

Analyzing the Efficacy of the Textbook 'Pathfinder': A Students' Perspective

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Abstract:

A textbook is the primary source and the most significant material in the teaching and learning process for attaining the course outcomes. According to Tomlinson (2003), "The extent of English teaching worldwide could probably not be sustained without the support of the many different kinds of textbooks and their ancillaries that are available to support English teachers." Ayu, M. and Indrawati, R (2018) opine that the use of an English textbook not only becomes a guide to the teachers while delivering the materials, but also influences the attitudes and performances of the learners towards the materials. The efficacy of the English textbook/course book holds a significant role in building linguistic proficiency, predominantly in academic as well as professional settings. This study primarily aims at evaluating the effectiveness of the textbook 'Pathfinder', prescribed by Jawaharlal Nehru Technological University (JNTU), Kakinada, for engineering undergraduates under the R23 regulations. An investigation was done among the first-year engineering students from various engineering colleges affiliated to JNT University, Kakinada, to analyze their opinions regarding the textbook prescribed. A mixed-methods approach has been adopted for collecting and analyzing the data collected from 130 students of various engineering colleges.

Keywords: Engineering English, textbook/course book, Analysis

Introduction:

Jack. C. Richards (2001) said, "Textbooks are a key component in most language programs." He added that, on the one hand, textbooks serve as the source of the language that learners acquire in the classroom. On the other hand, they serve to supplement the teacher's instruction. Apriyani, L. A., & Robiasih, R. H. (2019),

“For the teacher, textbook provides learning objectives for each lesson which help the teacher plan teaching material efficiently. While for student, textbook can help them as a source in learning inside and outside the classroom.” According to Li & Wang (2024), a significant correlation exists between students' use of textbooks and their interests and attitudes.

In the context of Language teaching, “The textbook is an almost universal element of ELT Teaching” (Hutchinson, T. and Torres, E., 1994). The language teaching that takes place all over the world today could not occur without the wide use of textbooks. EL textbooks are texts written to provide guidelines on what the learners are supposed to learn to acquire proficiency in the language. Students learning English as a second language have their first exposure to written texts. Thus, the textbooks provide the learners with the experiences they need to become experts in the target language.

Research Gap:

Some research has been conducted on English language teaching in engineering education, but relatively few studies have undertaken a comprehensive review of engineering English textbooks in relation to the current demands of industry and the communicative needs of learners. Ayu & Indrawati (2018) and Hanifa (2018) conducted content analyses of locally produced EFL textbooks, focusing on linguistic features, skills coverage, and critical thinking representation. Most of the existing research is focused on language proficiency, instructional techniques, or curriculum design, while the substance, authenticity, integration of skills, and relevance of prescribed textbooks are little studied. Moreover, very few studies have been conducted on the alignment of textbook activities with 21st-century skills such as critical thinking, collaboration, problem-solving, digital literacy, and workplace communication. This gap highlights the need for a close analysis of the textbooks to find out whether the English textbooks sufficiently equip the engineering students for academic success and career progression in a globalized workplace. In this context, the present research focuses on the efficacy of the English textbook ‘Path Finder’ prescribed by JNTU Kakinada, to analyze whether the content of the specified textbook meets the needs of the learners in terms of developing industry-specific skills.

Methodology:

This study has employed a mixed-methods approach, blending qualitative analysis of the selected textbook with the opinions and feedback gathered from the first and second year engineering students of various colleges across the districts: West Godavari, East Godavari, and Krishna. The analysis examines how well the textbook offers the four language skills (LSRW Skills), whether it stimulates critical and analytical thinking, and real-life social communication. 130 students from various engineering colleges who use the prescribed textbook ‘Pathfinder’ as the

primary source for the subject 'Communicative English' were chosen using a simple random sampling method. Data have been collected using a questionnaire.

Data Analysis & Findings:

Data have been collected on the basis of the needs of the students about the textbook, textbook competence and its depth, and whether it improves the four language skills of the students.

The sample includes 130 engineering students, of whom 63 are female and 67 are male, who responded to the questionnaire. Of the 130 students, 122 students speak Telugu as their native language, 7 students speak Urdu, and 1 student speaks a language other than the languages given while collecting the demographic information of the sampling students.

It has been observed that the majority of the students completed their schooling and intermediate in the English medium. 45.5% of students were from rural background, 44.6% from urban areas, and only 9.9% students are from semi-urban areas.

The collected data is analyzed using graphical images, for each question, followed by a description, as follows.

A general survey on English Textbook:

Question 1: What kind of English textbook would you like to have? A Textbook with...

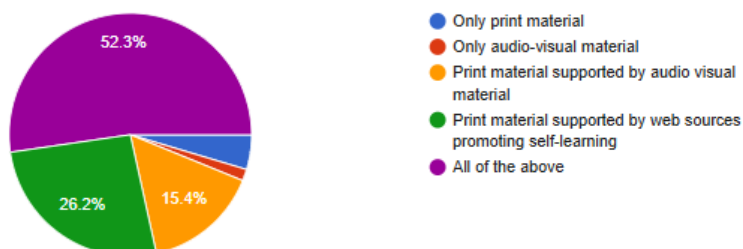


Fig.1

According to the graph above, 52.3% of respondents require a textbook of all kinds, including print materials supported by audio-visual materials and web sources that promote self-learning. Based on this, it has been inferred that most respondents (52.3% + 26.2%) want to learn and develop on their own, with less dependence on teachers.

Question 2: Do you expect your textbook to cover all four language skills (LSRW)?

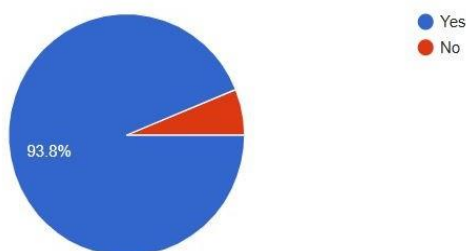


Fig.2

There was a general agreement among the participants that their textbook had covered language skills comprehensively. Of the 130 respondents, the majority of the respondents (93.8%) indicated the expectation that their textbooks should include the four language skills (LSRW), i.e., Listening, Speaking, Reading, and Writing. Only a few respondents (6.2%) did not feel that their textbook covered all four skills. This sign reflects the significance of an integrated approach to language acquisition in which all prerequisite skills are addressed in the course materials. The observations demonstrate a significant need for textbooks/coursebooks that promote comprehensive development of the language and for curriculum designers and instructors to make sure that their teaching materials facilitate complete coverage of the linguistic skills.

Question 3: Do you think your textbook should consist considerable practice material to develop your grammar, vocabulary, and other language elements?



Fig.3

The greater part (97.7%) of respondents feel that textbooks should comprise extensive practice material for the enhancement of language. Only a very few students disagreed (2.3%). This indicates strong agreement on the usefulness of textbook practice materials in enhancing language.

Question 4: Do you expect your textbook to also be available in digital format, such as PDF?

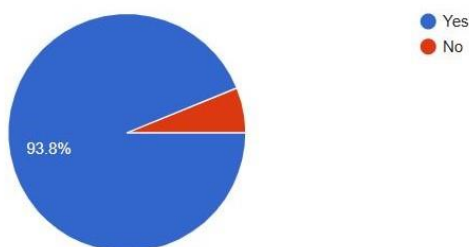


Fig.4

The vast majority (93.8%) of the respondents agree that textbooks should be digitized since they are accustomed to using digital platforms.

Question 5: Would you like the contents of your textbook to reflect gender equality?

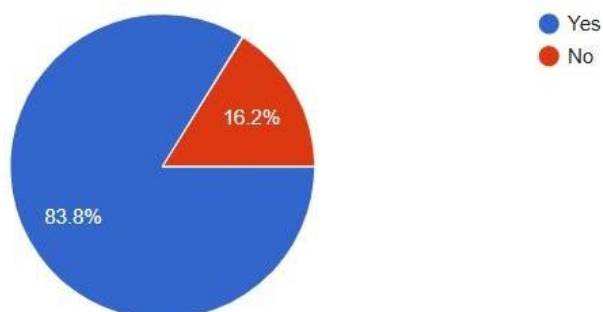


Fig.5

The survey shows that the majority of respondents want gender equality in textbook content. 83.8% are in favor, and only 16.2% are against. This overwhelming percentage indicates the obvious need to have more diverse and balanced textbooks, and the importance of gender representation in educational resources.

Question 6: How much do you think your textbook with optimal digital support should cost?

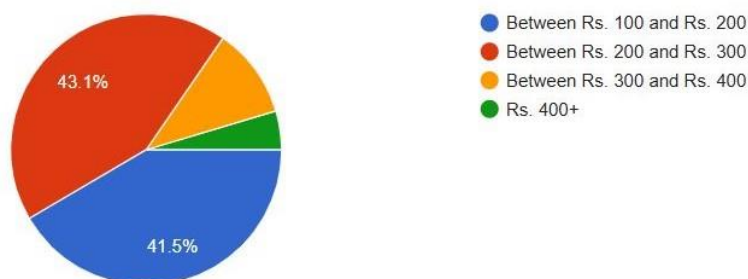


Fig.6

Most of the respondents feel that the pricing should be between Rs. 200 and Rs. 300 (43.1%) followed by those who want the price to be between Rs. 100 and Rs. 200 (41.5%) Only a small percentage felt Rs. 400+ is apt and even smaller percentage approved of the price range between Rs. 300 and Rs. 400. The data shows that students would like to keep the cost of textbooks below Rs. 300, which shows that they are price sensitive to educational material with digital capabilities.

Question 7: Do you think the cultural background of the lessons affect the understanding efficiency of the students?

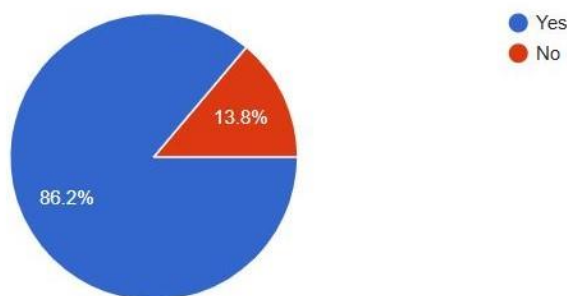


Fig.7

The above pie chart shows that only 13.8% of respondents disagreed with the view that the cultural background of the lessons affects the understanding efficiency of the students; on the other hand, a substantial majority of respondents (86.2%) are convinced that the cultural context of classes affects the effectiveness of students' comprehension. There is a broad agreement that including culturally appropriate material into instruction may be essential to improve students' understanding and involvement. These results underscore the importance of integrating cultural context in instructional content to enhance learning outcomes.

Question 8: Do you like to have language activities as you learn from the textbook?



Fig.8

As shown in Fig.8, 98.5% of the 130 participants preferred doing language activities in addition to textbook learning, while 1.5% disagreed. The constructive feedback indicates that students highly prioritize collaborative activities as an addition to traditional textbook-based education, which is crucial to promote active participation and stimulate an well-organized process of language learning.

Question 9: Do you think the contents of your textbook should enable you to prepare yourself for different competitive and proficiency tests, like GRE, TOEFL, IELTS, CAT, placements, etc.?

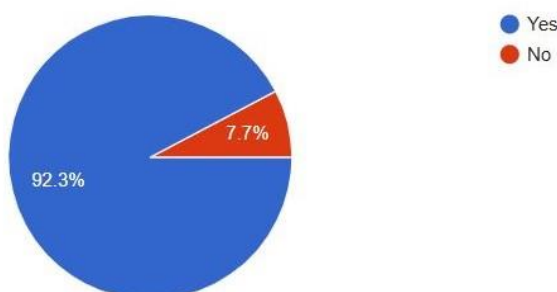


Fig.9

The results demonstrate clear agreement among respondents on the role of textbooks in equipping students for competitive and competency examinations. Out of these, 92.3% of participants agreed that the material of the textbook should help in preparing for examinations, like GRE, TOEFL, IELTS, CAT, and placements, whilst only 7.7% disagreed. The majority believes that students assume curriculum materials to prepare them for the rigors of standardized testing and/or career evaluations. The

inclusion of this type of material could substantially improve the apparent relevance and effectiveness of textbooks in an academic environment.

Question 10: Do you agree that an English textbook should include concise functional texts that offer students the chance to enhance their skills in listening, speaking, reading, and writing? These texts may take the form of invitations, advertisements, short messages, and descriptive, narrative, and argumentative passages.

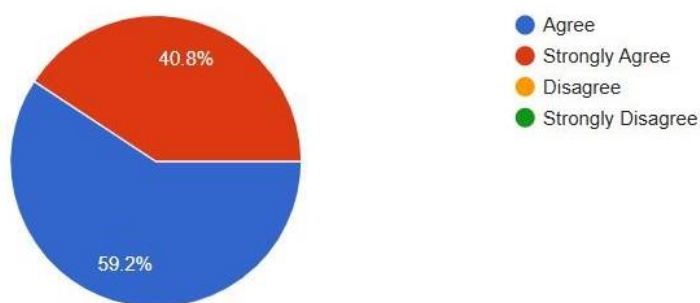


Fig.10

The data shows that there is huge support for including short functional texts in English textbooks, as 59.2% of the respondents agree and 40.8% of them strongly agree with the statement. It is interesting to note that there were no responses of “Disagree” or “Strongly Disagree,” which suggests that the participants were in complete agreement that such texts are important for improving students’ language skills.

Question 11: Do you agree that an English textbook should include a few short transactional dialogues which aim at developing Communicative English?

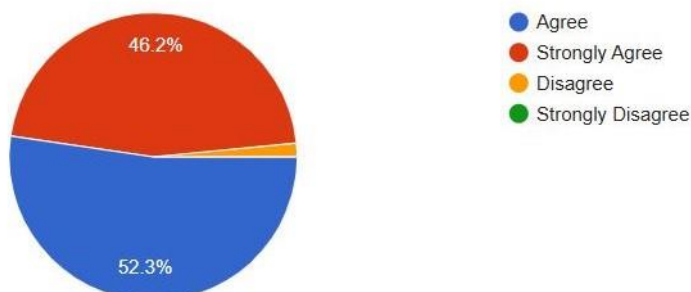


Fig.11

As per the above fig.11, most of the respondents were in support of the statement, 52.3% agreed and 46.2% strongly agreed to the statement giving an overall positive score of 98.5%. 1.5 per cent disagreed and none strongly disagreed. These findings show a strong agreement among the participants that short transactional dialogues need to be included in English textbooks to improve the communicative competence of the learners.

Question 12: Do you think that a textbook should offer extensive exposure to students by presenting a variety of relevant text types?

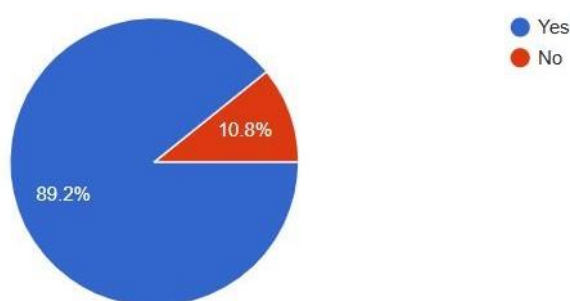


Fig.12

The pie chart shows the views of 130 respondents on whether or not students should be introduced to several relevant text genres in an English textbook. The results indicated that 89.2% of the respondents answered “Yes” and only 10.8% answered “No”. The vast majority of the respondents are positive about the presence of different types of text in English textbooks. This shows that they consider this kind of exposure important for the development of students’ language proficiency, reading skills, and overall communicative competence.

Question 13: Do you agree that an English textbook must be useful to develop students’ employability skills that include fluency, accuracy, and terminology necessary to get a job and progress in the professional environment?

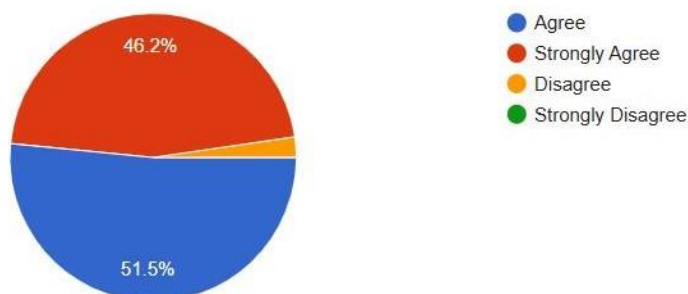


Fig.13

The given responses indicate a widespread agreement on the importance of English textbooks in developing students' employability skills. 67 respondents agreed, and 60 strongly agreed that textbooks are expected to enhance proficiency, accuracy, and the terminology required for professional advancement. Only a very small minority disagreed. The huge support illustrates how important well-developed English books are in preparing students for the challenges of today's working environment.

Question 14: Do you agree that the content in the English textbook should incorporate analytical skills to enhance their linguistic abilities?

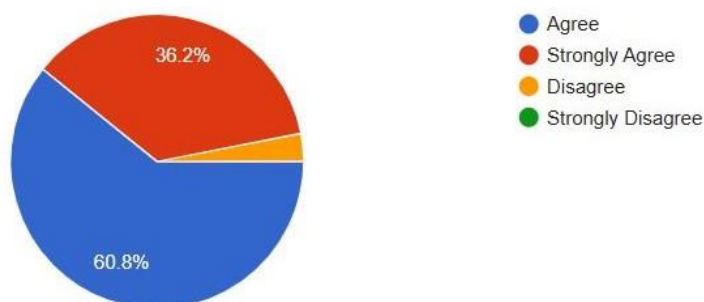


Fig.14

It has been observed that the respondents strongly agree that analytical skills should be included in English textbooks to improve language capabilities. More specifically, 60.8% of participants agreed, and 36.2% strongly agreed with the statement. The little percentage of disagreement indicated that there was general agreement with the idea of incorporating analytical skill development in the teaching of the English language.

A survey on the specific textbook 'Path Finder':

Question 1: Is the textbook 'Path Finder' helpful to develop LSRW Skills?



Fig.15

According to fig.15 above, 96.9% of respondents believe that the textbook “Path Finder” is useful for enhancing LSRW (Listening, Speaking, Reading, and Writing) skills. Very few objected, demonstrating how much the textbook improved these vital language skills.

Question 2: Do you agree that all the units consist of good presentation and practice of listening skills?

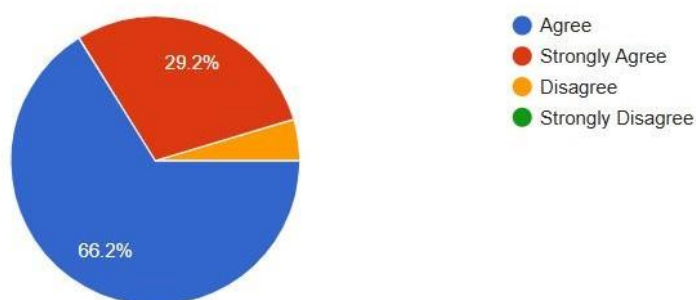


Fig.16

The findings revealed that the course units were very effective in introducing and practicing listening skills. Of 130 respondents, 66.2% agreed, and 29.2% strongly agreed, indicating that 95.4% of participants held a positive opinion. Very few students (4.6%) dissented, and few respondents strongly disagreed. The responses demonstrate that the teaching methods and the listening tasks were meticulously designed and effectively strengthened the listening skills of the students, which signifies great satisfaction with this aspect of the course.

Question 3: Do you agree that all the units consist of good presentation and practice of speaking skills?

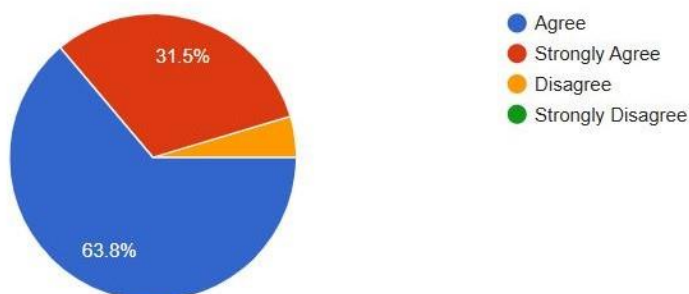


Fig.17

The responses infer that the course modules were remarkably effective in offering opportunities to practice oral communication. 95.3% (31.5% and 63.8%) expressed affirmative responses. Very few (4.7%) dissented from the view that the course units comprise good presentation and practice of speaking skills. All in all, the findings suggest that the course was effective in enriching the speaking skills of the students and fulfilled their expectations, signifying the quality and applicability of the pedagogical design.

Question 4: Do you agree that all the units consist of good presentation and practice of reading skills?

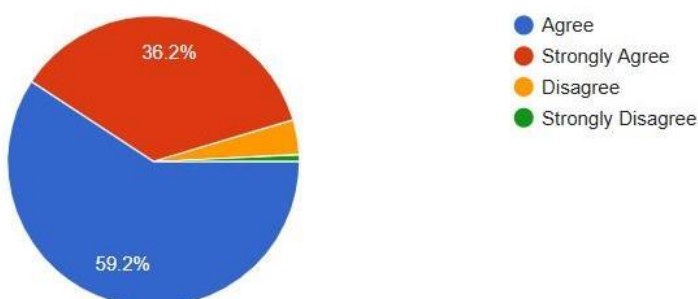


Fig.18

The information, according to the above fig. 18, implies that the modules of the course were very effective in presenting materials and opportunities to improve reading skills. 95.4% of the total respondents (36.2% + 59.2%) gave a positive response. The agreement reveals that the reading materials, activities, and teaching

strategies affected the students' reading comprehension. There was very little dissatisfaction, with only 3.8% disagreeing and 0.8% strongly disagreeing. Overall, the findings conclude that the textbook effectively develops reading abilities and provides learners with useful, productive reading practice.

Question 5: Do you agree that all the units consist of good presentation and practice of writing skills?

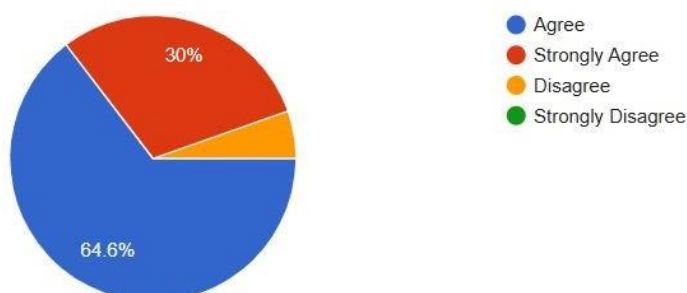


Fig.19

As per fig. 19, a survey of 130 respondents was made to assess the statement, "All the units consist of good presentation and practice of writing skills." This resulting pie chart shows an overwhelmingly positive consensus, with the participants combined agreeing at 94.6%. Specifically, a large majority of 64.6% agreed with the statement, with an additional 30% strongly agreeing. On the other hand, only a small percentage – around 5.4% – expressed disagreement, and importantly, there were no responses indicating strong disagreement. These findings suggest a very favorable reception in terms of the effectiveness of the units' instructional design providing presentation and writing skills practice.

Question 6: Do you agree that each unit consists of activities to enrich the grammatical accuracy of the students?

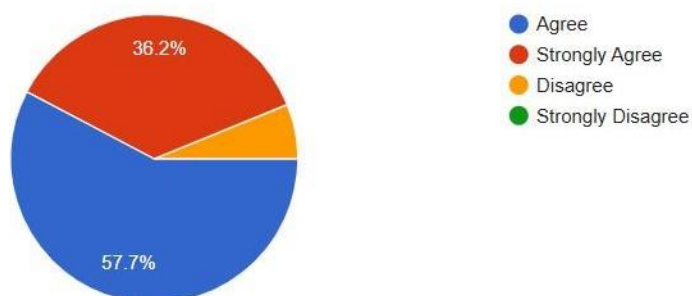


Fig.20

Based on the data, a strong positive consensus, with a combined 93.9% of respondents agreeing. More specifically, 57.7% agreed with the majority of respondents, with a large 36.2% strongly agreeing. In contrast, a very small minority, approximately 6.1%, disagreed, and no one strongly disagreed. The findings suggest that the students were fully satisfied with the integration and perceived efficiency of the grammar-enriching exercises in the instructional units.

Question 7: Vocabulary, along with grammar, plays a significant role in developing one's language. In this context, do you agree that each unit in the textbook discusses vocabulary concepts to flourish linguistic knowledge?

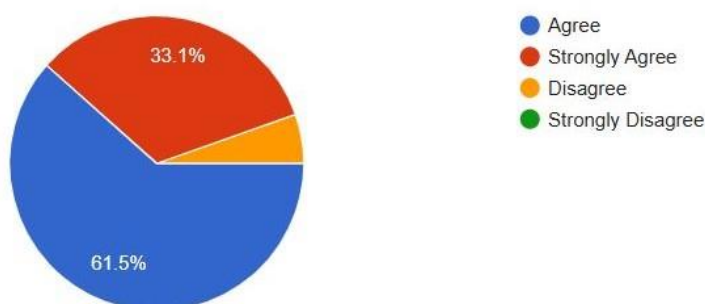


Fig.21

As depicted in the pie chart, there is a very positive consensus, with 94.6% of participants saying they agree. In particular, a vast majority, 61.5%, agreed with the statement and an additional 33.1% strongly agreed. By contrast, a small number of comments – around 5.4% – disagreed, with no comments expressing strong disagreement. The findings show that most of the participants agree that the units in the textbook successfully incorporate the vocabulary ideas that are important for language development.

Question 8: How far are the lessons successful in making the students comprehend and inculcate the habit of self-learning?

Summarizing the students' opinions, the "Pathfinder" textbook is generally liked by students because it helps them to learn on their own and develop their communication skills, including LSRW skills. Lessons like "The Gift of Magi" and "Elon Musk" are highly praised by students for imparting human values and inspiration for innovation. The unit, 'The Power of Intrapersonal Communication', helps the students to manage stress. However, the participants specify that the productivity of these autonomous learning habits is based on pedagogical approaches, learner participation, and motivation. On the whole, the perceptions are favorable, but some respondents recommend improvements such as more grammatical exercises, wide-ranging terminology, and more relevant texts to enhance understanding.

Question 9: Do you really believe that the content prescribed in the textbook is useful to the engineering graduates to develop autonomous learning?

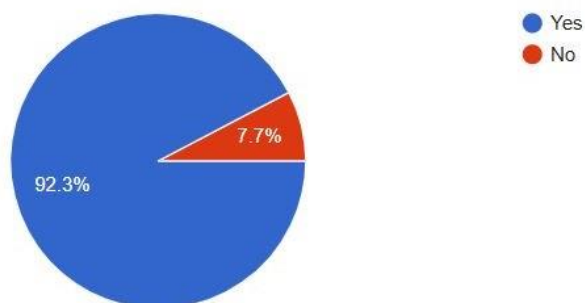


Fig.22

The observations from the responses demonstrate that the engineering English textbook 'Path Finder' is greatly beneficial to the students in the context of autonomous learning. Only 7.7% of the respondents expressed their view that the content prescribed in the textbook is not useful, whereas 93.3% had a positive view that it promotes independent learning. As far as the students' perceptions of the question are concerned, the textbook offers abundant teaching-learning materials that develop self-learning opportunities. The curriculum is effective in supporting learners to enrich in-depth theoretical understanding and to learn on their own. These findings are predominantly applicable to engineering studies in which sustained learning and continuous skill enhancement are needed to align with technological developments.

Question 10: Do you believe that the prescribed activities are to enhance the life skills of the technological students?

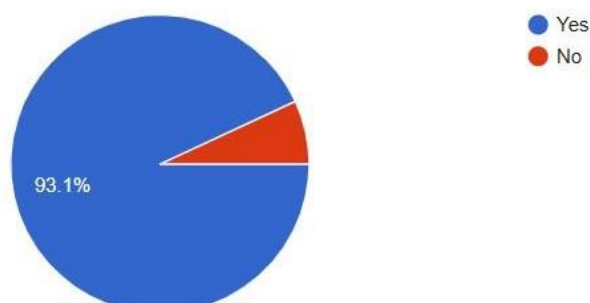


Fig.23

The responses portray that the majority (93.1%) of participants concurred that the activities prescribed in the textbook help the technological students enrich their life skills, whereas 6.9% of the participants did not. The overwhelming majority showed that the exercises were successful in developing critical thinking, communication, teamwork, leadership, and problem-solving skills. The overall results suggest that the proposed activities are essential in providing students with the life skills that are necessary to succeed academically, professionally, and personally, although a few expressed dissatisfactions, suggesting the need to improve by providing more industry-specific and experiential learning activities.

Question 11: Is the content given in the textbook helpful to develop skills that can make the students industry-ready?

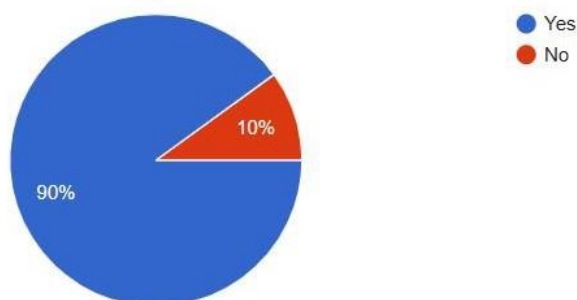


Fig.24

It has been found that 90% of the respondents believed that the textbook 'Pathfinder' helps students to augment their skills that are indispensable to be ready for the workforce, whereas 10% disagreed. Based on the majority responses, it has been suggested that the curriculum is effective in cultivating technical expertise, critical thinking, and problem-solving skills required for professional practice. Generally, the findings suggest a good opinion towards the required content in training students to meet the needs of the engineering and technology sectors. However, a small percentage of the respondents felt that there is scope for improvement, especially as far as improving the relevance to industry and practical exposure is concerned.

Question 12: Do you think individual and group activities given in the textbook help students learn language skills practically?



Fig.25

The results suggest a generally positive attitude toward the effectiveness of individual and group work in helping students strengthen their language skills through experiential learning. From the total 130 participants, 96.2% agreed that the exercises described in the mentioned text improved the practical language skills, while 3.8% disagreed with this statement. The high level of agreement indicates that the curriculum effectively supports experiential learning by allowing students to build their communication, collaboration, speaking, listening, reading, and writing skills for real-world situations. The results demonstrate the benefits of interactive, activity-oriented education in developing students' self-confidence and linguistic skills. The results show that both individual activities and group activities are significantly beneficial to students' practical development of language skills, but a small percentage of participants expressed concerns, indicating room for further improvement.

Question 13: Do you think students need more exposure to language or literature to enhance their language skills?

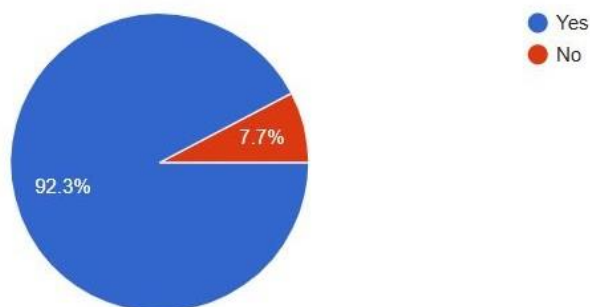


Fig.26

The collected data show that a large number of respondents believe that students should receive more exposure to language and literature to enhance their language skills. Out of the 130 respondents, 92.3% agreed that more exposure to language and literary texts is needed, while 7.7% did not. The high level of consensus implies that respondents agree on the need to engage with a greater variety of language materials and literary texts to improve communication skills, vocabulary, critical thinking, creativity, and general language competency. The findings also suggest that regular exposure to a variety of texts may lead to greater reading comprehension, writing abilities, and interpretative skills and hence contribute to academic accomplishment as well as professional competence. While a minority of respondents provided a different view, the overall findings point to the importance of including richer language and literature-based learning experiences in the curriculum to promote students' holistic linguistic and intellectual development.

Question 14: How much percentage of students' needs has the textbook 'Path Finder' covered?

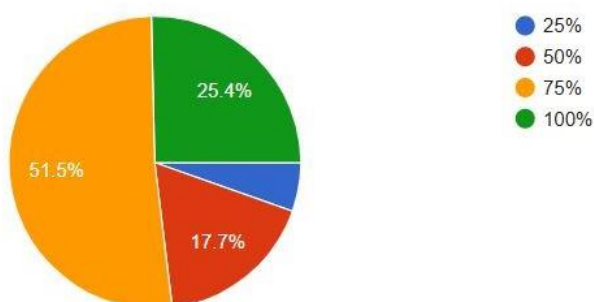


Fig.27

According to the fig.27, the findings show that most of the respondents think that the textbook Path Finder caters to a great percentage of students' learning needs. Out of the 130 respondents, 51.5% said that the textbook is covering about 75% of the students' needs. 25.4% said that it is covering 100% of the students' needs. Also 17.7 % thought that it covers about 50 % and just 5.4 % considered the coverage to be limited to 25 %. The results indicate that the textbook is generally regarded as a comprehensive and effective learning resource which adequately meets the academic, communicative and professional needs of most students. But the results also show that some respondents see room for development, with the need to strengthen the content with more practical activities, industry-relevant materials and up-to-date language learning resources. The results overall indicate that Path Finder is perceived to address a considerable proportion of students' educational needs, but leaving room for additional development in order to attain more learner satisfaction.

Question 14: How satisfactory is the prescribed textbook 'Path Finder'?

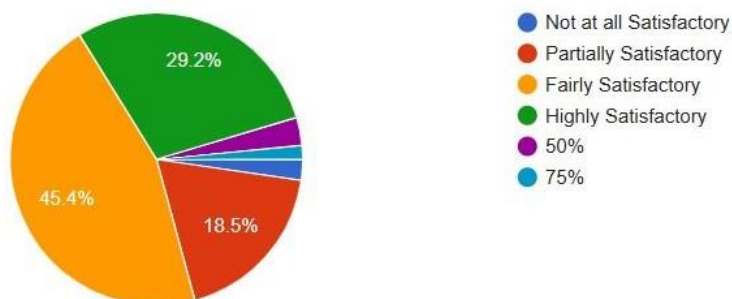


Fig.28

The participants of the survey are satisfied with the textbook, 'Path Finder', as far as the responses they gave are concerned. It has been found that 29.2% of the participants are highly satisfied and 45.4% are found to be fairly satisfied with the prescribed textbook. 18.5% of the respondents found the textbook to be partially satisfactory, whereas a small fraction considered it to be not at all satisfactory. Comprehensively, the majority have a positive perspective towards the textbook. As per the results, it has been observed that adding more activities, content, hands-on applications, and industry-oriented resources is required for the students. It has also been observed that the textbook 'Path Finder' is a well-structured one and welcomed by the engineering students and that further advancements will increase its significance and efficiency.

Conclusion:

The findings, as per the data collected from the students, suggest that the prescribed English language textbook 'Path Finder' is well-structured in terms of content, clear in their grammatical explanations, and systematic in their presentation of language ideas. However, it is more inclined to focus on theoretical knowledge than on the practical application of language skills. The textbook does a very good job of helping learners master grammatical structures and vocabulary, but it often lacks interactive, learner-centered activities that actively involve students in meaningful conversation and collaborative learning. The prospects for students to gain practical language competency are diminished because activities such as group discussions, role plays, problem-solving tasks, and real-life communication exercises are either limited or not appropriately integrated.

Moreover, the results show a severe lack of integration of digital technologies and authentic learning resources that are becoming more and more relevant in modern language education. Modern language learning needs to be confronted with multimedia materials, online platforms, digital assessments, podcasts, videos, and interactive applications in the current communication practices in academic,

professional, and global settings. However, 'Path Finder', like many textbooks, is still heavily reliant on traditional print content limiting students' access to technology-enhanced learning environments. The other key issue is the limited applicability of the textbook to the context. In many instances, the learning materials are poorly coordinated with the students' academic fields, professional objectives, or real-life communication demands. This makes it difficult for learners to relate classroom learning to real-world circumstances in further education, employment, or everyday life. This lack of context, even though the students are satisfied with the content administered in the prescribed textbook, may weaken the learners' motivation and hamper the development of communicative ability. The findings at this preliminary stage highlight the need for curriculum developers and textbook designers to adopt a more learner-centered approach by including authentic materials, technology-enabled learning resources, and context-specific activities to better prepare students for academic success, professional communication, and lifelong learning.

The research illustrates that an effective English textbook is expected to be a peer learning tool, encourage learners' participation, critical thinking, and English language skills, and provide language content as well. To facilitate this, textbooks must include online resources and activity-based learning that promote learner participation and the use of the language in everyday contexts. Content must be written with the academic and professional needs of the students in mind to make sure greater significance and application. Textbooks that are updated regularly to include new trends and digital resources can be even more beneficial in developing communicative competence and preparing students for success in the classroom and the workplace.

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