Global Business Textbook Evaluation: Task Types in the Spotlight

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Abstract

Textbook evaluation, with the aim of assisting the choice of the most suitable book for a specific context, has become a needed practice in the field of English for Specific Purposes (ESP). During recent years, with the rapid spread of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) and its concern for tasks and activities that enhance learners' interaction, more researchers have become interested in exploring the different task types in textbooks in the field of English Language Teaching (ELT). The present study sought to evaluate the two most popular global business English textbook series (*English Business Result and Market Leader*) that are taught in Iranian institutes, in terms of their task types according to Nunan's (1999) classification of tasks. The results revealed that linguistic tasks and creative tasks were respectively the most and the least common task types presented in these textbooks. The results also indicated a significant difference among the frequency of task types in the textbooks. It was evident that these ESP textbooks covered all of the macro tasks and most of the micro tasks specified by Nunan (1999), but some of them significantly focused on specific types of tasks.

Keywords: textbook evaluation, Nunan's (1999) classification of tasks, business English, task types

Introduction

Due to globalization and the spread of English worldwide, more and more people around the world are motivated to learn English academically (Galloway, 2017; Kusumaningputri & Widodo, 2018). It goes without saying that in the domain of education, planned and prearranged teaching material plays an indisputable role (Dabbagh & Safaei, 2019). For decades, textbooks have been used as the main and most important source of information for instruction; maybe as significant as teachers (Ayu & Indrawati, 2018). The literature provides strong evidence of the major role of

textbooks as the best means of delivering content knowledge. Textbooks, as the heart of educational programs, offer students "a rich array of new and potentially interesting facts, and open the door to a world of fantastic experience" (Chambliss & Calfee, 1998, p.7). Textbooks play a key role in most language teaching and learning programs and have a "noteworthy eminence for both teachers and learners" (Ayu & Indrawati, 2018). According to Zohrabi, Sabouri and Kheradmand (2014), "textbooks are one of the elements that may promote or discourage learners depending on their materials. They are a kind of support for both teachers and learners and provide students with a kind of consistency" (p.95). In fact, it appears that "textbooks are the main sources that can convey the knowledge and information to the learners in an easy and organized way" (Ahour & Ahmadi, 2012, p. 176). Moreover, they are used to such an extent that it seems impossible to teach without some education material (Alemi & Rezanejad, 2013). They can definitely guide the teachers in the presentation of materials and also impact students' attitudes toward learning. Certainly, English for Specific Purposes (ESP), as an approach to English Language Teaching (ELT), is no exception, as ESP is now considered an indispensable piece in the puzzle of Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL).

ESP is mostly defined as a materials-led approach (i.e. a system of education mainly based on textbook materials) in the broader framework of ELT (Dudley-Evans & St John, 1998). In the same vein, business English is a growing trend within the field of ELT and ESP. The term ESP is widely used and readily understood by practitioners, but its generality can lead to confusion. ESP textbooks are considered to be among the most visible parts of any ESP teaching programme, especially in countries where English is used as a foreign language. To put it differently, ESP classrooms may be almost the only source of English knowledge for the pupils, which play a vital role in exposing them to the language. This fact is accentuated in Iranian society as an EFL (English as a Foreign Language) context where the spread of ESP in academic communities and language institutes has resulted in a wide variety of specialized textbooks. Furthermore, with the advent of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT), the ability to employ the target language in real-life situations has become the main concern of language pedagogy. It is worth mentioning that by being aware of the types of tasks presented in ESP materials, teachers can provide their students with the most appropriate materials to improve their proficiency. Against this backdrop, the present study aimed at exploring the task types presented in business ESP textbooks taught in the EFL context of Iran.

Review of the literature
Theoretical background

The Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) approach has attracted a lot of academic attention in recent years (Celce-Murcia, 2001). Its main principles revolve around learners' ability to effectively communicate in the target language (Celce-Murcia, 2001; Nunan, 2004). According to Celce-Murcia (2001), CLT can be employed efficiently in ELT by teachers and course designers through designing tasks that are at

the same time communicative and also focus on language development. Accordingly, some scholars have proposed their own categorization of tasks. For instance, Pattison (1987) declared that there are seven types of tasks, namely (1) question and answers, (2) dialogues and role plays, (3) matching activities, (4) communication strategies, (5) pictures and picture stories, (6) puzzles and problems, and (7) discussions and decisions. Berwick (1988) made a distinction between transactional tasks and interpersonal tasks, with the former focusing on the exchange of goods and services in interactions and the later focusing on the social goals of communication.

Later, language teachers and materials developers have also turned their attention to the relationship between CLT teaching methodology and Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) while developing teaching materials or educational exercises. Task-based language learning, first proposed by Prabhu (1987), stresses a more prominent focus on tasks than on the language itself to boost effective learning. According to Brown (1994), TBLT considers the learning process as a set of communicative tasks that are directly connected with the educational goals of the curriculum. With regard to the definition of tasks, Nunan (1989) considers them to be part of classroom work that involves the learners in understanding, creating, or interrelating in the target language. Also, tasks are considered to put more emphasis on the meaning than the form of language and "should also have a sense of completeness, being able to stand alone as a communicative act in its own right" (Nunan, 1993, p. 59).

Nunan (1989), on the other hand, divided tasks into two groups: "real-world tasks or target tasks" and "pedagogical tasks" (pp. 40-41). In this classification, real-world tasks or target tasks are meant to improve the social skills of the learners and assist them in fulfilling their real-life needs in similar daily life interactions. Pedagogical tasks, on the other hand, are mostly concerned with sets of exercises in different language skills. Later, Nunan (1999) made a different list and categorized tasks according to the use of different strategies. Accordingly, five different tasks types were presented, namely (1) cognitive, (2) interpersonal, (3) linguistic, (4) affective, and (5) creative.

Overall, and with regard to what has been mentioned, it is worth noting that as Alemi, Jahangard, and Hesami (2013) point out, textbook and materials developers are more concerned with developing communicative tasks in order to develop pupils' use of communicative language strategies in their future interactions. Nevertheless, the point is that seemingly, a lot of teachers in the world are unfortunately using the materials without a full awareness of the tasks presented in the textbooks, their types, and their usefulness. That is to say, most of the teachers don't realize that there are meaningful gaps in the task types contained in textbooks and that they may need to be more discerning in selecting textbooks or willing to provide specific supplemental materials to compensate for the deficits in the textbooks. This instigated the present study to explore the different task types employed in Iranian business English textbooks. We used Nunan's (1999) classification of tasks, as this model seems to be more specific and comprehensive than other suggested models on task types. Few studies have been conducted on the use of different task types in business English

textbooks, especially in the EFL context of Iran. This is significant as tasks can help language learners in the better acquisition of language by focusing on meaning rather than form in doing different tasks. Therefore, the current study aims to investigate the different task types in business English textbooks used in Iran, based on Nunan's (1999) task type classification.

Previous research on textbook evaluation in Iran

English textbooks around the world have been evaluated in different contexts and based on a variety of criteria. The topic has also gained momentum in Iran among several researchers (e.g., Ahmadi & Deakhshan, 2015; Alemi, Jahangard, & Hesami, 2013; Alemi, Ahmadi, & Rezanejad, 2020; Azizfar, 2009; Rahimpour & Hashemi, 2011; Riazi & Mosalamnejad, 2010). Various textbooks, particularly school textbooks, have been evaluated based on different models or checklists. To shed more light on these studies, this section pertains to a review of previous studies on textbook evaluation in the EFL context of Iran.

In order to see the effect of task types on foreign language written production, Rezazadeh, et al. (2011) investigated how three aspects of language production, namely fluency, complexity, and accuracy, vary between two different task types (argumentative writing tasks and instruction writing tasks). Their findings showed that participants in the instruction-task group did considerably better than those in the argumentative-task group regarding fluency and accuracy.

Alemi, et al. (2013) evaluated ELT textbooks (*Top Notch* and *Interchange*) in terms of the five task types proposed by Nunan (1999). The results of their study suggested that, generally, both coursebooks used tasks that were mainly linguistic and less cognitive. However, the frequency of co-operative tasks (a micro task within the macro category of Interpersonal tasks) in particular, in *Interchange*, was higher than the frequency of other types of tasks, while in *Top Notch* most of the tasks were practice tasks (a micro task within the macro category of Linguistic tasks). Moreover, Papi (2015) evaluated the task types in the English textbook used in 7th grade of high schools in Iran, entitled *Prospect 1*, using Finch's (1999) checklist as well as an in-depth method in order to have a comprehensive evaluation. The findings showed that in the target textbook, static/one-way tasks occur more frequently than dynamic/two-way tasks. Additionally, the incidence of shared tasks was more than other task types. This showed that the focus of this book was mostly on pair work and group work.

Razmjoo and Kazempourfard (2012) focused on Bloom's Revised Taxonomy in terms of learning objectives. The results of their study showed that Lower Order Thinking Skills (LOTS), the three lower levels in Bloom's Revised Taxonomy, were the most frequent learning levels in the *Interchange* series. Moreover, a significant difference was also found among the textbooks in terms of including different levels of learning objectives. The other result of this study revealed the total absence of metacognitive knowledge. All in all, it was found that this series is not able to make the learners critical thinkers.

Tajeddin and Teimournezhad (2014) explored the manifestation of culture in dialogues and reading passages used in international and local textbooks in Iran. A

content analysis procedure was adopted based on the taxonomies proposed by Cortazzi et al. The aim of this study was to investigate which culture types plus which aspects of each culture were mostly addressed in the textbooks. The results showed that most of the cultural elements in the local textbooks were culturally neutral (i.e. they did not denote any specific culture). Also, the international textbooks focused more on intercultural issues and emphasized target language cultures.

Vahdatnia and Salehi (2020) focused on ESP textbook evaluation and investigated students' and teachers' insights with regard to a textbook used in the field of chemical engineering. The data were collected through a questionnaire and the results showed that both students and teachers held a positive attitude toward the suitability of the objectives of the book, exercises and strategies, and its overall content. However, they frowned upon the general layout of the book and its practical issues. In a different study, Alemi et al. (2020) investigated the type and frequency of tasks in Iranian high school English textbooks (*Prospect* & *English Book*) based on Nunan's (1999) taxonomy of tasks. The findings of their study indicated that linguistic tasks were the dominant task type in these textbooks.

Purpose of the study

According to Grant (1987), there is no such a thing as a perfect textbook; every textbook has its pros and cons. Grant also highlights the significance of textbook evaluation. Textbooks need to be evaluated to make sure they match the curriculum objectives, learners' educational context, and, more importantly, learners' needs. The present study attempted to evaluate the two most popular global business textbooks taught in Iranian ELT institutes in terms of their task types, based on Nunan's (1999) classification of tasks. It aimed to identify different task types in each series and to show the most frequent. Furthermore, the two series were compared with each other in terms of their tasks. Hence, the following research questions guided the study:

1. What kinds of task types are utilized in two ESP textbook series (*English Business Result* and *Market Leader)* and which of these task types are more frequent?

2. Is there any significant difference in the occurrence and frequency of task types in these textbooks?

Method

The corpus
The materials used in this study were the two most popular global business textbook series currently taught in Iranian ELT institutes (three levels: Elementary, Intermediate, and Advanced):

> *Elementary Business Result* (Grant, Hughes, & Turner, 2009)
> *Intermediate Business Result* (Hughes & Naunton, 2007)
> *Advanced Business Result* (Baade, Holloway, Scrivener, & Turner, 2009)
>
> *Elementary Market Leader* (Cotton, Falvey, & Kent, 2011)

Intermediate Market Leader (Cotton, Falvey, & Kent, 2011)
Advanced Market Leader (Dubicka & O'Keeffe, 2011)

In what follows, some instances of the various task types in these textbooks are presented:

1. "Work with a partner. Take turns to be a customer and a waiter at the café. Use the menu and practice ordering food" (Role playing task, *Elementary Business Result*, page 37).
2. "On a website, Professor Ben Fletcher of the University of Hertfordshire, UK, compares careers to the children's game of 'Snakes and Ladders'. Brainstorm what you think the snakes and the ladders might be" (Brainstorming task, *Advanced Business Result*, page 14).
3. "What skills are essential for your job, or the job you would like to do in the future?" (Personalizing task, *Advanced Market Leader*, page 114).
4. "Read the complete article and check your answers" (Self-evaluation task, *Advanced Market*, page 46).
5. "In your view, what different qualities are needed to successfully lead" (Creative task, *Advanced Business Result*, page 78).
6. "Work in small groups and discuss the difference in business travel between now and 5, 10, or 20 years ago" (Group work task, *Elementary Business Result*, page 67).
7. "Work in small groups, divide into two parts - A and B. Group A turn to file 21 on page 140. Group B turn to file 28 on page 142. Read the information and make notes" (Note taking task, *Intermediate Business Result*, page 126).

Data analysis framework

In this study, Nunan's (1999) framework for the classification of tasks was used (see Appendix for detailed explanations). Nunan classified tasks into five major groups based on the strategies underpinning them: (a) cognitive, (b) interpersonal, (c) linguistic, (d) affective, and (e) creative. Each task has sub-categories, resulting in twenty different micro task types (Table 1). All tasks were extracted from the textbooks and manually coded to their types. Also, examples of each task are introduced and usages are discussed. In the quantitative part, the frequency and percentage of each type of task is calculated and tabulated and the most frequent task types in each textbook are discerned. In order to answer the second research question, Pearson's Chi Square test was conducted to examine the relationship between task types and textbooks. The Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) release 21 was used to analyze the survey data and to find out if there is a relationship between task types and textbooks.

Table 1. Task types (Nunan, 1999)

Cognitive	Interpersonal	Linguistic	Affective	Creative
Classifying	Co-operating	Conversational patterns	Personalizing	Brainstorming
Predicting	Role playing	Practicing	Self-evaluating	
Inducing		Using context	Reflecting	
Note taking		Summarizing		
Concept mapping		Selective reading/listening		
Inferencing		Skimming		
Discriminating				
Diagramming				

Results

Research Question 1: Types & frequency of tasks

Each textbook was analyzed regarding its task types, based on Nunan's (1999) framework. The results are presented in Table 2. As can be seen, almost all task types were included. From a macro-level point of view, the results of the study revealed that the most frequent task type was linguistic.
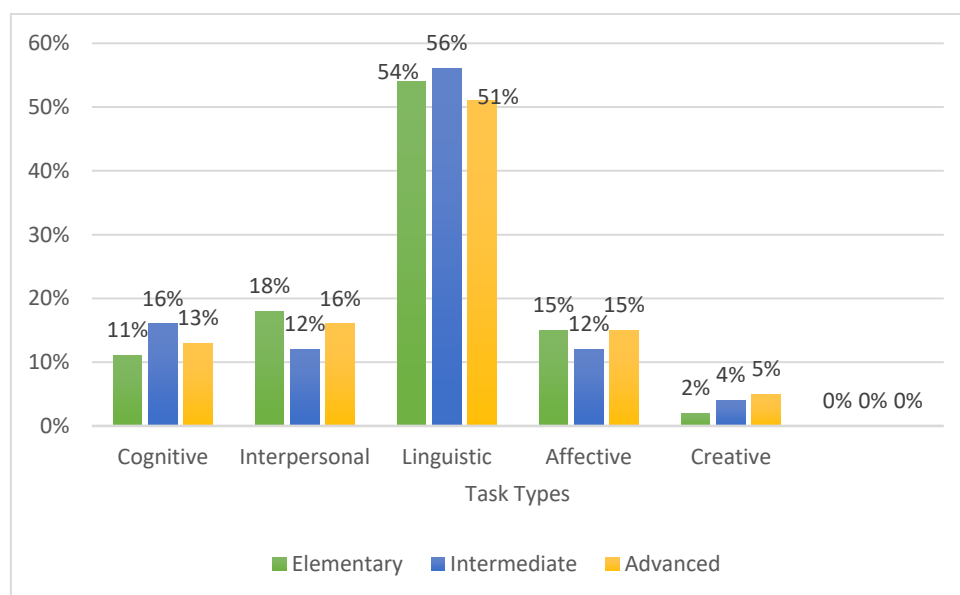

Figure 1. The frequency of the macro task types in *Business Result*

Figure 1 shows that the three teaching levels are similar for all tasks. The linguistic tasks constitute half of the total, while the creative tasks represent less than 5%. The remaining tasks (interpersonal, affective and cognitive) are equivalent in proportion, and each represent about 15%.

Table 2. Frequency and percentage of each task type in the target textbooks

Book Task Type	EBR	IBR	ABR	EML	IML	AML
	F	F	F	F	F	F
Cognitive						
Classifying	0	0	6	3	1	3
Predicting	0	1	2	2	2	3
Inducing	39	66	26	26	27	22
Taking Notes	4	15	21	15	7	9
Concept mapping	0	0	0	0	0	0
Inferencing	2	12	15	8	6	12
Discriminating	0	0	0	0	0	0
Diagramming	2	0	0	0	0	0
Total	**47**	**94**	**70**	**54**	**43**	**49**
Interpersonal						
Co-operating	64	59	70	43	32	42
Role playing	12	10	15	28	16	21
Total	**76**	**69**	**85**	**71**	**48**	**63**
Linguistic						
Conversational patterns	37	37	22	31	2	5
Practicing	72	125	88	132	126	62
Using context	22	26	39	33	37	54
Summarizing	1	2	0	0	5	8
Selective listening/reading	87	109	92	125	98	107
Skimming	15	23	30	18	29	25
Total	**234**	**322**	**271**	**339**	**297**	**261**
Affective						
Personalizing	45	55	59	90	72	97
Self-evaluating	18	12	18	16	9	11
Reflecting	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total	**63**	**67**	**77**	**106**	**81**	**108**
Creative						
Brainstorming	11	20	27	15	19	10
Total	**11**	**20**	**27**	**15**	**19**	**10**
Total	**431**	**572**	**530**	**585**	**488**	**491**

Note: EBR = Elementary Business Result; IBR = Intermediate Business Result; ABR = Advanced Business Result; EML = Elementary Market Leader; EML = Intermediate Market Leader; AML = Advanced Market Leader; F = Frequency.

As stated earlier, all macro types of tasks were included in the target textbooks. By contrast, some of the micro task types were utterly ignored or disregarded in these textbooks. As Table 2 illustrates, *Elementary Business Result*'s tasks include 20.19% selective reading/listening, 16.71% practicing, 14.85% co-operating, 10.44%

personalizing, 9.05% inducing, 8.58% conversational patterns, 5.10% using context, 4.18% self-evaluating, 3.48% skimming, 2.78% role playing, 2.55% brainstorming, 0.93% note taking, 0.46% inferencing, 0.46% discriminating, 0.23% summarizing. However, no classifying, predicting, concept mapping, diagramming and reflecting tasks were found in the content of *Elementary Business Result*. Therefore, along with *Intermediate Business Result, Elementary Business Result* can be regarded as one of the books that included the greatest number of ignored micro task types. In *Intermediate Business Result,* some of the task types were also ignored totally including classifying, concept mapping, discriminating, diagramming and reflecting.
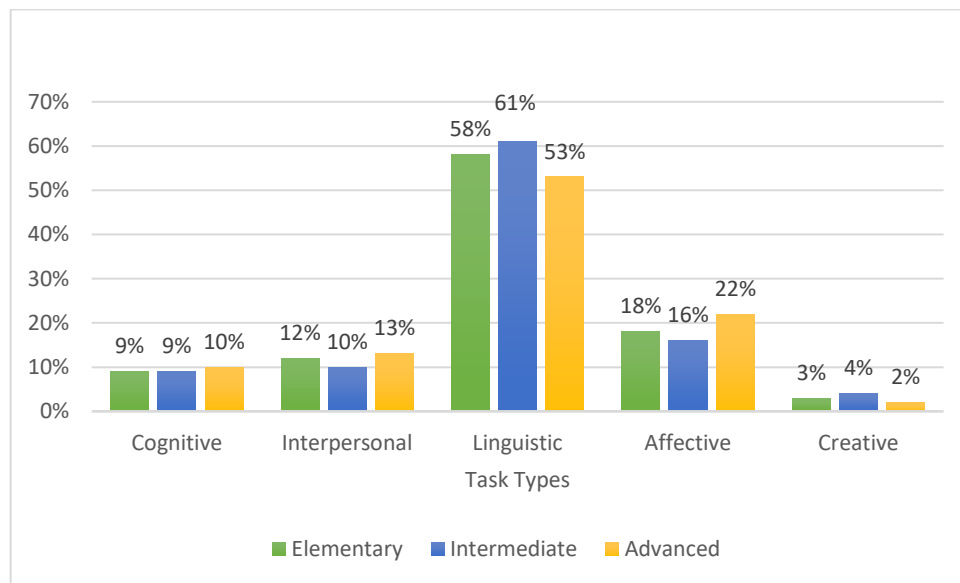

Figure 2. The frequency of the macro task types in *Market Leader*

Figure 2 shows that all the teaching levels are fairly equivalent. As in Figure 1, the linguistics tasks are the most frequent (around 60%) and the creative tasks the least (4% or less). Interpersonal and cognitive tasks have lower proportions than for business results (approximately 10% each). Affective tasks represent about 20% of the total, which is another difference between *Market Leader* and *Business Result*.

Regarding the second part of the first research question (frequency of task types) the most frequent macro types of task included in all textbooks were linguistic. The most important proportion of all reported tasks were linguistic: *Elementary Business Result* (54.29%)*, Intermediate Business Result* (56.29%)*, Advanced Business Result* (51.13%)*, Elementary Market Leader* (57.95%)*, Intermediate Market Leader* (60.86%)*, and Advanced Market Leader* (53.16%).

Affective, interpersonal, and cognitive tasks were respectively ranked in second, third, and fourth positions. The majority of the tasks – after linguistic tasks – in *Advanced Market Leader, Elementary Market Leader,* and *Intermediate Market Leader,* are affective, at 22%, 18.12%, and 16.60%, respectively. In *Elementary Business Result* (17.63%)*, Advanced Business Result* (16.04%), and *Intermediate Business Result* (12.06%), interpersonal tasks were in second position. Creative tasks

were ranked last for all textbooks: *Advanced Business Result* (5.09%)*, Intermediate Market Leader* (3.89%)*, Intermediate Business Result* (3.50%)*, Elementary Market Leader* (2.56%)*, Elementary Business Result* (2.25%)*,* and *Advanced Market Leader* (2.04%). In most of the textbooks except *Intermediate Business Result*, cognitive tasks were the fourth most frequent: *Advanced Business Result* (13.21%)*, Elementary Business Result* (10.90%)*, Advanced Market Leader* (9.98%)*, Elementary Market Leader* (9.23%)*,* and *Intermediate Market Leader (8.81%)*. Affective tasks were in fourth position for *Intermediate Business Result* (11.71%).

Research Question 2: Any significant difference

The second research question was concerned with the existence of any significant difference in the occurrence and frequency of different task types in these textbooks. Pearson's Chi-square test was performed in order to examine the relation between task types and the textbooks in two stages. In the first stage, the difference between levels of these textbooks was examined (*Elementary Business Result, Intermediate Business Result, Advanced Business Result, Elementary Market Leader, Intermediate Market Leader* and *Advanced Market Leader*). The Chi-square value of 70.704, with an associated significance level of less than 0.0001, provides support for a statistically significant difference between task types and textbooks in different levels of the textbooks. Furthermore, the analysis of the table of contributions to the chi-square indicator shows that there was an over-representation of cognitive tasks for *Business Result* and an over-representation of affective tasks for *Market Leader*.

Table 3. Book levels and task types cross-tabulation

			Cognitive	Interpersonal	Linguistic	Affective	Creative	**Total**
					Task Types			
Book title	*Business Result Elementary*	Count	47	76	234	63	11	**431**
	Business Result Intermediate	Count	94	69	322	67	20	**572**
	Business Result Advanced	Count	70	85	271	77	27	**530**
	Market Leader Elementary	Count	54	71	339	106	15	**585**
	Market Leader Intermediate	Count	43	48	297	81	19	**488**
	Market Leader Advanced	Count	49	63	261	108	10	**491**
Total		Count	357	412	1724	502	102	**3097**

In the second stage, the researcher analyzed the three levels (Elementary, Intermediate, and Advance) of *Business Result* and *Market Leader* individually; in addition, the two series were also examined as a whole. The frequency of each task type in the series is presented in Table 5. The Chi-square value of 24.693, with an associated significance level of .000 (Asymp. sig = .000), and with the degree of freedom 4 (df = 4), also suggests a statistically significant relationship between task types and

textbooks in the two series. The analysis of the table of contributions to the chi-square indicator confirms the previous result that there is an over-representation of cognitive tasks for the *Business Result* series. In addition, there is an important contribution from the Interpersonal dimension to the chi-square indicator.

Table 5. Book series and task types cross-tabulation

			Cognitive	Interpersonal	Linguistic	Affective	Creative	Total
					Task Types			
Title	*Business Result* series	Count	211	230	827	257	58	**1583**
	Market Leader series	Count	146	182	897	295	44	**1564**
Total		Count	357	412	1724	552	102	**3147**

Discussion

The main goal of the present study was to investigate the frequency of various task types based on the taxonomy proposed by Nunan (1999). A comprehensive analysis of the content of the studied books indicated that linguistic tasks were the most prominent type. This finding goes in tandem with Elmiana (2018) who analyzed task types in senior high school EFL textbooks in Indonesia. Our results also support the findings of Alemi et al. (2013) who evaluated and compared two global course books (*Top Notch* and *Interchange*) in terms of Nunan's (1999) classification. They also found that linguistic tasks were the most frequent. Our findings are also in accordance with Alemi et al. (2020) who also reported linguistic tasks as being the most common in high school textbooks used in Iran.

As Nunan (1999) stated, linguistic tasks, as a main category, are comprised of six task types: conversational patterns, practicing, using context, summarizing, selective reading/listening, and skimming. For instance, in the *using context* task, learners try to guess the meaning of unknown words using the context around it and this may further result in better and improved reading comprehension skill. Also, as Paribakht and Wesche (1999) note, the majority of second language learners use guessing from the context as a specific strategy to learn new vocabularies. Moreover, in this category of tasks, summarizing and skimming tasks were among the not totally, but to some extent ignored, micro task types in the aforementioned textbooks. This is in spite of the fact that summarizing is a vital skill that can help learners improve their reading and writing abilities. In addition, through skimming, the learners read the text quickly to understand the general purpose and meaning of the text. It is said that active readers use this technique to save time. Skimming can also build confidence by noticing the point that it is possible to gain meaning without reading every word in a text. Accordingly, Brown (1994) argued that skimming and scanning are among the most

valued strategies that learners as well as native speakers use in reading a text. He also asserted that through skimming, language learners can predict the main goal of a text and more easily get the message. Also, Willis and Willis (1996) suggested that teachers can offer students language data in the form of a single text or examples from familiar sources, with which students will conduct certain operations. The outcome of these operations will be an enhanced awareness of and sensitivity to language. In his "Noticing Hypothesis", Schmidt (1990) asserted that the only linguistic elements in the input that learners can acquire are those elements that they notice; nothing is learned unless it has been noticed and noticing happens when a learner becomes aware of a particular grammar point or language feature in input. Accordingly, we expected to see more summarizing and skimming activities in these textbooks. Hence, given the involvement of different skills in these tasks besides their significance in high-stakes international language tests, the writers believe that more attention needs to be paid to these tasks in textbooks.

On the same lines, with regard to the linguistic tasks, Willis and Willis (1996) suggested that grammar plays a vital role in learning a language. Learning grammar is one of the important ways to speak English effectively, accurately, and fluently. English for Specific Purposes (ESP) tries to focus on learners' specific objectives, or their need to learn English for pragmatic use in a specific context. ESP courses' first priority is to prepare students for their future career. Therefore, ESP textbooks are designed to meet the specific learning needs of specific learners that textbooks with tasks for traditional General English (GE) will not provide. ESP learners, especially business English students with the dire need to communicate with other people, mostly need to be exposed to tasks that help them use the language in context and enhance their creativity. Communicating via language rather than just knowing the rules can also improve their pragmatic competence. Also, the results showed that the other task types were underestimated in most of the textbooks. Consequently, overusing linguistic tasks cannot actively involve language learners in real-life communicative activities. This could be interpreted as one of the great deficiencies of all the analyzed textbooks. Within the linguistic tasks, the results indicated that there was no evidence of 'summarizing' task types in most of these textbooks, except *Elementary Business Result* and *Intermediate Business Result*, which included very few of them.

The next most frequent task types were affective and interpersonal tasks, with some minor differences. Moreover, cognitive tasks were in fourth place and the last rank was devoted to cognitive task types. This is of course in contrast with Elmiana (2018) who reported interpersonal and cognitive tasks as the most frequent. However, just like our study, Elmiana (2018) also claimed that creative tasks were the least frequent type in the observed textbooks. Our results with regard to the least frequent task type runs counter to the findings of Alemi, et al. (2013), who reported that cognitive tasks were the least frequent while we observed that creative tasks were paid the least attention. In the same vein, Alemi and Hesami (2014) also found that the *Top Notch* series consisted of a sufficient number of creative tasks to help learners with different levels of intelligence to improve their communicative abilities.

As mentioned earlier, not much attention was paid to creative tasks in most of these textbooks. Creative tasks were the least frequent task types in all the books. Based on Nunan's (1999) classification, brainstorming tasks are the only creative ones. Brainstorming is used to "think of as many ideas as you can" (Nunan, 1999, p.184). As Ledbetter (2010) stated, the purpose of brainstorming is to guide people to new ways of thinking and to break away from the common way of reasoning. Rao (2007) found a positive effect of brainstorming techniques on learners who used them regularly over a period of twelve months and showed that these students gained significantly higher marks in writing tasks. Additionally, his survey revealed that students felt positive towards the effectiveness of brainstorming techniques. Underestimating such tasks in textbooks can be regarded as a great disadvantage which can cause lack of creativity, self-responsibility, and autonomy, leading to difficulties for learners' productive skills such as writing. In order to compensate for such shortage in the textbooks, teachers can use modified tasks and try to encourage learners to think about as many ideas as they can on each topic. Also, it needs to be mentioned here that interested researchers may explore the teachers' guide materials of the textbooks (these or any other textbook series) in future studies to investigate the existence of this type of task.

Analyzing the whole content of the target textbooks from a micro-level perspective revealed that some micro task types were hardly included at all. Classifying, as one type of cognitive task, was either totally ignored in some of the target textbooks or was very infrequent in others. *Elementary Business Result* and *Intermediate Business Result* did not include any classifying tasks, and other textbooks (*Advanced Business Result, Elementary Market Leader, Intermediate Market Leader* and *Advanced Market Leader*) included very few. This is alarming since, as Nunan (1999) stated, "classifying tasks require learners to put vocabulary items into their semantic groups. These tasks help learners because it is easier to memorize items that are grouped together in meaningful ways than trying to remember isolated items" (p. 185).

Predicting was also ignored by *Elementary Business Result*, and was the lowest-scoring in the other textbooks. Predicting is sub-categorized within cognitive tasks and according to Nunan (1999) "results in more effective learning" because "learners are adequately prepared for the new materials" (p. 187). This task activates learners' previous knowledge around the text and helps them make connections between what they already know and new information they can get. The strategy of making predictions actively involves students and tries to connect them to the text by requiring them to say what they think might occur in the story. Using the text, students refine, revise, and verify their thinking and predictions.

Other important cognitive tasks which have been ignored or not sufficiently presented by most of the textbooks were concept mapping and discriminating. Concept mapping helps learners show the main ideas in a text in the form of a map. Also, in terms of diagramming tasks, almost all the textbooks lacked this task type although *Elementary Business Result* included a few. According to Sokmen (1997), pictorial schemata such as diagrams emphasize distinctive features and require learners to

deeply process words by organizing words and making their meanings usual and concrete. Diagrams are also especially interesting for pair and group work.

With regard to reflecting tasks, there was no instance of this kind of task in the target textbooks. It is argued that adequate exposure of the learners to this set of language tasks would support students to become autonomous language learners (Sánchez, 2011). In the latest approaches to foreign/second language teaching, the implication of learners' own influences on their language learning through active involvement is emphasized. It is necessary for students to know their role in the learning process and to take responsibility for their learning in order to increase their independence as students and language users. According to O'Malley and Chamot (1990), students who do not reflect on their learning process "are essentially learners without direction or opportunity to plan their learning, monitor their progress, or review their accomplishments and future learning directions" (p. 8). The concept of learner autonomy as one of the results of reflecting tasks has consequences not only for the way in which learning is organized but also for the kind of knowledge that is acquired. If learners determine the goals and content of their learning, "objective, universal knowledge is replaced by subjective, individual knowledge: the learner is no longer faced with an independent reality that escapes him, to which he cannot but give way, but with a reality which he himself constructs and dominates" (Holec, 1981, p. 21).

Cooperative learning, as another sub-group of interpersonal tasks, is also an important way to change the climate of the traditional classroom in which teachers try to put data into the minds of the learners by dictating their notes and lectures (Alemi & Hesami, 2014). In addition, group work is the instructional use of small groups of students who work together to make the most of their own and each other's learning intakes (Johnson & Johnson, 1974). As Newton (2001) stated, teachers utilize some cooperative options to expose learners to new words through task-based interaction, in order to reconcile the potential benefits of tasks with cooperative learning. Moreover, group work on tasks involves learners performing beyond the capacities of any individual learner.

Considering the number of tasks used in each textbook, it is evident that in each textbook the authors endeavored to concentrate on the task types which they think are more important in the process of language learning. As the findings showed, the number of cognitive tasks was significantly higher in *Intermediate Business Result* than in the other textbooks. Although classifying, concept mapping, discriminating, and diagramming types were totally ignored and only one predicting task was included, the number of cognitive tasks was significantly higher than in the other textbooks in general. The cognitive approach mainly focuses on the mental activities that lead to successful learning. Memory and learning both require the learner to dynamically create new awareness and strategies. Learners are likely to remember better when they learn material through various distributed sessions. Consequently, the central characteristic of the cognitive approach is the focus on the processes basic to complex learning.

Results indicated that *Elementary Business Result* had more interpersonal tasks than the other textbooks. According to Nunan (1999), interpersonal tasks constitute co-operating and role-playing tasks. These start with phrases like "Work with a partner", "Give your presentation to the class" or "Present your reason to another pair" and encourage learners to share their ideas and opinions on a specific topic and help them stay interactively on the task. Moreover, in each lesson of the book, learners could find opportunities to play different roles in role play activities and use what they learn in a real-life situation. These results are in line with what *Elementary Business Result*'s authors (Grant, Hughes, & Turner, 2009) claimed: a communicative syllabus which provides pick-up-and-use business skills along with an interactive workbook with practice exercises. The results for *Elementary Business Result* are also in line with what Sahragard, et al. (2008) reported in their study, that the textbook focused mainly on pair work and meaning. They also found that it encouraged students to use the language and they demand more expressing than being only a listener.

Also, in *Intermediate Business Result,* learners are encouraged to activate their mental activities more than in other textbooks. This is carried out by asking them to predict what is to come in the learning process, look for patterns and regularities, write down the important information in a text in their own words, and use their prior knowledge for learning something new. In addition, the number of affective tasks were significantly higher in *Advanced Market Leader* than in the other textbooks with the Std. residuals of 3.2. In all the units of *Advanced Market Leader,* learners are given the opportunity to share their own opinions, feelings, and ideas about a subject in the form of personalizing tasks. Personalizing tasks, as Cordova and Lepper (1996) found out, not only increase learners' motivation but also their level of engagement in the learning process, how much they learn in a fixed time period, and their gained competence and amount of aspiration. In most of the tasks, learners were also required to check their answers with a partner or the audio in the form of self-evaluating tasks. However, in terms of reflecting tasks, no examples were observed in the whole textbook, which is quite insufficient.

Considering that the most frequent task type in all of these ESP textbooks was linguistic, it can be concluded that enhancing communicative competence is not the first priority of these textbooks. This kind of task cannot foster the communicative competence of business English learners as expected. Moreover, it does not engage learners actively in the process of real life communication which they are in dire need of. A more balanced number of tasks, based on business English learners' needs with the main focus on communicative purposes, should be implemented.

Conclusion

The thrust of the current study was to analyze and evaluate the two most popular global business textbooks *(Business Result* and *Market Leader)* in terms of their task types, based on Nunan's (1999) framework. We investigated the different task types in each series and explored the most frequent types in each. All three levels (elementary, intermediate, and advanced) were evaluated in each series. Additionally, we determined whether there is a significant relationship between task types and the

different levels of textbook within each series, as well as between the two series. The overall findings in macro-level analysis of the tasks indicated that the linguistic tasks and creative tasks were correspondingly the most and the least frequent types of tasks in these textbooks. Our careful analysis revealed that all of the macro task types introduced by Nunan (1999) were present in all of these textbooks. However, the proportion of tasks was not the same. Analyzing the whole content of the selected textbooks from a micro-level point of view indicated that most of the micro task types were also covered by these books. However, none of the textbooks allocated any tasks to concept mapping, discriminating, and reflecting tasks.

These findings can have a number of pedagogical implications for academia and practitioners in the field of ELT: first and foremost, for materials developers, especially business textbook developers and curriculum designers. As our findings indicated, a heterogeneous distribution of different task types was observed in the evaluated textbooks and across the series. For example, reflecting tasks, as a sub-category of affective tasks, were totally ignored in all of the textbooks. It needs to be noted that adequate exposure of learners to a wide variety of language tasks helps to lead to autonomous language learners (Sánchez, 2011). As O'Malley & Chamot (1990) assert, learners who are exposed to textbooks with an inadequate number of tasks may not have a good plan for their own learning and adequately observe their progress. Moreover, ESP teachers, whether in Iran or around the world, may benefit from the results of this study when selecting the kind of textbook to meet the basic needs of their prospective learners. Teachers are expected to compare different available textbooks on the market and select the best one according to the context and course at hand. Through awareness of the general layout and content of different textbooks, teachers may compensate for the drawbacks by providing students with more practice on specific issues. In addition, ESP students who are basically self-studying can also use the findings of this study.

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Appendix

Task types according to Nunan (1999) include (a) cognitive, (b) interpersonal, (c) linguistic, (d) affective, and (e) creative.

Cognitive tasks

Cognitive tasks comprise eight task types as sub-groups including: classifying, predicting, inducing, note taking, concept mapping, inferencing, discriminating, and diagramming. In order to make these tasks comprehensible, a short definition is given below for each of them.

- Classifying: putting similar things in different groups
- Predicting: foreseeing what may happen during learning
- Inducing: observing patterns and arrangements
- Note-taking: keeping a record of the important information in your own words
- Concept mapping: using a map to show the main ideas in a text
- Inferencing: learn something new using what you already know
- Discriminating: making a distinction between the main and supporting idea
- Diagramming: labeling a diagram by the use of information from a text

Interpersonal tasks

The second type of major tasks is interpersonal tasks, including co-operating and role playing.

- Co-operating: trying to share the learning experience with other students
- Role playing: imagining a new identity and use the language for the new situation

Linguistic tasks

Linguistic tasks, as the third type of macro tasks, constitute six micro task types containing: conversational patterns, practicing, using context, summarizing, selective reading/listening, and skimming.

- Conversational patterns: mastering the ability to use expressions to handle a conversation
- Practicing: doing exercises and practice to improve both knowledge and skills of learners
- Using context: guessing the meaning of words by using the context
- Summarizing: presenting the most important points in a text
- Selective reading/listening: reading or listening only for important information, not trying to comprehend every single word
- Skimming: reading or listening to a text in order to get an overall idea

Affective tasks

Personalizing, self-evaluating, and reflecting tasks are the three sub-categories of affective tasks.

- Personalizing: trying to share ideas and feelings on a specific subject
- Self-evaluating: rating yourself and evaluate how you learned
- Reflecting: considering the best learning procedure for yourself

Creative tasks

Brainstorming tasks, is the only sub-category of creative tasks. Here is a short description:

- Brainstorming tasks: encouraging the students to reflect on as many new ideas as they can