

Correlation of Speech Acts and Language Functions in Top Notch Series vs. ILI Textbooks from a Pragmatic Point of View

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Abstract

The present paper is an attempt to evaluate the conversations of two currently used textbooks in Iranian context (Top Notch and ILI textbooks) on the basis of two frameworks of Halliday(1978) and Cohen(1996) to determine features of the books in general and the strengths and weaknesses of them, in particular. For this purpose, two levels (Basic& Intermediate) were selected and two pragmatic models of Halliday and Cohen were applied to analyze them. The researcher codified each speech acts and language functions in the conversations. The researcher concluded that the absence of one of the speech acts and language functions in the conversations of the two previously mentioned textbooks can be regarded as a weak point of these textbooks. The results showed that the conversations in the two textbooks have some pragmatic problems with regard to language functions and speech acts.

Keywords: speech acts, language functions, pragmatic, textbooks evaluation

1. Introduction

Textbooks are important tools in any teaching/learning process, and they are useful devices for giving the necessary information to the learners. Hutchinson and Torres (1994) have argued that the textbook has a very important and positive part to play in teaching and learning of English. They state that textbooks provide the necessary input into classroom lessons through different activities such as readings and explanations. Thus, they will always survive on the grounds that they meet certain needs.

Textbooks can give purpose to the learners; if no textbook exist, learners would not take their learning seriously. Textbook can be used as a syllabus. If there is no textbook in class, students will lose their focus and it becomes an approach of teacher-dependent class. Furthermore, textbooks can be used as a supporter and helper for new teachers.

On the other hand there are some negative points regarding textbooks. No individual textbook can be useful for different students with different needs. We cannot guarantee that topics are related to the student's needs and can be interesting for all of them. In addition, a textbook decreases the teacher's creativity. Teachers just focus on the textbook so there is no motivation for them to create something new and more interesting for their classes. They only stick to the textbook.

There have been some aspects in choosing an appropriate textbook. One of these aspects is the aim of the class curriculum. If the aim is to familiarize the students with the authentic texts then texts that have authentic articles should be chosen. Another aspect about choosing a textbook is whether to choose individual textbooks or a textbook series. There are some advantages and disadvantages to each of them.

The next question regarding choosing a textbook is how well textbook objectives can match the course goals. The other important aspect is that the text should be simple and understandable. Students and teachers prefer visual materials that are easy to read and follow. The learner's factors such as age, cultural background, interests and purpose should be taken into consideration. We should also pay attention to students' needs and their aims in order to choose a useful book. In sum, experts believe that consumers of textbooks are students, teachers, schools and institutes who have different viewpoints about a good and standard textbook.

Choosing appropriate textbooks for a given situation is very difficult. Most of the teachers are not experienced enough to know the criterion of choosing textbooks so they just select them based on the publishers suggestions

which may lead to waste of money and time.

According to Riazi (2003, p. 52), "Textbooks play a very crucial role in the realm of language teaching and learning and are considered the next important factor in the second/foreign language classroom after the teacher." The textbook is a tool in the hands of the teacher, and the teacher must know not only how to use it, but also how useful it can be.

Low (1987, p. 21) reminds us that "Teachers generally need to screen materials, in order to predict their suitability for particular classes". Thus, we should use material evaluation to question and develop our own ideas as to what is required. Another benefit is through identifying strengths and weaknesses in textbooks, optimum use can be made of strong points, and weaker points can be adapted or substituted from other works (Cunningsworth, 1995).

The wealth of published materials for English language teaching (ELT) available in the market makes selecting the right textbook book a challenging task. Moreover, the selection of a particular core textbook is an executive educational decision in which there is considerable professional, financial, and even political investment (Sheldon, 1988).

The position of Top Notch series in Iran

People learn languages when they have opportunities to understand and work with the language in a context that they comprehend and find interesting. In Iran when new materials are available, people become so attracted towards them that they believe they are the best for learning or teaching. This is exactly in line with the results of Chadran's (2001) study showing that teachers preferred available commercially produced materials in the market over the prescribed textbooks developed by the Ministry, that they do not engage themselves in producing materials of their own, that they consider textbooks out-dated and dull. As a result, nowadays, Top Notch series have become almost the most frequently-used series in almost most of the institutes and also most of the tutoring for English language teaching and learning without any preceding evaluation or assessment. This explanation can best support the selection of Top Notch series as one part of the present study.

2. Objectives of the Study

English language has become an international language nowadays. It is one of the dominant languages of the global market. Students who are interested in engaging in international business will need English skills. The continuing trend of globalization is creating a need for multilingual individuals. Teaching English to children will definitely open up new opportunities for them in the future.

Textbooks are the most important means of teaching and learning. Therefore, one of the teacher's main jobs is choosing an appropriate textbook for a class. Choosing materials and their development and evaluation in English Language Teaching (ELT) has attracted researcher's attention which in turn has led to textbook evaluation frameworks development.

It has been widely accepted that a textbook is an essential component of the EFL classroom. Evaluation of textbooks, therefore, is of utmost importance so that its pedagogical contribution to the teaching and learning process can be assured.

The purpose of the present paper is to conduct a careful inspection of the conversations in the Basic and Intermediate levels, in order to find out the types of language functions and speech acts and percentages of each one in both textbooks (Top Notch series Vs. ILI textbooks). Therefore, the current study focuses on the following questions:

1. What are the types of speech acts in Top Notch series conversation texts?
2. What are the types of speech acts in ILI conversation texts?
3. What are the types of language functions in Top Notch series conversation texts?
4. What are the types of language functions in ILI conversation texts?
5. How frequently each language function is used in these two different textbooks?
6. How frequently each speech act is used in these two different textbooks?
7. Are the conversations of these two different textbooks pragmatically appropriate and efficient with regard to the existence and the distribution of speech acts and language functions?

3. Theoretical Frameworks of the Study

Halliday's (1978) Functional Model

Halliday's (1978) Functional Model is a significant model in pragmatics. This model shows different types of functions in language which expresses the socially-oriented characteristics of language. According to Halliday there are different kinds of language functions as follows:

1. Instrumental function: This function is applied to satisfy our material needs or to get other people do us different things such as requests, suggestions, commands, and warnings.
2. Regulatory function: This function is used to control the behavior of others such as rules, regulations, and laws.
3. Interactional function: This function is served to form, establish, maintain, and change interpersonal relationships such as greetings, leave takings, compliments, insults, and apologies.
4. Personal function: This function is applied to identify and express the self such as expressing feelings, interests, and actions.
5. Heuristic function: This function is served to expand one's knowledge of language itself or to discover the world around and inside such as question and answer routines.
6. Imaginative function: This function is used to tell stories and jokes and create an imaginary environment.
7. Informative function: This function is used for exchanging the new information about people, things and actions such as describing, identifying and narrating.
8. Attention getting function: This function is used in many communicative situations generally for addressing people or trying to ask a question, giving an offer, or giving one's idea. (1978, p. 19)

Cohen's (1996) Speech Act Taxonomy

Based on Austin's (1962), and Searle's (1969) theory, Cohen (1996) identifies five categories of speech acts based on the functions assigned to them.

1. Representatives are used when the utterance states what the speaker believes, like "describing, predicting something, stating and affirming".
2. Commissives are used when an utterance commits the speaker to future actions like "promising, vowing, threatening, offering".
3. Directives are referred to as utterances in which the words make the hearer do something like "inviting, requesting, ordering, warning, and suggesting".
4. Expressives state the speaker's feelings like "regretting, thanking, congratulating, condoling and apologizing".
5. Declaratives are utterances that change the world through their utterance like "naming ships, announcing marriage and sentencing".

Why choosing Halliday's (1978) and Cohen's (1996) as a framework?

The present study applies two frameworks which have not previously been used for evaluation purposes together. These frameworks include Halliday's (1978) model of language functions and Cohen's (1996) model of speech acts which can evaluate and illustrate the pragmatic load of the textbooks.

According to Bloor (1997), Halliday's (1978) model is "functional" and concerned with how the language is used in context. In fact, this issue is something that not all linguists have taken into consideration in such a direct way as Halliday (1978).

Cutting (2002) states that speech act theory describes what utterances are intended to do, such as promise, threaten and apologize which are pragmatic dimension of language. These units, or speech acts, introduce the pragmatic dimension of language, emphasizing the social principles of discourse, taking a socio-cultural perspective on language usage, and testing the way that the principles of social behavior are shown. Therefore, with regard to the application of Cohen's (1996) model in the current study, it should be declared that units covering language functions are speech acts which complicate the present pragmatic study.

Cutting (2002) elaborates on pragmatics as closely associated with analytical philosophy, particularly with the work of Austin (1962) and Searle (1976) on speech acts. Also, Fairclough's (1989) consider speech acts as a central part of pragmatics.

Furthermore, looking at other pragmatic frameworks, such as Leech's (1983) speech acts, Matreyek's (1990)

language functions, Jakobson's (1960) language functions, one can come to this conclusion that Halliday's (1978) and Cohen's (1996) frameworks are the most suitable and comprehensive models for the conversation analysis in the realm of pragmatics as they consider meanings and functions together in their frameworks.

4. Methodology

4.1 Materials

The materials in the present study are Top Notch and Iran Language Institute (ILI) textbooks. There are 12 different textbooks in Top Notch series that are published by Longman Incorporation. On the other hand, the ILI English books consist of 18 textbooks on the whole that are published by Iran Language Institute in Iran.

4.2 Data Collection Procedure

The data for this study contains the conversations in Top Notch series textbooks and ILI textbooks. Only the conversation sections have been observed and evaluated. The researcher has chosen two levels (Basic, Intermediate) for each of these textbooks. The researcher has tried to analyze the data based on two frameworks for obtaining more exact results.

4.3 Data Analysis Procedure

The total analysis of the collected data in the current study has been done by a very detailed examination in the dialogues involved in the Top Notch and ILI textbooks on the basis of two previously mentioned frameworks.

The researcher codified each speech act and language function in the conversations based on two previously mentioned frameworks separately by putting the exact function and speech act next to each sentence. Then, the researcher counted the frequencies of each speech act and function.

In addition, by applying the chi-square test the distribution level of language functions and speech acts illustrated.

A sample from Top Notch

Conversation 1 (Book A, Unit 1, Page 7):

Jake: Excuse me. [Interactional] [Expressive] Are you Marie? [Heuristic] [Directive]

Laura: No, I'm not. [Informative] [Representative] I'm Laura. [Informative] [Representative] That's Marie. [Informative] [Representative]

Jake: Where? [Heuristic] [Directive]

Laura: Right over there. [Informative] [Representative]

Jake: Thank you. [Interactional] [Expressive]

Laura: You're welcome. [Interactional] [Expressive]

Halliday's Approach

At the very beginning of conversation 1, the phrase "Excuse me" which is an interactional function, has been used in order to start and form the conversation. At the same time, this phrase can also be considered as an attention-getting function since it is applied for trying to ask a question. When the situation is ready, Jake, using a heuristic function, asks his question, "Are you Marie?" to explore the name of his partner. Using an informative function, Laura answers, "No, I'm not." And then she completes her answer with two other informative sentences, "I'm Laura" and "That's Marie", so as to identify Marie and herself. To establish and maintain the conversation, Jake asks another heuristic question, "where?" to know about the place where Marie is standing. Laura replies with another informative response about the place, i.e. "Right over there". To wrap up the conversation, Jake replies the compliment "Thank you" in the form of an interactional function, which is replied by another interactional compliment, "You're welcome."

Cohen's Approach

This conversation starts with the expressive speech act "Excuse me" to show a sort of apology for asking the directive question "Are you Marie?" as a request for a new information. Giving the new information, Laura applies three representative speech acts, "No, I'm not," "I'm Laura," and "That's Marie." In the form of another directive speech act, Jake asks "Where?" which is answered by Laura's representative description of Marie's place. Finally, the conversation comes to an end through two expressive speech acts, i.e. the "Thank you" compliment and the "You're welcome" response.

5. Results and Discussion

Overall Findings of Basic and Intermediate Levels in Top Notch Series

Table 1. Result of language functions in basic and intermediate levels of Top Notch

Code	Language Functions	Frequency	Percentage (%)
1	Instrumental	44	4.55
2	Regulatory	48	4.96
3	Interactional	120	12.42
4	Personal	238	24.63
5	Heuristic	217	22.46
6	Imaginative	1	0.10
7	Informative	234	24.22
8	Attention-getting	64	6.62
T	Total	966	100

According to the result of this table, 966 is the total frequency of language functions in both levels. Personal with 24.63 has got the highest and imaginative with 0.10 has got the lowest percentage.

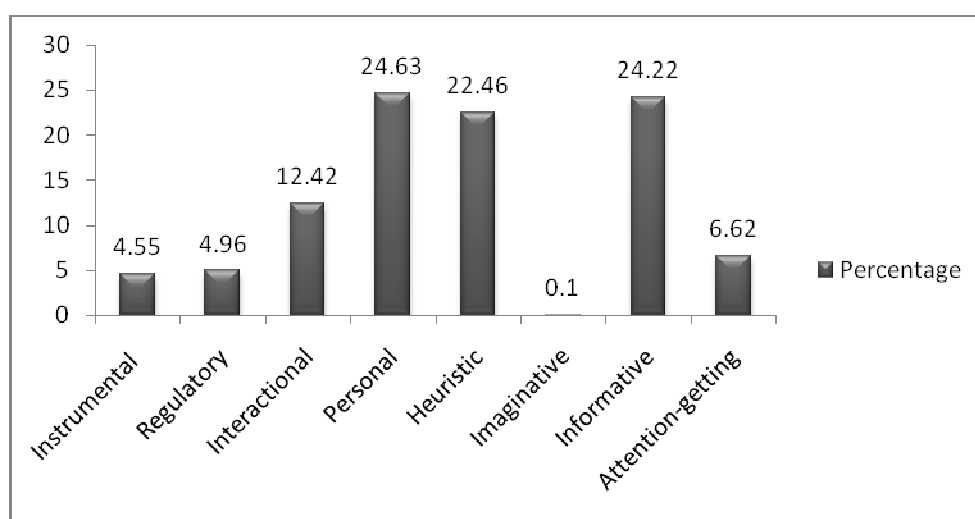


Figure 1. Percentages of language functions in Top Notch Series

Table 2. Chi-square results for overall language functions in basic and intermediate levels of Top Notch

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	1.546E4 ^a	64	.000
Likelihood Ratio	6.079E3	64	.000
N of Valid Cases	1932		

a. 34 cells (42.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is .00.

Table 2 shows that the difference among the frequencies of the language functions is statistically significant, i.e. sig. = .000 ($p < .05$)

Table 3. Result of speech acts in basic and intermediate levels of Top Notch

Code	Speech Acts	Frequency	Percentage (%)
1	Representative	239	25.92
2	Directive	288	31.23
3	Expressive	361	39.15
4	Commissive	34	3.68
5	Declarative	0	0
T	Total	922	100

Table 3 shows that, the percentage of representative speech act is 25.92%, directive speech act 31.23%, expressive speech act 39.15%, commissive speech act 3.68%, and declarative speech act 0%. Therefore, the least frequently used speech act is declarative with 0% while the most frequent one is the expressive with 39.15%.

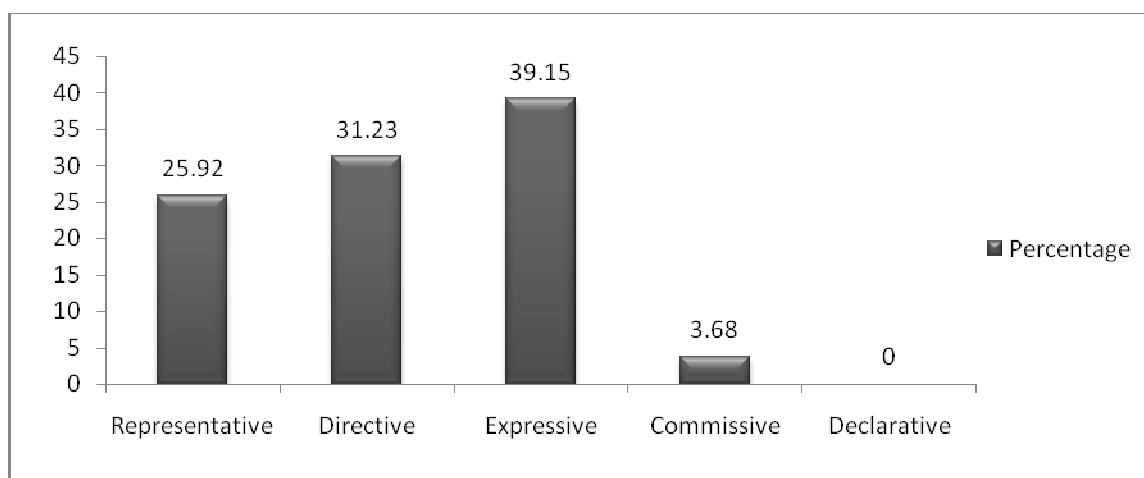


Figure 2. Percentages of speech acts in Top Notch Series

Table 4. Chi-square results for overall speech acts in basic and intermediate levels of Top Notch

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	7.376E3 ^a	16	.000
Likelihood Ratio	4.773E3	16	.000
N of Valid Cases	1844		

a. 3 cells (12.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is .63.

Looking at Table 4, one can recognize that the difference among the overall frequencies of speech acts is significant and meaningful, i.e. sig. = .000 ($p < .05$).

Overall Findings of Basic and Intermediate Levels in ILI Textbooks

Table 5. Result of language functions in basic and intermediate levels of ILI

Code	Language Functions	Frequency	Percentage (%)
1	Instrumental	20	3.26
2	Regulatory	25	4.08
3	Interactional	36	5.88
4	Personal	129	21.07
5	Heuristic	158	25.81
6	Imaginative	1	0.16
7	Informative	202	33
8	Attention-getting	41	6.69
T	Total	612	100

According to Table 5, the percentages of language functions show that 3.26% refers to instrumental, 4.08% regulatory, 5.88% interactional, 21.07% personal, 25.81% heuristic, 0.16% imaginative, 33% informative, and 6.69% attention-getting functions. Therefore, it can be concluded that the overall minimum of all language functions deals with imaginative one, i.e. 0.16%, while the overall maximum of all language functions refer to informative function, i.e. 33%.

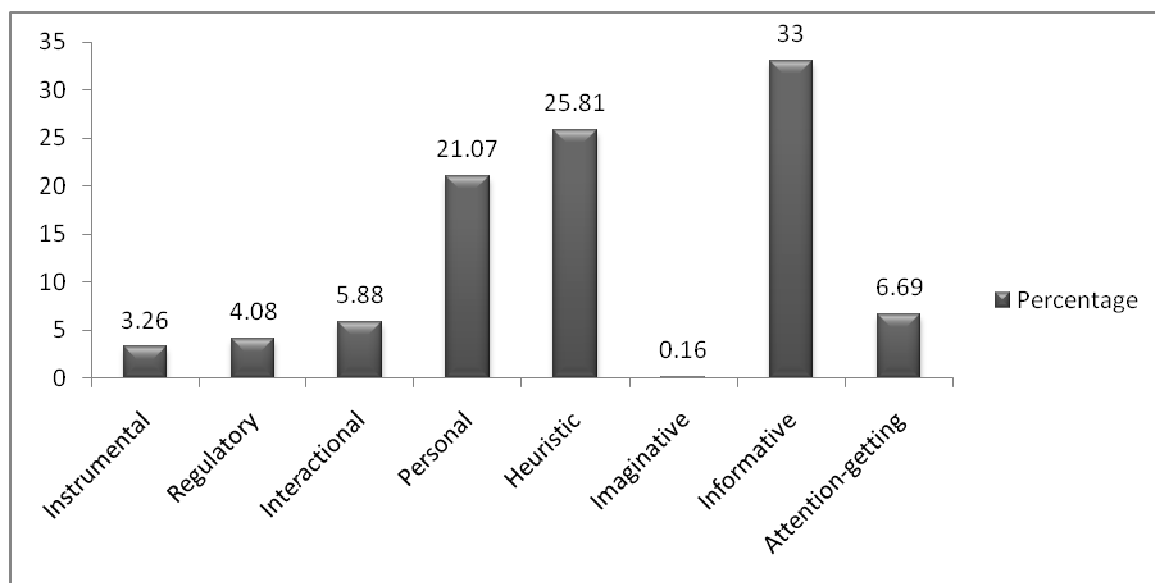


Figure 3. Percentages of language functions in ILI Textbooks

Table 6. Chi-square results for overall language functions in ILI textbook

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	9.792E3 ^a	64	.000
Likelihood Ratio	3.709E3	64	.000
N of Valid Cases	1224		

a. 51 cells (63.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is .00.

Table 6 shows that the difference among the frequencies of the language functions is significant and meaningful,

i.e. sig. = .000 ($p < .05$). This result means that the distribution of language functions is not equal.

Table 7. Result of speech acts in basic and intermediate levels of ILI

Code	Speech Acts	Frequency	Percentage (%)
1	Representative	216	36.61
2	Directive	196	33.22
3	Expressive	168	28.47
4	Commissive	10	1.69
5	Declarative	0	0
T	Total	590	100

Table 7 shows that the frequency is 216 representative speech act, 196 directive speech act, 168 expressive speech act, 10 commissive speech act, and 0 declarative speech act in the overall conversations of Basic and Intermediate ILI text books. On the whole 590 speech acts have been found in these books. As Table 7 demonstrated, 36.61% of all speech acts refers to representative, 33.22% refers to directive, 28.47% refers to expressive, 1.69% refers to commissive, and 0% refers to declarative speech act. Therefore, the minimum percentage of speech acts refers to declarative speech act, i.e. 0%, and the maximum percentage refers to representative speech act, i.e. 36.61%.

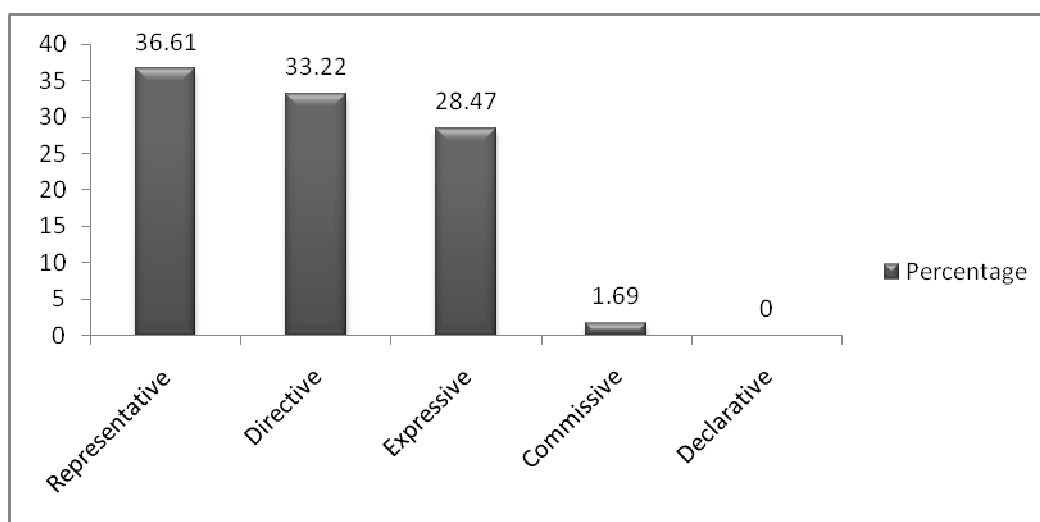


Figure 4. Percentages of speech acts in ILI textbooks

Table 8. Chi-square results for overall speech acts in ILI textbooks

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	4.720E3 ^a	16	.000
Likelihood Ratio	3.006E3	16	.000
N of Valid Cases	1180		

a. 7 cells (28.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is .08.

The difference among the frequencies of the overall speech acts is significant and meaningful, i.e. sig. = .000 ($p < .05$).

Correlational Analysis

Table 9. Pearson correlation between language functions of Top Notch and ILI

		Top Notch frequency	ILI frequency
Top Notch frequency	Pearson Correlation	1	.935**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.002
	N	8	7
ILI frequency	Pearson Correlation	.935**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.002	
	N	7	7

0.01 level (2-t**). Correlation is significant at the ailed).

The correlation coefficient is 0.935 and the p-value is 0.002. Thus, it can be concluded that the correlation coefficient is significant, that is, there is a very high correlation between the frequency of language functions in ILI textbooks and Top Notch series.

Table 10. Pearson correlation between speech acts of Top Notch and ILI

		Top Notch frequency	ILI frequency
Top Notch frequency	Pearson Correlation	1	.904*
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.035
	N	5	5
ILI frequency	Pearson Correlation	.904*	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.035	
	N	5	5

*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

The correlation coefficient is 0.904 and the p-value is 0.035. Therefore, based on statistics the correlation coefficient is significant, that is, there is a very high correlation between the textbooks (Top Notch and ILI) regarding the speech acts in them.

In conclusion, textbook's role in EFL/ESL context is so hard to determine and define. There are a lot of textbooks available in the market these days which seem to be suitable on the surface but they do not reach the criteria of a truly superior book. So as to achieve the mastery of a second language and successful communication, pragmatic competence in the second language must be improved. This issue sheds light on the crucial role of the textbook to make English learners communicatively competent. Therefore, the present study aimed at evaluating Top Notch series and ILI textbooks to find out to what extent language functions and speech acts, have been applied in the conversation sections of these textbooks. In this vein, by applying the two frameworks the researcher attempted to assess the pragmatic strength of the conversation sections in these widely used textbooks, namely Top Notch series and ILI textbooks.

The present investigation is both theoretically and practically significant since its findings will hopefully help teachers and institutes that have chosen the previously mentioned textbooks as their teaching materials. Also the findings can help them with their approaches toward materials development. Moreover, learners of English language who tend to start learning the language through these textbooks will surely have a better scope of the textbooks they have chosen.

As far as the methodology of this study is concerned, in order to obtain more comprehensive results, two levels (Basic, Intermediate) were chosen and all the conversations of the selected textbooks were analyzed based on Halliday and Cohen as the two pragmatic frameworks for analyzing the conversations.

The obtained results indicated that the conversations in both Top Notch and ILI textbooks have several shortcomings such as the absence of a couple of pragmatic variables and their unequal distribution. Therefore, having obtained these results, the researcher answered the research questions and interpreted them in detail.

The purpose of the present study was to evaluate the efficiency of Top Notch series and ILI textbooks as EFL materials for Iranian learners of English by examining the conversation sections of these textbooks from a pragmatic point of view. The main reason for performing such a research was due to little has been done in evaluating the efficiency of textbooks and EFL materials in language institutes in Iran, especially in terms of fulfilling learners' communicative needs or as Austin (1962) put, in terms of helping learners of English do things with words.

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