Level One English Language Teachers' Evaluation of the Quality of the Super Minds CEFR Textbook

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Abstract

In 2017, the Ministry of Education decided to use Super Minds (Student's Book 1), an imported textbook published by Cambridge English in the UK, as the English Language textbook for Year 1 and Year 2 pupils in all public schools in Malaysia. The adoption of the book garnered much attention and debate as Malaysians presented opposing views regarding the necessity and usefulness of using an imported textbook rather than a local one. The ongoing debate prompted the researcher to conduct the present study a year after the book came into use, with the aim of evaluating the content, physical and overall quality of the Super Minds textbook. The respondents were 180 Level One primary school teachers who had been actively using the textbook in their English classes for at least a year prior to the study. The instrument was a self-developed rating scale with 25 items measuring the three quality constructs. It was converted into a Google Form and administered as an online survey via several social media platforms. The data were analyzed using exploratory factor analysis (EFA) and descriptive statistics. The EFA results supported the existence of content, physical and overall quality as three mutually exclusive constructs. Overall, the Level One English teachers rated the content quality and physical quality of Super Minds as average and good, while endorsing its overall quality to be moderate. A major contribution of the study is the production of a rating scale with relevant language learning criteria—such as practice activities, content relevance to the target audience, graphics, use of vocabulary and cultural appropriateness—for evaluating the quality of English language textbooks. For future research, the study recommends that Super Minds be assessed for usefulness and relevance to rural students and students from various ethnic groups.

Keywords: *Super Minds textbook, CEFR-aligned resources, physical quality, context quality, textbook rating scale*

BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

Super Minds is a primary school textbook for English Language learning produced by the Cambridge University Press in the United Kingdom. It contains weekly English lessons meant for methodically developing ESL learners' language skills and thinking ability. The activities were carefully crafted and specifically designed to train learners' memory and improve their concentration. In 2017, the Malaysian Ministry of Education decided to adopt the textbook to be used by all primary public schools in the country. The decision sparked much debate and controversy about the appropriateness of the move, leading many to start speculating about the textbook's quality and suitability for Malaysian pupils. In this study, the researchers explored Malaysian ESL teachers' perceptions on the matter. The article begins by first describing a brief history behind the adoption of *Super Minds.*

Changes in Textbooks for Malaysian Pupils' Learning of English

The Malaysian education system has been through many changes in the past ten years to upgrade its quality of education to be at par with other leading countries in the world. Since the English language has become the most important language in so many fields, the Ministry of Education has made serious efforts to increase the mastery of English among Malaysian students. Changes in Malaysian education started taking place in 2011 when the Curriculum Development Division developed a new curriculum to replace the old *"Kurikulum Bersepadu Sekolah Rendah"* (KBSR), which was called the *"Kurikulum Standard Sekolah Rendah"* (KSSR). A new set of textbooks was produced at that time to be aligned with the new KSSR content. The four English Language skills (i.e., listening and speaking, reading, writing and language arts) were taught exclusively in separate lessons. However, teachers were allowed to integrate other sub-skills to complement the four major skills depending on students' learning needs.

In 2017, the Curriculum Development Division once again revised the KSSR. The revised version was called KSSR *Semakan* or Revised KSSR. Following the revision, the English textbooks for four levels of schooling—i.e., for Year 1, Year 2, Form 1 and Form 2—were changed or replaced once again. Starting from January 2017, students in Year 1, Year 2, Form 1 and Form 2 would be using an imported textbook which aligned with the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR) for Languages that the Ministry decided to adopt for all Malaysian schools. CEFR was established by the Council of Europe in 2001 to describe English language learners' varying levels of ability. There are six reference levels that describe ESL learners' language ability in terms of speaking, reading, listening, and writing. The levels are represented by the codes A1, A2, B1, B2, C1 and C2, where A1 is the lowest level and C2 is the highest level of language ability. Table 1 shows the CEFR levels and their descriptors.

Table 1
CEFR Proficiency Levels

Language Users	Level	Descriptors
Proficient User	C2	Proficient
	C1	Advanced
Independent User	B2	Upper Immediate
	B1	Intermediate
Basic User	A2	Elementary
	A1	Beginner

The *Super Minds* textbook was intended for use by Year 1 and Year 2 students, while the *Pulse 2* textbook was prescribed for Form 1 and Form 2. The contents of the textbooks, which were fully UK-based, were retained in their original context, and not changed or modified in any way to suit the Malaysian cultural context. This raised teachers' concern about the books' suitability and compatibility with the Malaysian culture and our young Malaysian audience's ability to comprehend the "British-ness" of their content. The issue was hotly debated as it affected both primary and secondary school students who must now use the textbooks for learning English.

The *Super Minds* textbook (Student's Book 1) was the sole focus of this research although there are other imported English textbooks used by Malaysian students in all government schools. The *Super Minds* series, intended for primary school English language learning, are published by the Cambridge University Press in 2012, while *Pulse 2* (for secondary level English) is published by MacMillan. Malaysia decided to use the *Super Minds* book as the English textbook for Year One and Year Two students in all government schools starting 2017.

There are nine topics altogether in the book. Topics one to four are to be learned by Year One pupils, while topics five to nine are to be learned by Year Two pupils. Every section in the topic has different sets of main and complementary skills to be acquired by the pupils, but every topic covers all of the language skills outlined in the syllabus. The first page of the textbook clearly states what pupils will learn in every topic, including all the vocabulary, grammar, stories, values, phonics, language skills and thinking skills. All the topics covered in the *Super Minds* textbook are presented in Table 2.

The decision made by the Malaysian Ministry of Education to use the UK-imported English textbooks for the two primary grades has spun a controversial and hotly debated issue among Malaysians, especially English teachers. The Ministry felt that this initiative was well-justified as it would expose local students to more authentic and proper English use. In support of this move, some education activists have argued that the content, written by professional writers in Britain, would create greater cultural awareness and acceptance among Malaysian students, and broaden their viewpoints in aspects like culture, religion, and lifestyle (Nurul Azwa, 2017a).

Table 2
Topics Covered in the Super Minds Textbook by Grade Level

Grade Level	Topic
Year 1	1. At School
	2. Let's Play
	3. Pet Show
	4. Lunchtime
Year 2	5. Free Time
	6. The Old House
	7. Get Dressed
	8. The Robot
	9. At the Beach

However, not agreeing with the Ministry, language experts feel that the textbooks lack local context, and might make it difficult for pupils (their being young learners) to relate to the foreign ideas the books talk about. They worry that Malaysian pupils may not be able to relate to content that is very British-specific, such as Red Poppy Day, secondhand shops, the Edinburgh Festival, or car boot sales that are partof the culture in Britain (The Star Online, 2018; Zairil, 2017), but are foreign to Malaysians. Angel (2019) argued that textbook materials should be based on the local context that fulfils the needs of students in order to help them learn effectively. Mukundan (2013) had earlier made this assertion, stressing the importance of having relatable social-cultural elements in textbooks as this would help pupils to use the language in diverse contexts. Given this information, the researcher, who is himself an English teacher, has been interested to study the Super Minds textbook (Book 1) to ascertain the extent of its content quality and suitability for local use.

Many Malaysians have expressed their opinions about this issue through social media. Parents, reporters, bloggers, and many others have gone online to express their opinions about the use of the imported textbooks for Malaysian students. Some educators in the Ministry have also done the same. It is the English language teachers who must use the textbooks in their classrooms. These teachers, therefore, have every right and reason to be involved in the process of evaluating the books in order to identify their strong and weak points in relation to the teachers' own teaching situations (Tok, 2010).

As widely known, the Ministry had directed all schools in Malaysia to use the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR) textbooks starting from January 2017. Since then, the imported textbooks that have been used in English classes in Malaysian schools have received mix responses from the Malaysian public, educators and school communities. Many professionals in education have articulated their opinions regarding this issue. Even though many teachers have voiced out their views and opinions regarding the suitability of the imported textbooks, online and offline, conclusions about the books' quality cannot be made until both teachers and students have thoroughly used the books, and systematic research into their utility and evaluation of their quality are conducted. Our current lack of understanding and evidence on the Super Minds textbooks' quality has prompted the present research on English teachers' evaluation of the imported books after using them in their classrooms.

LITERATURE REVIEW

This section presents an overview of some research studies that have been carried out on textbook evaluation. The present study is unique in the sense that it is not like most other studies because it focuses on the evaluation of an imported textbook. The literature contains numerous previous studies on textbook evaluation, but very rarely did these studies examine imported textbooks. The review has tried locating Malaysian-based studies conducted within the last ten years that evaluated imported textbooks, but there are none to date. This might be because Malaysia is the first country in the world that uses imported textbooks in teaching English in all of its public schools, while other countries are more likely to use their own locally developed materials. Working within this constraint, this section will present a review of relevant previous studies on textbook evaluation, and discuss the role of textbook evaluation generally, and English textbook evaluation, especially, in the context of language learning.

Role of Textbook Evaluation in English Language Teaching

It is a fact that English has become an international language, and therefore, does not belong only to native speakers in English-speaking countries. It has truly belonged to the world as the global lingua franca of this century. This is the reason why many non-English speaking countries make English as a subject to be learned in their schools and education systems. Among all language teaching and learning materials, textbooks play a significant role in pupils' acquiring a second language. They do not only convey or impart the curriculum, but also provide a good resource for learning activities in the classroom (Sheldon, 1988; Mithans & Grmek, 2020).

Since textbooks are frequently the main resource for teachers and students in the teaching and learning process, selecting an appropriate and effective textbook is critical. In fact, a proper evaluation of the textbook content and material is an important process to ensure that learning takes place accordingly (Gholami, Noordin & Galea, 2017). It is necessary for English teachers to evaluate the textbooks they are using because choosing the wrong textbooks will affect students' proficiency development and acquisition of the English Language (Mukundan & Kalajahi, 2013).

The selection of English textbooks for classroom use is an important administrative decision that often involves a considerable degree of professional, financial, or even political investment (Sheldon, 1988). Choosing the correct textbook is not an easy task and should be taken seriously as it affects many parties. The interest of pupils, especially, is at stake. There are many types of English textbook in the market, but to select the best one for the target audience is crucial. Sheldon (1988) and Mithans and Grmek (2020) have offered several reasons and criteria for textbook evaluation. Experts and scholars have collectively argued that a thorough evaluation would enable the managerial and teaching staff of a specific institution or organization to discriminate between all of the available textbooks on the market (Litz, 2001).

Amerian (2014) stated that designing and developing appropriate textbooks and learning materials is one of the most important steps of successful language teaching. Due to their

important role, textbooks should contain activities and input that fulfill the needs of both teachers and students. They should be attractive, motivational, interesting and lead students to acquire the knowledge and language skills intended. Thus, textbook developers should design textbooks according to the needs of teachers and students. They should know their target audience and produce textbooks that cater to their audience's needs. An ideal textbook should benefit learners and help teachers to realize the pedagogical goals of the curriculum (Mukundan & Kalajahi, 2013). For English language textbooks, the contents and activities should be capable of developing students' skills in listening, speaking, reading, and writing.

It is very important to conduct a thorough and systematic evaluation to ensure that a given textbook can effectively facilitate the attainment of instructional objectives and learning outcomes, and at the same time, be economically viable to teachers and students (Mukundan & Kalajahi, 2013). Another reason is to identify particular strengths and weaknesses in the textbooks already in use, so that optimum utilization can be made of their strong points, while their weaker areas can be strengthened through adaptation or by substituting them with material from other books (Moazam & Jodai, 2014).

According to Ansary and Babaii (2002), teachers should be given the responsibility of evaluating textbooks. Teachers are the people directly using the textbook, and they often do not know how to express their opinion to the authorities. Many may have contemplated whether they should even evaluate textbooks that have been decided by the Ministry since the decision is top-down. It seems unlikely that teachers' feedback on the decision made by the Ministry is welcome. Whether they like it or not, teachers have no choice but to put in their best effort to fully utilize the textbook so their students can benefit from it.

Textbook evaluation does not only help teachers and students in the classroom, but it also facilitates curriculum designers and material developers in considering key issues while designing language courses (Handayani, 2016). Material evaluation can help teachers and instructors to improve and upgrade their respective language courses. Wrong choices of textbooks are likely to affect both teaching and student learning negatively (Lawrence, 2011).

Criteria for Textbook Evaluation

Textbooks are important sources of knowledge, beliefs, values, and skills (Iqbal, 2013). They serve as crucial references for teachers to plan and prepare their lessons. Therefore, it is very important to use appropriate and good quality textbooks that can clearly help teachers to achieve curriculum objectives. The noble aims of education cannot be achieved if teachers and students are given poor quality textbooks to teach and learn with, respectively (Deuri, 2012).

A review of extant literature shows that there exist multiple frameworks and guidelines for evaluating textbooks. However, textbook evaluation criteria may vary because of the circumstances that prevail in different teaching and learning contexts (Nguyen, 2015). To date, there are no generally agreed upon criteria to be used in evaluating textbooks (Sheldon, 1988). The process depends on the purpose of the evaluation and the objectives of the curriculum.

However, even though the existing frameworks and criteria are not exactly the same, they share some common general aspects that can be adapted to the local Malaysian situation.

Deuri (2012) and Iqbal (2013) suggested several effective measures to design an ideal textbook that include size, durable binding, clear font structure, good printing, attractive titling, illustrations, suitable content, simple language, systematic paragraphing, and sufficient grammatical works. Littlejohn (2011), on the other hand, proposed a framework to evaluate textbook materials and divided his framework into two sections, i.e., publication and design. The publication aspect evaluates the physical properties of the materials, while design evaluates the idea behind the construction of materials.

Mukundan, Hajimohammadi and Nimehchisalem (2011) created a set of textbook evaluation criteria, classifying them into two categories, namely (1) general attributes, and (2) teaching and learning content. There are five sub-categories under general attributes, which are related to syllabus and curriculum, methodology, suitability with learners, physical and utilitarian attributes, and supplementary materials. Meanwhile, learning-teaching content was divided into nine sub-categories which are general, listening, speaking, reading, writing, vocabulary, grammar, pronunciation and exercises.

Daneshfar and Abdollahi (2018) used the Litz checklist of textbook evaluation to have teachers and students in their study evaluate a pre-university English textbook. The Litz checklist has been verified as a valid measure of textbook evaluation and is used worldwide. It has seven criteria for textbook evaluation, which include practical consideration, layout and design, activities, skills, language type, subject and content, and overall consensus. A group of researchers evaluated a Year 6 (KSSR) English textbook, employing a checklist of evaluation criteria with eight categories and 40 items (Momand, Sugunabalan, Ibrahim, & Sandaran, 2019). One of the categories discussed in their research was social and cultural contexts. Momand et al. (2019) found that the textbook was comprehensible and relatable in terms of social and culture contexts of the students where it contained positive views of ethnic origins, occupations, age groups, social groups and disability. They reached the conclusion that the content and material of a textbook should be selected based on the local context that fulfills the needs of learners.

Behnke (2018) summarized the findings of numerous textbook evaluation studies and concluded that aspects such as textbook design, layout, typography, images, and emotional design do exercise some influence on students' learning outcomes. Well-designed textbooks with built-in mechanisms like visual processing and flowcharts, analytical thinking tasks, embedded questions, hypothesis derivation and testing, and verbal reasoning can "make learning more fun, lasting, and meaningful and may actively engage learners' cognition in many ways" (p. 385). To be effective, textbooks must incorporate learner friendly layouts that facilitate learners' information processing. The layouts must have four important characteristics, i.e., clarity, coherence, consistency, and aesthetics, in order to be learner friendly. In terms of typography, disfluent fonts have been shown to obstruct comprehension so textbooks should avoid using them. Whenever visuals and images are incorporated, they should be accompanied with a purposeful design that includes "paragraphs of text related to the

illustrations featured" (Behnke, 2018, p. 387) as learners may face difficulties decoding what the visuals may mean. Behnke (2018) further wrote that "the emotional design hypothesis assumes that visually appealing learning materials support cognitive processing" (p. 387) and that "well-designed learning materials may foster positive emotions and comprehension….and reduce the perceived difficulty of learning tasks" (p. 388).

In general, there are a variety of frameworks and criteria for evaluating textbooks that have been proposed in previous studies. The proposed evaluation criteria can be added, omitted, and adapted to meet the contextual needs of teachers and students. The content of an evaluation checklist should be decided based on the objective of the evaluation, and most importantly, the objectives of the curriculum. Educators should choose and use the correct evaluation criteria depending on their main focus and objectives of evaluating a particular textbook. In the present study, the CEFR-aligned Super Minds textbook was being evaluated for its suitability with the local context of young Malaysian learners. For this purpose, the researcher considered all the evaluation criteria discussed in the review to create the rating scale used in the present study.

The Malaysian Public's Views on the Super Minds Textbook

Regarding the adoption of Super Minds as the primary textbook for L1 English language learners, Malaysians have differing and opposing views. On the one hand, we have Malaysians supporting the use of Super Minds, while on the other, there are those that are critical of its adoption.

A professor at UCSI University, Tajuddin Rasdi supported the decision made by the government to implement a new curriculum for English language that aligns with the Common European Framework Refference (CEFR). He agreed with the narrative that students will be exposed to a higher level of English if they learn from a foreign-edited textbook. He also added that students' knowledge of culture, religion and lifestyle will broaden by reading this book that is written by Britain's professional writers. He further claimed that the quality of local books is too low compared to that of the imported textbook, an opinion supported by Mdm Noor Azimah Rahim who is the head of the Parent Action Group for Education (PAGE). The secretary-general of Malaysia's National Union of the Teaching Profession (NUTP), Mr. Harry Tan, stated that English textbooks do not need to have any specific content because teaching language is about reading, listening, writing, and speaking. He believed that the imported CEFR-aligned textbook that talks about other cultures can encourage Malaysian pupils to learn English with a broader perspective. Therefore, teachers should upgrade their skills in teaching the new curriculum with higher levels of English usage.

On the other hand, a politician took the opposing stand, stating that the content of the imported textbook has zero local content. He cited some examples of the contents in Pulse 2 (i.e., the book used for Form 1 students) which are not suitable for local use, illustrating how the book was actually intended for Spanish learners and is, therefore, not suitable for Malaysian students. On top of that, he suggested that the government should give the opportunity to local textbook writers to produce a textbook with local content that meets the standard of CEFR.

The Malaysian English Teaching Association (META) president, Dr. S. Ganakumaran, also agreed that the imported textbook lacks local context and is hard for students to relate to, especially students in rural and sub-urban areas with low levels of English proficiency and are very challenging to teach. This situation would contribute to a further learning and performance gap between urban and rural students.

A senior lecturer at Universiti Malaya's Faculty of Education, Dr Zuwati Hasim, also has the same viewpoint. Our students do not need to learn about foreign cultures in class, she said. Instead, they need to learn about themselves and their country first. What is important is our textbooks should impart content that reflects the multi- cultural diversity of our nation. General knowledge about foreign cultures can be learned independently as students can access the information online. Lastly, Prof Dr Wan Norliza, a local authority in language learning asserted that to master a certain language, practice is key. Having all the best textbooks in the world does not ensure that our students will master the language if they do not actively use it in speaking and writing.

In Farah Farzana and Hamidah (2019), the challenges faced by teachers in using the Super Minds textbook were addressed. The research involved 63 English teachers from 20 primary schools and focused on two aspects of the book, namely its physical make-up and practical concerns. The results showed that the respondents believed that Super Minds' illustrations were not appropriate representations of local and national standards. The units in the textbook were also perceived as inappropriate for local students and unfamiliar to them, while the themes in the textbook were completely unrelated to Malaysian students' culture and environment. Based on the results, the researchers remarked that our policymakers and English curriculum designers should make some adjustments and modifications to overcome the shortcomings and weaknesses of the Super Minds textbook.

The mixed responses and opinions from the country's education scholars, researchers and activists on Super Minds were primarily based on their observations rather than on a direct experience of using the textbook. Therefore, these opposing views need to be reconciled with empirical evidence from a systematic textbook evaluation research to verify the claims on the weak and strong points of the Super Minds textbook. Textbook evaluation is very important to ensure that students can benefit from the learning material used in class. There is no single textbook that can fulfill all of students' learning needs. Since the Malaysian government has decided to use the imported textbook as the primary English language textbook, an evaluation is needed to determine the quality of Super Minds and ascertain how and if the book benefited local students. Furthermore, many education activists have declared the textbook content to be unfit for local use. Therefore, a textbook evaluation study is warranted to see whether Super Minds satisfies the needs of Malaysian students and the goals of the national language curriculum in terms of its content quality and physical appeal. The lack of such evaluation research was the premise of the present study.

Research Objectives and Questions

This study examined Level One (i.e., Year 1 and Year 2) English language teachers' perceptions of the Super Minds textbook quality in three aspects, i.e., content quality, physical quality, and overall quality. The broader aim of the study was to determine whether Malaysian teachers felt that they and their pupils could fully benefit from this imported textbook. The next objective was to extract the underlying structure of the quality construct measured in the rating scale. Based on the objectives, the research questions were:

1.   What are Level 1 English teachers' perceptions of the Super Minds textbook in terms of its content, physical and overall quality?
2.   Do physical, content, and overall qualities constitute a valid underlying measure of textbook quality?

METHODS

Construct Definition

Quality in this study was defined as Level One English teachers' perceptions and evaluation of the standard of excellence or degree of goodness exhibited by the Super Minds textbook in terms of its content's usefulness, physical appearance and appeal, and overall utility (adapted from Smith, 1993). To measure the key constructs of quality, the researchers developed and content validated a rating scale to specifically assess various aspects of the textbook's content, physical and overall quality. The procedures are described in this section.

Research Design

This study was an *ex-post facto* (after the fact) research utilizing the cross- sectional survey method. The design was *ex-post facto* because it is a post-use evaluation of the Super Minds textbook conducted after teachers have used the book extensively and formulated clear opinions about its quality and usefulness. According to Ellis (1997), post-use evaluation by users is useful for identifying the strengths and weaknesses of a particular textbook after a period of usage. In this study, a quantitative data collection method utilizing a Likert questionnaire was used with descriptive statistics to summarize the variables.

Population and Sample

The study's population encompasses all Level One English teachers in Malaysia who are regularly using the Super Minds textbook in their English classes. They are teachers instructing either Year 1 or Year 2 or both grade levels throughout Malaysia. All these teachers have been using the imported textbook for at least one year prior to the study and are very familiar with the content and physical appearance of the textbook. Therefore, they would know the textbook well enough to be able to evaluate it objectively.

The respondents comprised a convenience sample of 180 Level One English teachers from various states in Malaysia who have had ample experience of using the Super Minds textbook. Most of them were Malay and female with an average teaching experience of 13.6 years. More specific information is given about the sample in the Results section.

Instrument

The data collecting instrument was a self-developed rating scale on textbook quality which was later validated by a panel of two assessment experts. The scale comprised 30 items laid out in four sections. The first part, Section A, contained six questions on the teachers' demographics, which included gender, ethnicity, school type, teaching experience, school locality (i.e., rural or urban) and the grade level taught (i.e., Year 1, Year 2 or both).

Section B contained 13 questions that required the teachers to rate the Super Minds textbook in terms of its content quality using the following indicators: "use of vocabulary," "relevance to Malaysian pupils", "listening activities," and "speaking activities." Section C consisted of eight items on the book's physical appearance and included aspects like "visual appearance", "attractiveness," and "paper quality." The last section, Section D, contained the teachers' overall evaluation of Super Minds, asking their opinion on whether the book was able to "motivate pupils to learn English," "raise pupils' interest in the English language", and whether its content was "not culturally biased." The textbook's overall quality was rated on a six-point scale ranging from Substandard (1) and Poor (2) to Average (3) and Good (4) and to Very Good (5) or Excellent (6). Table 3 summarizes the contents of the self-developed rating scale.

Table 3
Rating Scale Content

Section	Content	No of Items
A	Respondents' Demographics	5
B	Items measuring Super Minds' content quality	13
C	Items measuring Super Minds' physical quality	7
D	Items measuring Super Minds' overall quality	5
	Total Items	30

Instrument Validity and Reliability

All items in the rating scale were self-developed with some reference made to Ellis (1997), Litz (2001), Mukundan (2011) and Momand et al. (2019). The scale's items were specifically created to suit the local Malaysian context of English language teaching, keeping in mind the pupils who might be speaking English as their second, third or even fourth language. The items were content validated by a panel of two assessment experts who assessed their alignment with

the quality constructs based on the respective operational definitions. All items were approved by the experts with some minor adjustments in language.

The scale was subsequently pilot tested with 20 Level One English teachers teaching in the district of Lubok Antu in Sarawak, where the researcher himself was employed. The questionnaire in Google Form was shared in a WhatsApp group managed by an officer from the District Education Office of Lubok Antu. All the members in the Whatsapp group were English teachers familiar with the Super Minds textbook. The objective of the pilot study was to see whether the items came across as clear to the respondents and whether they were sufficient in reliability.

A reliability analysis using the Cronbach's alpha was performed to assess the reliability indexes of the quality constructs based on the pilot data. The alpha coefficient for content quality was $\alpha = .98$, and that of physical quality was $\alpha = .97$, while the reliability index for the book's overall quality was $\alpha = .92$. All three constructs exhibited high reliability indexes. Therefore, all items measuring them were retained in the final questionnaire.

Data Collection

The rating scale was Google formed and administered online to ease the respondents' completion of the survey. The survey link was posted in WhatsApp and Telegram groups to all English teachers in Malaysia. The snowballing technique was also employed to reach English teachers in remote places. In this case, some of the respondents had forwarded the survey to their friends, who then forwarded it to their colleagues and networks of English teachers. In addition, to increase the sample size, the researcher had requested assistance from the officers at all State Education Departments (i.e., Jabatan Pendidikan Negeri or JPN) and District Education Offices (i.e., Pejabat Pendidikan Daerah or PPD) in Malaysia to share the survey link with the English teachers under their supervision. As many responses as possible were collected to form the study's sample. Due to the non-randomness of the sampling procedure, the resulting sample was a sample of convenience comprising 180 Level One teachers of English who voluntarily participated in the survey.

Data Analysis and Treatment

The online rating scale generated numerical data that accumulated into a Google Excel sheet. The data were then imported into SPSS and recoded from string data to numerical data type for analysis (i.e., Substandard = 1; Poor = 2; Average = 3; Good = 4; Very Good = 5; Excellent = 6). Data cleaning was performed to ensure the data were free from errors and non-usable cases, such as in certain respondents' giving the same responses across all items. "Timestamp" in the Excel data was changed to "Respondent ID" in SPSS. Prior to running the descriptive analysis to address the first research question, Principal Axis Factoring (PAF) with Promax rotation was applied to extract the underlying factor structure of the quality construct. Descriptive statistics (i.e., frequency counts, percentages, means and standard deviations) were used to summarize Level One teachers' perceptions and evaluation of the Super Minds textbook in terms of its content quality, physical appearance, and overall quality. To summarize teachers' perceptions

of the textbook's quality, the responses were collapsed into just four categories as follows: 1 = Poor and Substandard; 2 = Average; 3 = Good; 4 = Very Good and Excellent.

RESULTS

Characteristics of the Sample

The sample consisted of 180 Level One English teachers from various states in Malaysia who had firsthand experience of using the Super Minds textbook. A large majority were female (87.2%) Malay (85%) teachers. Male teachers made up just about 13% of the sample. The teachers had a teaching experience ranging from 1 year to 34 years with an average teaching experience of 13.6 years. Almost half (49.4%) were teaching both Grades 1 and 2. Urban teachers (23.3%) formed a small segment of the sample; the rest were rural (40.6%) and suburban (30.6%) English teachers. More information about the sample is given in Table 4.

Table 4
Sample Demography (N = 180)

Demography	Frequency	Percentage
Gender		
▪ Male	23	12.8
▪ Female	157	87.2
Race		
▪ Malay/Bumi	153	85.0
▪ Non-Malay	27	15.0
School Locality		
▪ Urban	42	23.3
▪ Suburban	65	36.1
▪ Rural	73	40.6
Grade Level Taught		
▪ Year 1 only	36	20.0
▪ Year 2 only	55	30.6
▪ Year 1 & Year 2	89	49.4

Underlying Factor Structure of Textbook Quality

To determine the underlying factor structure of textbook quality based on the respondents' evaluation of Super Minds, the study ran Principal Axis Factoring (PAF) with Promax rotation on the data. The PAF procedures produced reasonable results in terms of sampling adequacy and inter-item correlations (Table 5). The Kaiser-Meyer- Olkin (KMO) measure of sampling adequacy was 0.94, indicating that the sample size of the study (N = 180) was appropriate for data factorability. The Bartlett's test of sphericity was statistically significant ($\chi2=6850.67, 300,$ p = .001), suggesting acceptable overall correlations within the correlation matrix. However, one item (i.e., PQ1R which measured the "visual appearance of the Super Minds textbook") cross- loaded into two factors. Therefore, the PAF was revised to produce a better factor structure with no cross-loading.

Table 5 shows the communalities of the items, which were acceptable at above 0.5, except for item OQ3R. In summary, the results confirmed the factorability of the data, hence justifying the use of PAF in the analysis. The revised PAF produced a three-factor structure underlying

Level One English teachers' evaluation of Super Minds' quality as a textbook. The extracted factors are shown in Table 6. They were then labelled according to the three quality constructs proposed in the study, namely Content Quality (13 items), Physical Quality (7 items), and Overall Quality (5 items). Content Quality explained the biggest variance (64.33%), followed by Physical Quality (8.63%) and Overall Quality (5.22%).

Table 5
Inter-item Correlation Matrix, Descriptive Statistics and Communalities

	CQ1	CQ2	CQ3	CQ4	CQ5	CQ6	CQ7	CQ8	CQ9	CQ10	CQ11	CQ12	CQ13	PQ2	PQ3	PQ4	PQ5	PQ6	PQ7	PQ8	OQ1	OQ2	OQ3	OQ4	OQ5
CQ1R	1.00																								
CQ2R	0.83	1.00																							
CQ3R	0.87	0.88	1.00																						
CQ4R	0.78	0.77	0.95	1.00																					
CQ5R	0.75	0.74	0.93	0.95	1.00																				
CQ6R	0.76	0.76	0.80	0.94	0.93	1.00																			
CQ7R	0.77	0.74	0.78	0.88	0.86	0.91	1.00																		
CQ8R	0.70	0.78	0.79	0.74	0.73	0.76	0.77	1.00																	
CQ9R	0.75	0.80	0.84	0.78	0.75	0.78	0.79	0.92	1.00																
CQ10R	0.73	0.78	0.82	0.73	0.69	0.73	0.74	0.84	0.88	1.00															
CQ11R	0.76	0.78	0.81	0.79	0.74	0.79	0.77	0.76	0.82	0.81	1.00														
CQ12R	0.64	0.69	0.70	0.69	0.65	0.68	0.69	0.72	0.76	0.77	0.90	1.00													
CQ13R	0.59	0.58	0.62	0.61	0.58	0.61	0.63	0.65	0.70	0.68	0.81	0.87	1.00												
PQ2R	0.71	0.67	0.75	0.69	0.67	0.67	0.62	0.62	0.63	0.61	0.73	0.63	0.56	1.00											
PQ3R	0.76	0.73	0.80	0.80	0.78	0.78	0.74	0.68	0.70	0.67	0.66	0.59	0.50	0.86	1.00										
PQ4R	0.73	0.71	0.77	0.75	0.72	0.72	0.69	0.65	0.67	0.64	0.71	0.64	0.55	0.90	0.94	1.00									
PQ5R	0.71	0.69	0.76	0.74	0.73	0.72	0.68	0.64	0.65	0.64	0.69	0.61	0.51	0.90	0.90	0.95	1.00								
PQ6R	0.74	0.69	0.76	0.76	0.74	0.73	0.69	0.64	0.65	0.62	0.69	0.60	0.51	0.91	0.90	0.94	0.97	1.00							
PQ7R	0.53	0.52	0.56	0.50	0.47	0.47	0.47	0.47	0.48	0.46	0.49	0.43	0.38	0.64	0.78	0.74	0.71	0.70	1.00						
PQ8R	0.54	0.55	0.59	0.49	0.47	0.48	0.49	0.53	0.53	0.52	0.55	0.53	0.48	0.62	0.74	0.68	0.66	0.64	0.86	1.00					
OQ1R	0.50	0.46	0.51	0.52	0.48	0.52	0.51	0.55	0.59	0.57	0.63	0.59	0.59	0.51	0.44	0.48	0.42	0.43	0.37	0.41	1.00				
OQ2R	0.54	0.49	0.53	0.59	0.52	0.57	0.55	0.59	0.60	0.58	0.65	0.62	0.61	0.55	0.47	0.51	0.46	0.48	0.39	0.41	0.91	1.00			
OQ3R	0.31	0.26	0.29	0.37	0.35	0.36	0.35	0.29	0.34	0.29	0.36	0.40	0.42	0.29	0.26	0.26	0.22	0.22	0.16	0.22	0.55	0.57	1.00		
OQ4R	0.43	0.47	0.47	0.46	0.44	0.47	0.48	0.54	0.59	0.57	0.58	0.59	0.57	0.46	0.41	0.46	0.40	0.42	0.33	0.38	0.75	0.71	0.50	1.00	
OQ5R	0.54	0.49	0.52	0.56	0.51	0.55	0.55	0.56	0.59	0.54	0.62	0.58	0.55	0.56	0.49	0.54	0.50	0.52	0.39	0.41	0.83	0.84	0.59	0.80	1.00
M	3.99	3.88	3.86	3.88	3.91	3.87	3.81	3.67	3.72	3.63	3.64	3.43	3.06	4.21	4.14	4.23	4.26	4.32	3.82	3.66	4.18	4.21	3.89	4.05	4.42
SD	1.29	1.31	1.31	1.31	1.30	1.29	1.31	1.30	1.26	1.22	1.32	1.32	1.32	1.46	1.42	1.41	1.42	1.46	1.45	1.38	1.33	1.32	1.41	1.38	1.27

Table 6

Factor Solution with the Extracted Items, Factor Loadings, Eigenvalues, Variance Explained and Reliability Indexes

Factor and Items	Factor Loading	Eigenvalue	Variance Explained	Cronbach's Alpha
Factor 1: Content Quality		16.08	64.33%	.98
1. Speaking activities	.928			
2. Authentic pronunciation practices	.926			
3. Reading activities	.906			
4. Listening activities	.884			
5. Listening stimuli	.882			
6. Writing practices	.856			
7. Reading passage	.855			
8. Presentation of grammar	.843			
9. Development of language skills	.810			
10. Beneficial to pupils	.759			
11. Use of vocabulary	.718			
12. Realistic	.664			
13. Relevant to Malaysian pupils	.573			
Factor 2: Physical Quality		2.16	8.63%	.97
1. Binding	.954			
2. Paper quality	.922			
3. Printing quality	.846			
4. Sharpness of graphics	.841			
5. Use of colour	.814			
6. Durability	.762			
7. Attractiveness	.628			
Factor 3: Overall Quality		1.31	5.22%	.92
1. Motivates pupils to learn English	.924			
2. Raises interest in English language	.874			
3. Provides new knowledge to pupils	.870			
4. Helps the teacher to plan lessons	.781			
5. Not culturally biased	.634			

All three quality constructs exhibited high reliabilities, i.e., α = .98 (Content Quality), α = .97 (Physical Quality), and α = .92 (Overall Quality). Due to the acceptable reliability estimates, the 25 extracted items in the rating scale were retained for the descriptive analysis. One Physical Quality item (PQ1R) was removed from the scale due to crossloading.

Content Quality of Super Minds

Content quality referred to Level One English teachers' evaluation of how good or excellent the Super Minds textbook was in its language use, grammar instruction and exercises, and in its presentation of the reading text and language skills. The items were meant to draw out teachers' opinions on whether the content of Super Minds was suitable and useful for Malaysian pupils. This construct was measured using thirteen (13) items that were successfully extracted from the PAF analysis. The teachers' responses to the thirteen (13) items are tabulated in Table 7.

Table 7

Teachers' Evaluation of Super Minds' Content Quality

Item	Rating				M	SD
	Poor (1)	Average (2)	Good (3)	Very Good & Excellent (4)		
1. Use of vocabulary	18 (10.0)	34 (18.9)	109 (60.6)	19 (10.6)	2.72	0.79
2. Presentation of grammar	23 (12.8)	44 (24.4)	96 (53.3)	17 (9.4)	2.59	0.83
3. Development of language skills	21 (11.7)	45 (25.0)	98 (54.4)	16 (8.9)	2.61	0.81
4. Listening stimuli	21 (11.7)	42 (23.3)	102 (56.7)	15 (8.3)	2.62	0.80
5. Listening activities	18 (10.0)	47 (26.1)	97 (53.9)	18 (10.0)	2.64	0.80
6. Speaking activities	19 (10.6)	47 (26.1)	98 (54.4)	16 (8.9)	2.62	0.80
7. Authentic pronunciation practices	26 (14.4)	42 (23.3)	94 (52.2)	18 (10.0)	2.58	0.86
8. Reading passages	30 (16.7)	55 (30.6)	79 (43.9)	16 (8.9)	2.45	0.87
9. Reading activities	26 (14.4)	57 (31.7)	81 (45.0)	16 (8.9)	2.48	0.85
10. Writing practices	28 (15.6)	61 (33.9)	79 (43.9)	12 (6.7)	2.42	0.83
11. Beneficial to pupils	33 (18.3)	54 (30.0)	76 (42.2)	17 (9.4)	2.43	0.90
12. Realistic	46 (25.6)	54 (30.0)	40 (22.2)	40 (22.2)	2.27	0.93
13. Relevance to Malaysian pupils	70 (38.9)	50 (27.8)	52 (28.9)	8 (4.4)	1.99	0.93
				Construct Mean	2.49	

Note. The responses were collapsed into just four categories (1 = Poor and Substandard; 2 = Average; 3 = Good; 4 = Very Good & Excellent).

Super Minds was mostly seen as high quality by most teachers in 7 out of the 13 aspects asked in the survey. Most teachers rated it as good or excellent in terms of its use of vocabulary (71.2%), listening stimuli (65.0%), listening activities (63.9%), development of language skills (63.3%), speaking activities (63.3%), presentation of grammar (62.7%), and authentic pronunciation practices (62.2%). Fewer teachers thought that the reading activities (53.9%) and reading passages (52.8%) were good or excellent, while just about half agreed its content (51.6%) and writing practices (50.6%) were beneficial to pupils. Less than half saw the book's content as realistic (44.4%). In contrast, more than 55.0% rated the book as poor or average in terms of its content being realistic (55.6%) and relevant to Malaysian pupils (66.7%). In summary, seven aspects of the textbook were rated as good and excellent by a majority of the respondents, while the remaining aspects were more or less considered average, and at times, poor. Four items (i.e., items 8 to 11) saw the respondents divided in their evaluation, where the

percentage of teachers who rated the content quality as poor and average was almost balanced with the percentage that rated the items as good and excellent. The average mean score for the content quality construct was M = 2.49, which indicated that the book was rated as just average by the teachers in terms of its content quality. Based on the percentage distributions, the strongest points of the textbook in terms of content were its use of vocabulary, grammar presentation, listening and speaking activities, and development of students' language skills.

Physical Quality of Super Minds

Physical quality assessed the respondents' evaluation of whether Super Minds had an appealing physical appearance that would capture pupils' interest to use it. The teachers' responses to the physical quality items are presented in Table 8.

Table 8

Teachers' Evaluation of Super Minds' Physical Quality (N =180)

Item	Rating				M	SD
	Poor (1)	Average (2)	Good (3)	Very Good & Excellent (4)		
1. Attractiveness	20 (11.1)	35 (19.4)	84 (46.7)	41 (22.8)	2.81	0.91
2. Paper quality	24 (13.3)	31 (17.2)	91 (50.6)	34 (18.9)	2.75	0.91
3. Print quality	18 (10.0)	35 (19.4)	89 (49.4)	38 (21.1)	2.82	0.88
4. Graphics	20 (11.1)	27 (15.0)	95 (52.8)	38 (21.1)	2.84	0.89
5. Use of colours	19 (10.6)	26 (14.4)	91 (50.6)	44 (24.4)	2.89	0.90
6. Binding	37 (20.6)	40 (22.2)	79 (43.9)	24 (13.3)	2.50	0.97
7. Durability	38 (21.1)	47 (26.1)	77 (42.8)	18 (10.0)	2.42	0.93
				Construct Mean	2.73	

Note. The responses were collapsed into just four categories (1 = Poor and Substandard; 2 = Average; 3 = Good; 4 = Very Good and Excellent).

Most teachers rated the book's physical appearance highly and positively on five of the seven indicators of quality, namely its use of colours (75.0%), graphics (73.9%), print quality (70.5%), attractiveness (69.5%), and paper quality (69.5%). Fewer teachers rated the binding (57.2%) and durability (52.8%) as good and excellent. In summary, the book was well rated by the Level One English teachers in almost all aspects of physical quality, except for binding and durability, where fewer teachers rated these two aspects highly. The average mean score for the physical quality of Super Minds was M = 2.73, which meant that the book was just as average and almost good by the teachers. Based on the percentage distributions, the most striking aspects of Super Minds' physical quality were its colours, graphics, and print quality.

Overall Quality of Super Minds

Table 9 shows the respondents' evaluation of the overall quality of Super Minds, measured using five items. The responses to these items were collapsed to represent only three levels of rating, i.e., poor, average and good and excellent, to get a more accurate picture of the teachers' evaluation.

Table 9

Teachers' Evaluation of Super Minds's Overall Quality (N =180)

Item	Rating			M	SD
	Poor	**Average**	**Good & Excellent**		
1. Provides new knowledge to pupils.	19 (10.6)	15 (8.3)	146 (81.1)	2.71	0.65
2. Raises students' interest in the English language	29 (16.1)	12 (6.70)	139 (77.2)	2.61	0.75
3. Motivates pupils to learn the English Language	32 (17.8)	10 (5.6)	138 (76.7)	2.59	0.78
4. Helps teachers to plan lessons	37 (20.6)	13 (7.2)	130 (72.2)	2.52	0.82
5. Cultural bias in content	42 (23.3)	20 (11.1)	118 (65.6)	2.42	0.85
			Construct Mean	2.57	

Note: The responses were collapsed into just three categories (1 = Poor and Substandard; 2 = Average; 3 = Good to Excellent).

A large majority of the respondents agreed the textbook was good in giving pupils new knowledge (81.1%) and that it increased pupils' interest (77.2%) and motivation (76.7%) to learn English. An important piece of feedback about the book was that it helped teachers with lesson planning (72.2%). Essentially, majority agreement was recorded for all items. However, not surprisingly, most teachers felt that the book was culturally biased (65.6%). The average mean score for the overall quality construct was M = 2.57, meaning that the teachers moderately agreed with all the items suggesting the overall quality of Super Minds. Based on the percentage distributions, the strongest factors in this quality dimension would be the book's ability to give new knowledge to Malaysian pupils and raise their interest in learning English. Figure 1 presents a visual illustration of Super Minds' quality with respect to its content, physical and overall worth as rated by Level One English teachers.

Figure 1
Visual Illustration of Super Minds' Quality
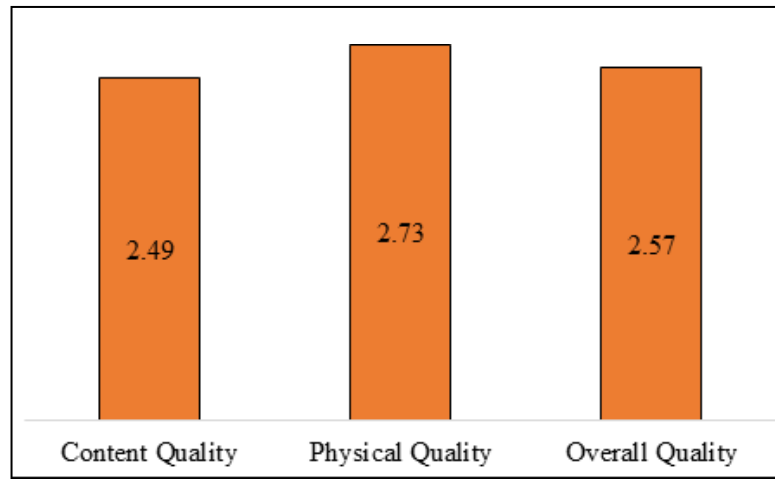
DISCUSSION OF KEY FINDINGS

Super Minds' Content Quality

Teachers rated Super Minds' content quality as average and good on most items. None of the content quality aspects was rated as excellent. The book's strong points were its vocabulary, listening and speaking activities and development of students' language skills. This positive evaluation could be understood as every topic in the book starts with the vocabulary that pupils need to know, giving them a jumpstart on the learning. Figure 2 shows a Map of the Book that explains what is to be learnt by students in every topic. This serves as an advance organizer that learners and teachers find very helpful.

Figure 2
Map of the Super Minds Textbook

In addition, teachers are provided with an audio CD that models the correct pronunciation of every word in the book. Students are asked to listen to the audio, say the words, and show the

words they heard from the played audio. For ESL learners and teachers, this type of learning support is greatly beneficial.

Super Minds' activities for learning vocabulary help to enhance and develop students' listening and speaking skills at the same time. Yang (2014) also suggested the same method to improve pupils' spoken English. Listening to English audio materials (i.e., via podcast, radio, television, and news broadcast) will certainly boost pupils' pronunciation and speaking skills. The key is to actively use the target language. Sample activities for learning vocabulary in the Super Minds textbook are shown in Figure 3.

Figure 3
Sample Vocabulary Learning Activities in Super Minds

A major weak point of the book is its relevance to Malaysian pupils. This aspect was rated as below average by the teachers. The evaluation is consistent with the concerns raised by educators and education activists on social and print media that the book may not be relatable to Malaysian learners (Nurul Azwa, 2017b, Rahmatullah et al., 2022). Many fear that Super Minds is not really suitable for Malaysian students as it teaches subject matter that is foreign to the Malaysian culture, like car boot sales and Red Poppy Day (The Star Online, 2018; Zairil, 2017). Its contents are based on the British-European culture and lifestyle which are alien to Malaysian students. For example, in the topic of Lunchtime in Chapter Four of the textbook, students learn different types of food taken during lunch which are foreign to local students as Malaysians do not eat the same types of food as Europeans. For students in remote areas, they may find it strange to eat pizza and steak for lunch, and this will require English teachers to provide an explanation to pupils to help them understand.

Furthermore, the characters used in the textbook (i.e., Flash, Whisper, Thunder, and Mistry) have a foreign twist to them and may not be relatable to local students. This aspect reflects the overarching concern that textbook content should be appropriate to the local context in order to properly address pupils' learning needs (Mohamad Syafiq, Norasyikin, Nurul Ain,

& Mohd Haniff, 2021) and that textbooks should use relatable social-cultural elements to develop pupils' ability to use language more effectively in diverse contexts (Mukundan, 2013). While all these foreign elements could be good knowledge for Malaysian students, their role in helping young ESL pupils to master the language is, however, questionable.

Super Minds' Physical Quality

Teachers rated the textbook as almost good in terms of physical quality. Aspects that were rated highly were the book's use of colors and sharp graphics. There is no doubt that the textbook is very colorful from cover to cover. Some of the background pages are also wonderfully colorful, making them look interesting and pleasing to the eye. There is not a single page with black and white pictures. All of the pictures are presented clearly in every page and easy for pupils to understand the message in the pictures, especially the cartoons with facial expressions. The colours used are bright and beautiful. This of course appeals to young learners, thereby increasing their interest to learn. As stated by Deuri (2012), clear and attractive illustrations are one of the criteria for a quality textbook.

However, the binding and the durability of the textbook were rated just about average by the teachers. This suggests that the material used for the Super Minds textbook is not definitively good or it is not as good as expected. The soft cover binding used on the textbook does not allow students to open it widely and lay it down flat on the table for studying due to the glue applied on the spine of the book's block. The binding also tears off easily, especially when the users love to press the spine of the book to open it and keep it flat on the table. This is likely the reason why binding and durability were given the lowest ratings by the teachers as the pages are easily torn. As explained by Deuri (2012), this aspect of a textbook is important because low-quality binding and low durability can result in interruptions during the teaching and learning process when pupils use textbooks that have missing or torn pages.

Super Minds' Overall Quality

The teachers rated the book's overall quality as moderate, agreeing that Super Minds was moderately good or moderately effective as a textbook for Malaysian ESL pupils. One feature was highly rated, i.e., its effectiveness in giving Malaysian pupils new knowledge about things outside of their immediate world and local context. A very clear example would be the school culture portrayed in the textbook, which is different from that existing in public schools in Malaysia, where the book's main characters go to school in different outfits every day. This is clearly different from Malaysian students' having to wear the same uniform to school. In Topic Four (Lunchtime), pupils learn about the different types of food taken during lunch in the UK. These are some of the examples of new knowledge that can be found in the textbook. Apart from this, Super Minds was also rated favorably in terms of its coverage of vocabulary and factual information that do provide pupils with new knowledge.

Most teachers agreed that the use of Super Minds can raise students' interest in the English Language. This may be due to the interesting activities embedded in the textbook which include singing, chanting and quizzing, which are needed to give pupils the experience of learning enjoyment, entertainment and satisfaction in class.

The activities suggested in the textbook require students to move around instead of just sitting and listening passively to teacher talk. This gives them the opportunity to enjoy the learning, and the physical and sensory stimulation they need to sustain an interest in English. Apparently, most of the teachers also found Super Minds helpful with lesson planning. The book contains suggested activities on every page. The activities are numbered and come with the materials. For example, in Topic Three (Pet Show), there are two activities on the first page, namely "Listen and Look" and "Listen and Chant" (Figure 4). Both activities are provided with audio clips to help teachers deliver the content. There is also an accompanying guidebook for teachers that detail out the steps they need to follow to teach the content on every page. These features of Super Minds really help teachers to plan effective English lessons.

Figure 4
Pet Show (Students' Book)

Underlying Structure of Textbook Quality

The PAF results supported the use of the three quality indicators (i.e., content quality, physical quality, and overall quality) as valid and reliable measures for evaluating the worth and value of Super Minds as a textbook. In line with many previous studies (e.g., Behnke, 2018; Daneshfar & Abdollahi, 2018; Deuri, 2012; Iqbal, 2013; Momand et al., 2019; Mukundan et

al., 2011), content quality and physical appeal are critical features of a good textbook that impact both teachers' classroom use of the book and what students can derive from it. In future research, there should be an attempt to examine how much each of these indicators contributes to teachers' effective use of textbook material and the resulting student outcomes in English language learning.

LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

The findings of this study must be read with caution due to its use of convenience sampling. The fact that the sample was not a random selection of teachers limits the generalizability of the results to the larger population of Level One teachers in Malaysia. In addition, due to the disproportionate numbers of rural and urban teachers involved in the study, the researcher could not run an analysis to compare their perceptions of Super Minds. It is likely that teachers in remote areas have different opinions and evaluations of the textbook compared to teachers teaching in cities and towns. Different levels of student ability in the rural areas could also influence teachers' perceptions of the textbook's utility.

CONCLUSION

The study was conducted at a rather small scale, but its contributions are noteworthy. First, it has produced a validated rating scale with reliable indicators for evaluating textbooks. The scale can be further refined by future researchers to suit their research context and objectives by adding relevant quality dimensions. It can even be used by teachers in an action research to assess the quality of various textbooks. The Ministry of Education, as well as other stakeholders such as parents and the parent-teacher association (PTA), can rely on the scale to decide whether a selected textbook is appropriate for classroom use and student learning.

Second, the rating scale has successfully introduced and confirmed a set of reliable criteria for evaluating textbook quality. Criteria such as practice activities, sharpness of graphics, content relevance to the target audience, use of vocabulary, use of diverse colours and contrast, and cultural appropriateness are important considerations for writers in writing a textbook for language learning, specifically, and for other school subjects, generally. Publishers and textbook writers must know the criteria that make good textbooks, which need to include content usefulness and physical appearance. Further, the items in this study can be part of a useful checklist for writers and publishers to evaluate a proposed textbook before deciding to publish it classroom use.

Given the usefulness of the findings, there is a need to explore students' views on whether they enjoy the textbook and find it beneficial for their learning of the English language. It would be interesting to know how students feel about having to learn about foreign cultural celebrations like the Red Poppy Day and Halloween. The data can then be used to compare how similarly or differently students and teachers evaluate Super Minds, and subsequently determine the criteria that both teachers and students can agree upon as features that make a good textbook. This exploration of learners' views should also include students of Chinese and Tamil vernacular schools in both rural and urban areas. Their perspectives should help the Ministry to make informed decisions when selecting textbooks for Malaysian pupils.

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