the students may have different ideas. To check that point, we asked the next question.

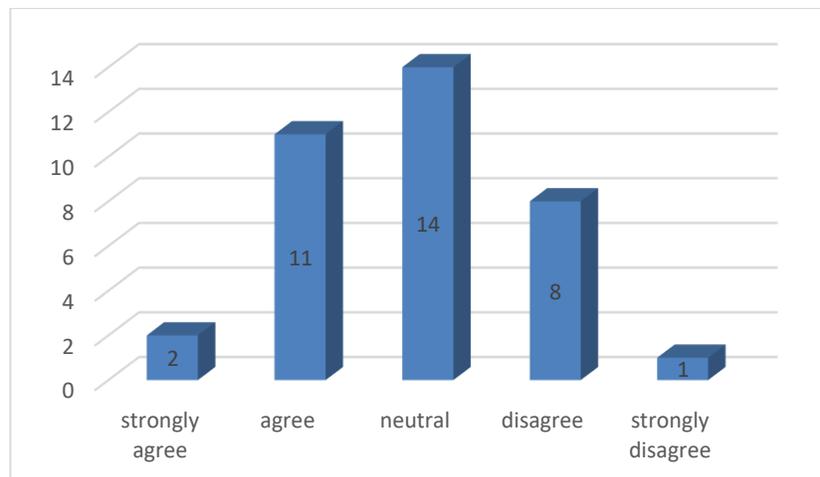


Figure 9: Do you find the same exercise type in vocabulary parts boring?

13 students (36%) find the same or similar exercise type boring, but the number of the students who remained neutral seems very high with the number of 14 which makes up 39% of the whole population. Only 9 students (25%) do not find them boring.

The next question is about their interest levels about the grammar explanations and exercises.

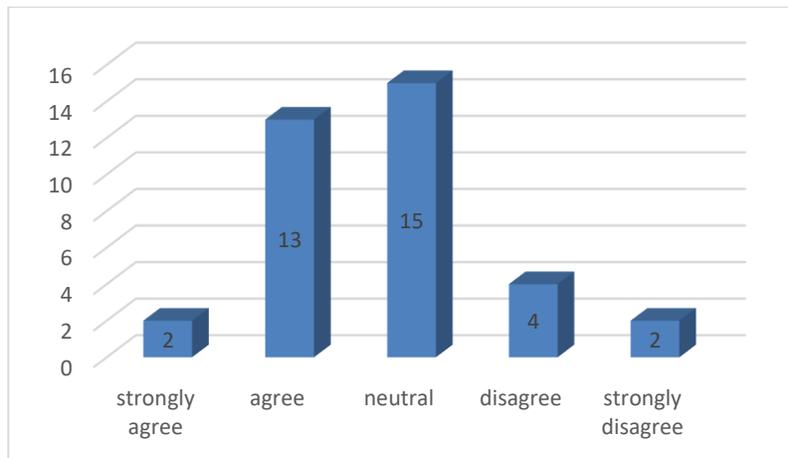


Figure 10: Do you find it interesting to see the same type of exercises and explanations in grammar parts?

Only 15 students (42%) find the explanations and exercises interesting in the book. Even 15 of them remained neutral, which means they also do not find them interesting. Only 6 of them (16%) find this part interesting. As a result, there is a problem especially with these grammar parts for the students because they come across almost the same type of questions in grammar parts.

We also inquired the same interest level of them about listening parts.

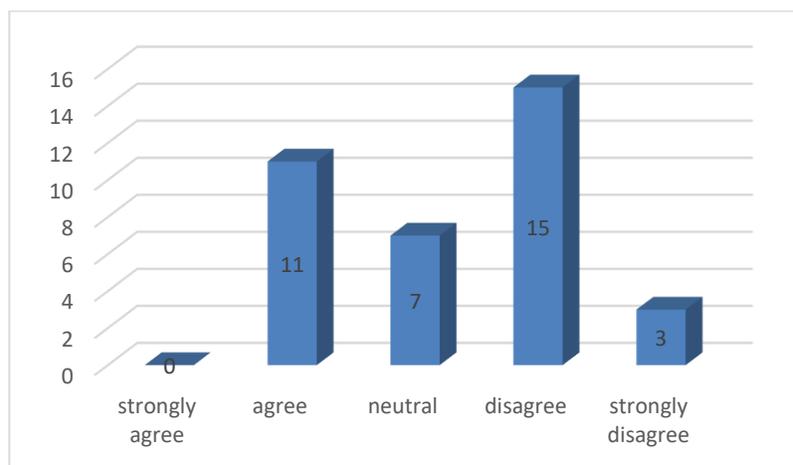


Figure 11: Do you think the listening exercises are all the same type?

Only 11 of them (31%) agreed upon this statement. They think that listening exercises are not all the same type implying they are not bored. In fact, listening exercises seem to be various in relation to others, and another point is that these parts are probable to be asked exactly as they are in the exams, so they may be more attentive to listening exercises.

We also inquired the same point for speaking exercises.

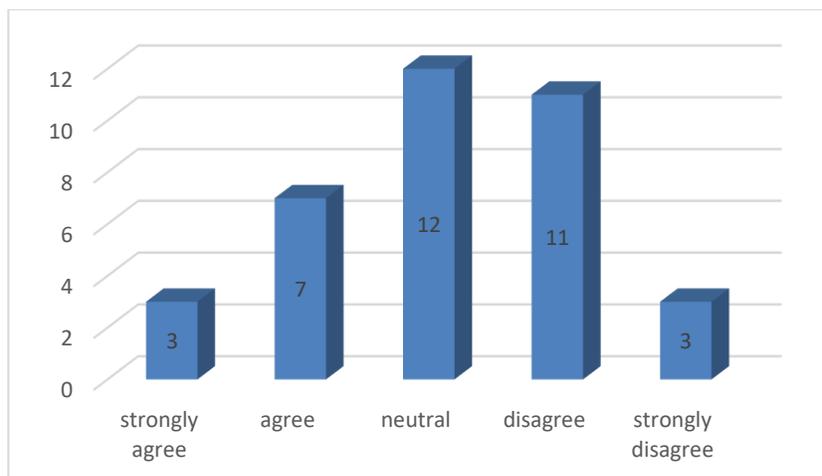


Figure 12: Do you think the speaking parts are all the same?

Figures seem similar to the previous question. Only 10 of them (28%) think that they are all the same and so boring.

As the students get accustomed to the design of the book after several units, they may expect the same type of exercises during the coming units. To check if they really think so, we asked the next question.

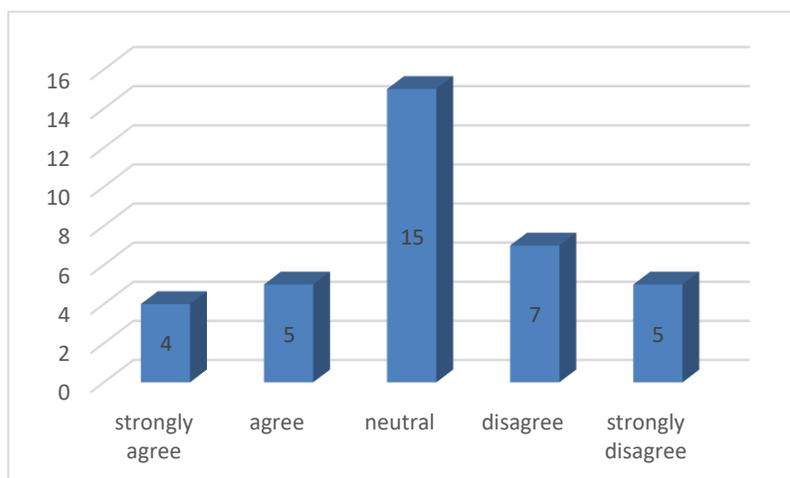


Figure 13: Do you expect anything extraordinary in the exercises of the book?

Only 9 students (25%) think accordingly. Most of them do not expect anything extraordinary in the coming units because they have quite similar design, and after a certain point, they start to feel they need new things or uninterested.

To consolidate the previous question, we asked the next one to the students.

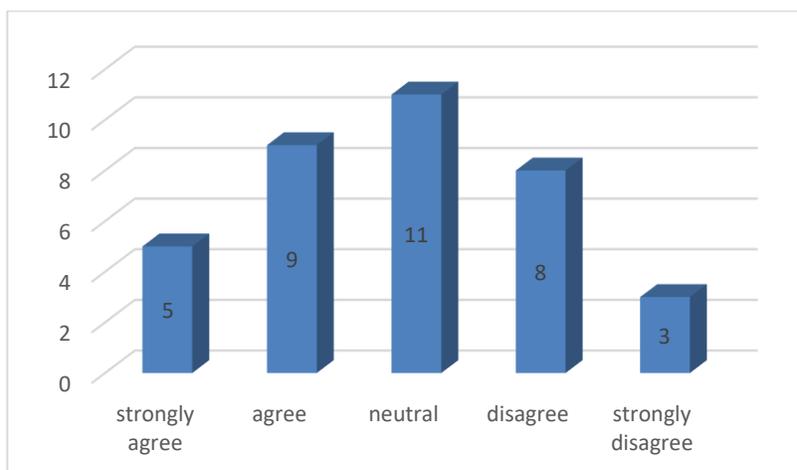


Figure 14: Do you find the same design throughout the units boring?

This is the question that summarizes how they see the book in terms of the same design, and we see that 13 of them (36%) agree on it. Although this figure gives the minority, there is a huge number of them that remained neutral about this question. 11 students (31%) cannot decide if it is boring or interesting. The other 11 students do not find it boring.

5. Discussion

In order to investigate the impression that the Scope coursebook left on the students, we asked the students questions under two headings. In the first heading, it was investigated how much the students benefited from the book. According to the results obtained, students benefit from the book as needed in all parts and improve their English.

Previously, some students' complaints that the book went by the same design had prompted us to do this research. To understand how valid this is in a larger sample, we administered this questionnaire to students. However, we wanted to see how much the students benefited from the book, rather than just evaluating their emotional approach. When we look at the results we have obtained, it is seen that the students generally think that they benefit from the content of the book properly. Nevertheless, it is seen that the same design, which is repeated over and over, has a negative effect on majority of the students. Since these students are preparatory students, they study from these books almost throughout the year. Students who only cover another book at the beginner level then cover "Scope 1" and "Scope 2" throughout the year. After the first few units of these 2 books, which have a total of 20 units, the students get used to the design of the book and this repetitive design is a reason why most of the students are bored. However, students also emphasize the informative aspect of the book.

When we look at the levels of these books, we see that the Scope 1 book is at the A1-A2 level, and the Scope 2 book is at the A2-B1 level. However, when we look at the content of the books, we can say that they offer a richer content than the books of the same level. As it stands, we can say that it is a book that is more inclined to university students and to the advanced English they need. In this aspect, students find this book informative and educative enough. However, repetitive design poses a problem for students.

6. Conclusion

Textbooks are indispensable resources in foreign language teaching. However, when we consider each book from different aspects, it is possible to say that different aspects of every coursebook may remain weak. Textbooks are useful for teachers as well as students. First of all, the fact that the content of the book is attractive and understandable not only enables the students to participate in the lesson eagerly, but also reveals many advantages for the teacher. Although teachers have the flexibility to plan activities outside of the book, they cannot go beyond the syllabus offered by the book. Therefore, the content of the book is very important.

We can say that the content of the Scope book we discussed is rich. However, it creates a number of disadvantages especially for students who learn English in a long run, such as preparatory classes. It is very difficult to overcome this problem with different activities because teachers also have to follow the syllabus given to them by the institution.

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