

Teaching Vocabulary and Reading Skills through Value and Etiquette-based Texts in Foreign Language Classrooms: An Expedient Endeavor?¹

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Abstract

The present study explores the use of value-and-etiquette-based reading materials for enhancing language learners' reading comprehension and vocabulary acquisition. To achieve this, the study employed a *sequential explanatory mixed-methods design*. Convenience sampling was used to select 73 B1 level language learners in two intact General English classes at Islamic Azad University, Urmia Branch in Iran as the participants of the study. Then, they were randomly assigned as an experimental group and a control group. Afterward, the researchers gave two pretests (reading and vocabulary), to both groups to discover their English level before the treatment sessions. The experimental group was provided with value-based and etiquette-awareness-raising instruction through reading comprehension texts with topics of values and etiquette as the main treatment of the study during a four-month period. Finally, the researchers administered the reading and vocabulary skills posttests to each group. The results revealed that the value-and-etiquette-based reading materials did not significantly expedite the learners' reading skills and did not change their attitudes towards the development of this skill, even though they had a beneficial impact on the learners' vocabulary learning and prompted them to adopt positive attitudes towards this aspect of the target language. The research suggested that offering guiding principles on the value-and-etiquette-based approach to language teaching in foreign language settings would be beneficial for EFL teacher educators, syllabus designers, and teachers.

Resumen

El presente estudio explora el uso de materiales de lectura basados en valores y etiqueta para mejorar la comprensión lectora y la adquisición de vocabulario de los estudiantes de idiomas. Para lograr esto, el estudio empleó un diseño secuencial explicativo de métodos mixtos. Se utilizó un muestreo por conveniencia para seleccionar a 73 estudiantes de idiomas de nivel B1 en dos clases intactas de inglés general en la Universidad Islámica Azad, Rama Urmia en Irán como participantes del estudio. Luego, fueron asignados aleatoriamente como un grupo experimental y un grupo de control. Después, los investigadores dieron dos pruebas previas (lectura y vocabulario), a ambos grupos para descubrir su nivel de inglés antes de las sesiones de tratamiento. El grupo experimental recibió instrucción basada en valores y conciencia de etiqueta a través de textos de comprensión lectora con temas de valores y etiqueta como el tratamiento principal del estudio durante un período de cuatro meses. Finalmente, los investigadores administraron las pruebas posteriores de habilidades de lectura y vocabulario a cada grupo. Los resultados revelaron que los materiales de lectura basados en valores y etiqueta no mejoraron significativamente las habilidades lectoras de los estudiantes ni modificaron sus actitudes hacia el desarrollo de esta habilidad, si bien tuvieron un impacto positivo en el aprendizaje de vocabulario y los impulsaron a adoptar actitudes positivas hacia este aspecto de la lengua meta. La investigación sugirió que ofrecer principios rectores sobre el enfoque basado en valores y etiqueta para la enseñanza de idiomas en entornos de lenguas extranjeras sería beneficioso para los formadores de docentes de inglés como lengua extranjera (EFL), los diseñadores de programas de estudio y los docentes.

Introduction

Modern societies have been created based on a group of individuals' shared values. Feather (1995) stated that human values constitute the most consequential aspect of their apprehension and perception. He noted that values comprise the standards which sway the diverse aspects of the individuals' cogitation and affection including their knowledge structure, motivation, attitudes, and social norms. Values have been classified into two categories including *social or cultural values* and *moral values*. Santrock (2007) argued that social values provide the members of society with an understanding of acceptable social conduct which is a prerequisite for social order. Moreover moral values encompass the standards which are established based on ethical considerations such as the notion of justice and they tend to have diverse manifestations in different cultures. In addition, Santrock asserted that etiquette encompasses the set of rules which delineate polite behavior in diverse areas of social life or among the members of specific groups such as the *telephone call etiquette* and *hotel reservation etiquette*.

The metaphor of the *Trojan Horse* was utilized by Cooke (1988) to characterize the status of English as a second language in foreign language contexts. He proposed that, in various regions around the globe, English serves as a symbolic artifact that enhances global communication for local language speakers. However, it gradually undermines the social standing of local languages, and eventually supplants them.

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This issue may raise significant concerns, particularly in countries like India and Ghana, where English assumes the prominent role as the language of media and education. However, it can also have detrimental effects on the acquisition of cultural values in countries where English is considered a foreign language and lacks substantial influence in the social lives of local language speakers. It is believed that moral and ideological content, discussed as *covert grammar* (Brown, 1997), are often hidden in textbook content and curriculum materials. Textbooks, exercises, illustrations, examples, and teaching methodology serve as vehicles for conveying and imparting particular messages, encompassing moral, ethical, and political perspectives that are inherent and unavoidable. While the primary focus of teaching English as a foreign language (TEFL) lies in the instruction of language itself, it is important to acknowledge that the contents of teaching materials include more than just linguistic elements. English language teaching has been recognized as a conduit for moral education, emphasizing its role in imparting ethical values, (Brown, 1997; Johnston, 2002; Shaaban, 2005). English as a second language (ESL) and English as a foreign language (EFL), language arts, literature, and social studies have been proposed by social scientists as means through which topics of international issues such as peace education, and moral education can be conveyed to learners (Sanchez, 1998; Shumer, 1999).

Research into value-based and etiquette-based language instruction (Brown, 1997; Ryan, 1986; Shaaban, 2005; Skehan, 1989) have indicated that teachers, instructional materials, and learner factors might perform leading roles in the instruction of values and etiquette. Brown (1997) noted that learners are provided with value-based instruction which is disguised as information on the cultural issues of the target language and adopt specific attitudes towards the relevant values through their language learning. Ryan (1986) suggested that EFL teachers need to discuss and promote social and moral values in the context of the classroom. As he explained, teachers have the responsibilities to "help children become ethically mature adults, capable of moral thought and action" (p. 228). Finally, Skehan (1989) pointed out learner factors such as gender, age group, and cognitive styles that might have a discernable impact on the learners' acquisition of the diverse aspects of the target language including its values, etiquette, and formal aspects, e.g. reading skill and vocabulary items.

A review of the relevant literature shows that there is a lack of research on the impact of value-based materials on English language learning, particularly with regard to vocabulary and reading skills development. While previous studies have explored the representation and transmission of cultural and moral values in English language textbooks, there has been limited investigation into how these values can effectively support language learning outcomes. For instance, studies by Li (2016) and Sulistiyo et al. (2020) have analyzed the representation of cultural values in EFL textbooks. However, none of these studies have specifically focused on the impact of value-based materials on vocabulary and reading skills development among English learners. Therefore, further research is needed to explore the relationship between value-based materials and English language learning outcomes, particularly in the areas of vocabulary and reading skills.

These issues highlight the need for more empirical studies of value-based and etiquette-awareness-raising instruction in both second and foreign language learning contexts including the EFL context of Iran. Instead of traditional textbook readings, this research uses passages rich in values and etiquette, examining their effectiveness in building vocabulary, reading skills, and positive attitudes towards such texts. It aims to replace the existing university-level reading textbook with alternative materials consisting of reading comprehension passages specifically designed to incorporate values and etiquette content. This can provide an opportunity to investigate the efficacy of teaching value-based and etiquette-topic reading texts on vocabulary learning and reading skills development. Studying learners' engagement with value-based and etiquette reading materials reveals insights into their course experience and responses. The present study has made an attempt to deal with the issues mentioned above in the Iranian EFL context. More specifically, it strived to answer the following research questions:

1. Do value-based and etiquette-based reading topics significantly affect male and female EFL learners' development of reading skills?
2. Do value-based and etiquette-based reading topics significantly affect male and female EFL learners' vocabulary learning?
3. What pattern/s of variation, if any, does value and etiquette-based reading instruction bring about in male and female learners' attitudes toward reading skill development and vocabulary learning?

Literature Review

A close study of the relevant literature (Tai, 2023; Feng, 2019; Focho, 2011) indicates that SLA researchers have examined certain aspects of value-based and etiquette-awareness-raising instruction at the expense

of others. More specifically, a number of studies (Li, 2016) have focused on the dissemination of cultural values such as individualism and egalitarianism with the help of learning comprehension texts and specific drawings in the EFL textbooks. Li investigated the transmission of cultural values through EFL textbooks used in China. The study explored the various cultural values conveyed through the texts and illustrations in the textbooks, including patriotism, respect, diligence, collectivism, and gender equity. The findings suggested that the national curriculum has been implemented in the textbooks, and that the cultural values reflected in them were influenced by the editors' and writers' perspectives. The study highlighted the importance of critically analyzing EFL textbooks in terms of the cultural values they transmit, and the need for more explicit instruction on cultural values in English language teaching. In a study, Feng (2019) explored how English language textbooks used in Hong Kong schools portrayed and gradually introduce social values to learners. The results suggested that the textbooks were more focused on the didactic education of good citizens rather than critical thinking skills. In another study, Sulistiyo et al. (2020) investigated the representation of moral values in English textbooks for young learners in Indonesia. The study aimed to examine how particular moral values were represented through lexical choices, images, and selected texts in three nationally adopted textbooks. The results showed that the value of helping others was predominantly represented in the textbooks, followed by politeness and caring. The study concluded that the textbook writers placed greater emphasis on these values as they aimed to teach them at an early age. In a similar study, Puspitasari et al. (2019) explored how moral values were integrated into primary school English language textbooks in Indonesia. Through a critical discourse analysis approach, the study examined the verbal and visual representations of moral values in three primary school textbooks. The findings revealed that helping others, being friendly and polite, and tolerance were the most frequently represented moral values. Moreover, another group of studies investigated the multicultural values in the Indonesian national English textbooks. Setyono and Widodo (2019) conducted a critical discourse analysis of the representation of multicultural values in an EFL textbook endorsed by the Ministry of Education and Culture for senior high school students. The study found four themes of multicultural values in the textbook: respect for different ethnic and religious groups, respect for indigenous people, conflict avoidance and peace with nature, and appreciation of creative cultural products.

The examination of the above-mentioned studies underlines the fact that, most of them (Li, 2016) were descriptive in nature and have not made an endeavor to determine the efficacy of value-based text modification in academic settings. Moreover, a preponderance of the pertinent studies (Setyono & Widodo, 2019) was conducted in school settings and disregarded other settings including universities and private language institutes. Third, almost none of the relevant studies examined the utility of etiquette awareness-raising instruction in the relevant language learning contexts. Fourth, all these studies focused on textbooks as the primary means of language instruction and have not included the consequential role of language teachers during the process of language learning. Fifth, none of the above-mentioned studies examined the effect of value-based instructions on the learners' acquisition of the various aspects of the target language including reading skills and vocabulary items among others. Finally, the relevant study (Setyono & Widodo, 2019) did not take learner factors (e.g., gender) into consideration and disregarded the fact that these might mediate the impact of value-based instruction on the language learners' attitudes towards social and moral values.

Method

Design

In a sequential explanatory mixed-methods design, researchers employ two distinct major phases to collect data: the quantitative phase and the qualitative phase (Creswell, 2003). Initially, researchers gather quantitative data on the pertinent variables. Subsequently, qualitative data are collected to validate the obtained quantitative data and further elaborate on the statistical results. In the present study, during pre-test, treatment, and post-test procedures, the researchers collected quantitative data on the EFL learners' reading skills and vocabulary acquisition through reading and vocabulary tests. Additionally, qualitative data on the learners' perspectives regarding the relevant variables were obtained using a semi-structured interview protocol. Both sets of data were subjected to analysis using appropriate statistical tests and content analysis.

Participants

In light of the aforementioned objectives of the study, first, the researchers employed convenience non-probability sampling to identify a total of 112 language learners from two General English classes at Islamic

Azad University, Urmia Branch in Iran. Subsequently, a subset of 73 participants, consisting of 31 males and 42 females at the B1 level (based on the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages, CEFR), was selected for inclusion in the study. Participants were included based on their confirmed B1 proficiency level, as determined by the Placement Test (Allan, 2004), and their willingness to participate. Among the selected participants, 36 individuals (20 females and 16 males) were randomly assigned to the value-based experimental reading group (VRG), while 37 individuals (22 females and 15 males) were randomly assigned to the select readings control group (SRG). These participants, aged between 18 and 24, were native speakers of Azerbaijani, Kurdish, Armenian, or Persian. Prior to commencing the research procedures, informed consent was obtained from all participants. Table 1 presents detailed profiles of the participants.

Gender	Group	N
Female	SRG	22
	VRG	20
Male	SRG	15
	VRG	16

Table 1: Participants' Profiles

Materials and instruments

Instructional materials

The present study made an endeavor to determine the impacts of teaching value-based and etiquette-awareness-raising materials on the participants' reading skills and vocabulary learning as well as their attitudes towards the value-based reading materials. Considering this objective, the researchers used six B1 level textbook chapters in order to provide the learners of the VRG with value-based, etiquette-awareness-raising, vocabulary building, and reading skill development instruction.

Each of these chapters included a persuasive reading comprehension passage, a moral story, a number of vocabulary learning tips, and specific reading skill development guidelines. The topics included helping others, taking self-responsibility, judging others, racism, and forgiveness and focused on cellphone etiquette and neighborhood etiquette. The passages took advantage of psychological and logical arguments in order to modify and sway the participants' perspectives on the relevant topic. Likewise, the moral sections in the treatment provided the experimental group with inspiring tales in order to inculcate the pertinent morals.

The SRG group was provided with six chapters from the textbook *Pre-Intermediate Select Readings* (Lee & Gunderson, 2011). This textbook was used since: a) the structure of its chapters was analogous with the structure of the chapters which were used in the treatment sessions of the experimental group; b) each of its chapters encompassed a B1 level passage on a specific topic; c) its chapters strived to amplify the language learners' reading comprehension and to improve their vocabulary acquisition; and d) it was used as a general English textbook in most of the universities Iran.

Reading skills pretest and posttest

Considering the primary objectives of the study, the researchers developed a comprehensive 30-item reading skills test, which served as the pretest and posttest for assessing the participants' reading skills before and after the relevant treatment sessions of the study (Appendix 1). This test had six 150-word B-level texts. The researchers used Cronbach's Alpha measure of internal consistency to assess the reliability of the test items. The results revealed a reliability index of 0.85, indicating a reliable research instrument. The researchers used *Google Forms* to administer the above-mentioned test, and the participants were given 40 minutes complete it.

Vocabulary pretest and posttest

In order to examine the effect of the treatment of the study on the participants' vocabulary learning, the researchers developed a 25-item multiple-choice vocabulary test as the vocabulary pretest and vocabulary posttest (Appendix 2). This test was developed based on five, 150-word B1-level reading comprehension texts. The reliability index of this test was examined by Cronbach's Alpha measure of internal consistency. Based on the results of the analysis, the reliability index of this test was 0.86, indicating a satisfactory reliability index that could be used in the present study. Like the attitudes towards values and etiquette questionnaire, the vocabulary test was administered to the participants using *Google Forms*. The had 15 minutes to complete this test.

Placement test

The researchers administered the Oxford Quick Placement Test (Allan, 2004) to determine the participants' proficiency level and to homogenize them before the beginning of the study. As Allan contended, the results of statistical analysis have accentuated the fact that the reliability and validity indices of the test are satisfactory. This test had 60 multiple-choice items and was administered to the participants with *Google Forms*. The participants had 30 minutes to complete the test.

Semi-structured interview protocol

A two-item, semi-structured interview protocol was developed to examine the participants' feelings and perspectives on the treatment sessions and to triangulate the obtained data from reading and vocabulary tests. The interviews were conducted in the participants' native language, which were translated into English for analysis.

The items of this interview protocol included flexible and adaptable questions. The interview sessions were conducted using the *Video Call* feature of the *WhatsApp* application, with each session having an approximate duration of 30 minutes. The sessions commenced with general and open-ended questions, such as "What was your general impression of this course?" This was followed by addressing specific main questions that emerged during the course of the interview, for example, "How did the course influence your attitudes towards vocabulary learning?"

Procedure

The 73 participants were randomly assigned these learners to the VRG (experimental) and SRG (control) groups. There were 36 and 37 learners in VRG and SRG, respectively. Then the researchers administered the reading skills pretest and the vocabulary pretest of the study to both of the groups in a one-week period using *Google Forms* to determine their reading skills and vocabulary before treatment sessions.

During the treatment sessions, the VRG group was provided with value-based and etiquette-awareness-raising instruction as the main treatment of the study. The instructions were delivered using the *Adobe Connect Learning Management System* over 14 sessions each lasting 90 minutes, in a four-month period. This approach to second language instruction tries to determine the impact of custom-designed instructional materials, infused with values and etiquette, on the learners' development of language skills (reading) and aspects (vocabulary). Accordingly, in this group, the researchers introduced the topic of value-based texts (e.g., the texts that made the learners aware of the importance of altruism) and moral stories and prompted the learners to read the texts and stories. Moreover, they provided the learners with adequate information on the reading skill development strategies (identifying the main idea, skimming, & scanning) and asked them to perform the relevant reading tasks. Furthermore, they directed the learners' attention to the vocabulary learning strategies (guessing meaning from context & word formation process and encouraged them to use them to complete the vocabulary tasks, such as the fill-in-the-blanks tasks. On the other hand, the SRG received the placebo treatment of the study using the same learning management system during the same period of time. More specifically, in this group, the researchers introduced the topic of the relevant texts (those texts of the pre-intermediate *Select Readings* textbook whose topics were not moral values or etiquette) and asked the learners to read them and to answer their reading comprehension questions. In addition, they provided the learners with information on the reading skill and vocabulary development strategies (repetition) of those chapters and prompted them to perform the activities.

After the end of the main treatment sessions, the researchers administered the reading skills and vocabulary posttests of the study to both of the groups in a one-week period using *Google Forms* in order to assess the impact of the main treatment of the study on the participants' reading skills and vocabulary learning. Then the researchers conducted the interview of the study over a two-week period in order to triangulate the quantitative data. Finally, the researchers used SPSS 20 and thematic analysis to analyze the quantitative and qualitative data, respectively.

Results

Quantitative data analysis

In the present study, characteristics of the obtained data were examined to determine the appropriate statistical test for performing the data analysis of the study. The preliminary data analysis revealed that the data satisfied the assumptions of parametric tests. More specifically, the data consisted of interval data and were collected independently. Additionally, the results of the Kolmogorov-Smirnov and Shapiro-Wilk tests indicated that the data followed a normal distribution.

On the basis of these issues, the parametric two-way ANCOVA test was used to perform the quantitative data analysis. This test was chosen largely because the study intended to control for the effect of the pretests (i.e., reading comprehension and vocabulary tests) as the main covariates in the study. More specifically, it aimed at preventing the covariates from influencing the dependent variables of the study including the EFL learners' development of reading skills and EFL learners' vocabulary learning.

The first research question examined the effect of value-based and etiquette-based reading topics on EFL learners' development of reading skills. Considering the purposes of this research question, the data based on the assumptions of the two-way ANCOVA test were examined. The data analysis results stressed the adherence of the data to the assumptions of this test. To provide further clarity, the outcomes of the Kolmogorov-Smirnov and Shapiro-Wilk normality tests are presented in Table 2.

Group		Gender	Kolmogorov-Smirnov			Shapiro-Wilk		
			Stat.	df	Sig.	Stat.	df	Sig.
Selected Readings Book Class	Standardized Residual for Posttest	Female	.084	22	.200	.965	22	.586
		Male	.120	15	.200	.913	15	.153
Female		.103	20	.200	.966	20	.675	
Male		.123	16	.200	.966	16	.771	

Table 2: Normality tests: EFL learners' reading skills (Posttest)

As shown in Table 2, all of the p-values were greater than .05. Therefore, the obtained data on the posttest reading skills were normally distributed. Table 3 provides the results of the Pearson Product-Moment Correlation test that examined the correlation between the covariate and the dependent variable:

Group	Gender		Coefficient Pretest	Coefficient Posttest
SRG	Female	Reading Skills Pretest	Pearson Correlation Sig. (2-tailed) N	1 .712 22
		Reading Skills Posttest	Pearson Correlation Sig. (2-tailed) N	.712 .002 22
	Male	Reading Skills Pretest	Pearson Correlation Sig. (2-tailed) N	1 .857 15
		Reading Skills Posttest	Pearson Correlation Sig. (2-tailed) N	.857 .000 15
VRG	Female	Reading Skills Pretest	Pearson Correlation Sig. (2-tailed) N	1 .756 20
		Reading Skills Posttest	Pearson Correlation Sig. (2-tailed) N	.756 .000 20
	Male	Reading Skills Pretest	Pearson Correlation Sig. (2-tailed) N	1 .798 16
		Reading Skills Posttest	Pearson Correlation Sig. (2-tailed) N	.798 .014 16

p<.05

Table 3: Correlation between the male and female EFL learners' results on the pretest (covariate) and posttest (dependent variable). Scores on reading skills

According to Table 3, the p-values were less than .05 and Pearson Correlation values were larger than 0.7. These results indicated a significant linear relationship between the covariate and the dependent variable (see Figure 1).

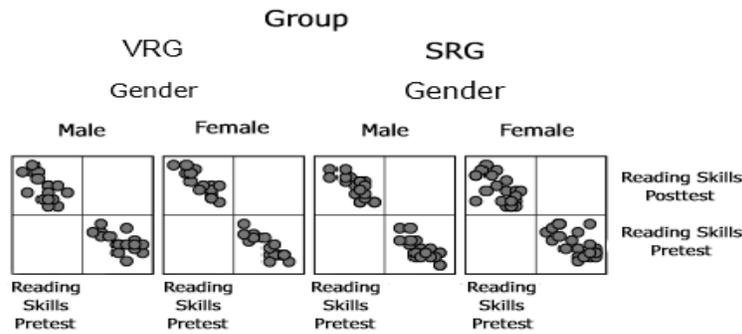


Figure 1. Correlation between EFL learners' results on the reading skills pretest and reading skills posttest.

Considering these issues, the two-way ANCOVA test was used to examine the effect of value-based and etiquette-based reading topics on EFL learners' reading skill development. Before the examination of the results of the ANCOVA test, the equality of the variances had to be determined. Table 4 provides the results of Levene's Test of Equality of Error Variances:

F	df1	df2	Sig.
.606	3	69	.613

Table 4: Levene's test of equality of error variances of the male and female EFL learners' results on the reading skills pretest and posttest

As shown in Table 4, the p-value .61 (marked as Sig.) in the results of Levene's test of equality of error variances was greater than .05. Therefore, the equality of the variances assumption was not violated and the researcher examined the results (Table 5) of the ANCOVA test.

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Corrected Model	238.658	4	59.665	18.273	.000
Intercept	39.927	1	39.927	12.228	.001
Pre-Reading Skills	227.512	1	227.512	69.680	.000
Group	3.075	1	3.075	.942	.335
Gender	6.989	1	6.989	2.141	.148
Group * Gender	3.624	1	3.624	1.110	.296
Error	222.027	68	3.265		
Total	2418.000	73			
Corrected Total	460.685	72			

Table 5: ANCOVA test of EFL learners' results of the reading skills pretest and posttest

According to Table 5, the value-based and etiquette-based instruction did not significantly improve the male and female EFL learners' reading skill development ($F(1, 68)=.942, p=.335$). Moreover, the learners' gender ($F(1, 68)=2.141, p=.148$), and the interaction between the value-based and etiquette-based instruction and the learners' gender ($F(1, 68)=1.110, p=.296$) did not significantly influence the EFL learners' reading skill development when the pretest scores were controlled. Consequently, it was determined that value-based and etiquette-based reading topics did not significantly affect the EFL learners' development of reading skills. Figure 2 shows these results:

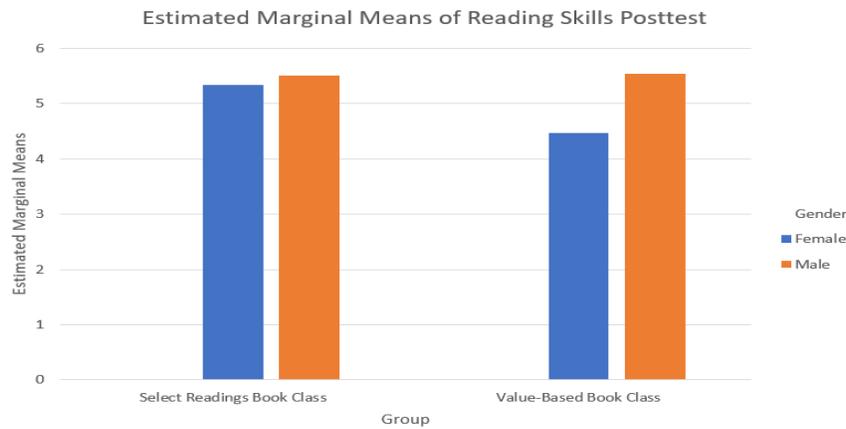


Figure 2. Comparison between EFL learners' results on the reading skills posttest.

The second research question of the study was to determine the impact of value-based and etiquette-based reading topics on EFL learners' vocabulary learning. Based on the aim of this question, the researchers examined the data based on the assumptions of the two-way ANCOVA test. The results revealed that the data did not violate the assumptions of this test (see Table 6).

Group	Gender	Kolmogorov-Smirnov			Shapiro-Wilk		
		Stat.	df	Sig.	Stat.	df	Sig.
Selected Readings Book Class	Female	.209	22	.214	.916	22	.264
	Male	.141	15	.200	.920	15	.194
Value-Based Book Class	Female	.166	20	.151	.944	20	.283
	Male	.182	16	.161	.924	16	.194

Table 6: Normality tests: EFL learners' vocabulary (posttest)

According to Table 6, the p-values in the results of the Kolmogorov-Smirnov and Shapiro-Wilk normality tests were greater than .05. Therefore, the obtained data on the vocabulary posttest were normally distributed. Moreover, Table 7 provides the results of the Pearson Product-Moment Correlation test that examined the correlation between the covariate and the dependent variable.

Group	Gender		Vocabulary Pretest	Vocabulary Posttest
SRG	Female	Vocabulary Pretest	Pearson Correlation Sig. (2-tailed) N	1 .784** 22
		Vocabulary Posttest	Pearson Correlation Sig. (2-tailed) N	.784** .004 22
	Male	Vocabulary Pretest	Pearson Correlation Sig. (2-tailed) N	1 .745* 15
		Vocabulary Posttest	Pearson Correlation Sig. (2-tailed) N	.745* .036 15
VRG	Female	Vocabulary Pretest	Pearson Correlation Sig. (2-tailed) N	1 .841* 20
		Vocabulary Posttest	Pearson Correlation Sig. (2-tailed) N	.841* .014 20
	Male	Vocabulary Pretest	Pearson Correlation Sig. (2-tailed) N	1 .760* 16
		Vocabulary Posttest	Pearson Correlation Sig. (2-tailed) N	.760* .024 16

*Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed), **Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed) p<.05

Table 7: Correlation between EFL learners' results on the pretest (covariate) and posttest (dependent variable). Scores on vocabulary.

As represented in Table 7 ($p < .05$ & $r = 0.7$), there was a significant linear relationship between the covariate and the dependent variable (see Figure 3).

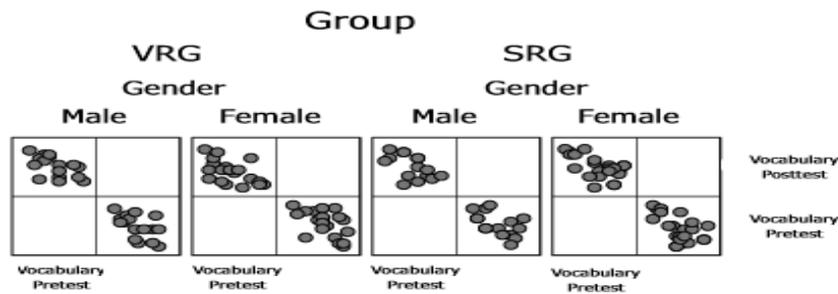


Figure 3. Correlation between EFL learners' results on the vocabulary pretest and vocabulary posttest.

The two-way ANCOVA test was run to examine the effect of the value-based and etiquette-based reading topics on the EFL learners' vocabulary learning. Before the examination of the results of the ANCOVA test, the equality of the variances had to be determined. Table 8 provides the results of the Levene's Test of Equality of Error Variances:

F	df1	df2	Sig.
1.377	3	69	.257

Table 8: Levene's test of equality of error variances of EFL learners' results on the vocabulary pretest and posttest

As shown in Table 8 ($p > .05$), the results of Levene's test of equality of error variances indicated that the equality of the variances assumption was not violated, so the researcher ran the ANCOVA test. Table 9 presents the results of this test.

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared
Corrected Model	455.469 ^a	4	113.867	8.330	.000	.329
Intercept	222.391	1	222.391	16.268	.000	.193
Pre-test	339.234	1	339.234	24.816	.000	.267
Group	245.868	1	245.868	17.986	.000	.209
Gender	3.333	1	3.333	.244	.623	.004
Group * Gender	.109	1	.109	.008	.929	.000
Error	929.572	68	13.670			
Total	10596.000	73				
Corrected Total	1385.041	72				

Table 9: ANCOVA test of EFL learners' results of the vocabulary pretest and posttest

As shown in Table 9, the value-based and etiquette-based instruction significantly improved EFL learners' vocabulary learning ($F(1,68) = 17.986$, $p = .000$). However, the learners' gender ($F(1, 68) = .244$, $p = .623$), and the interaction between the value-based and etiquette-based instruction and the learners' gender ($F(1, 68) = .008$, $p = .929$) did not significantly influence the EFL learners' vocabulary learning when the pretest scores were controlled. Therefore, it is argued that value-based and etiquette-based reading topics significantly affected the EFL learners' vocabulary learning. Figure 4 shows these results.

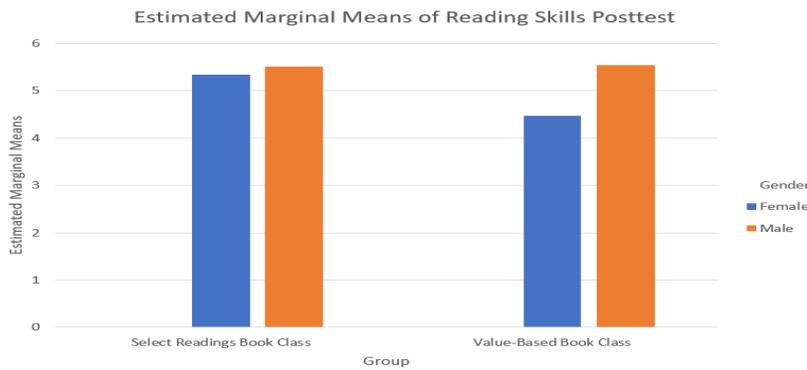


Figure 4: Comparison between EFL learners’ results on the vocabulary posttest.

Qualitative data analysis

The third research question of the study focused on the patterns of variation in the learners’ attitudes toward reading skill development and vocabulary learning which stemmed from the value and etiquette-based reading instruction of the present study. The data were collected through interviews in the participants’ native language, which were translated into English for analysis.

The analysis of the interviews indicated that, based on the participants’ opinions, the value and etiquette-based instruction did not change their attitudes toward reading skill development. The major theme which was extracted from the transcribed data could be named lack of value-and-etiquette-informed reading comprehension:

Those texts made me familiar with the social and moral values and etiquette rules. However, they did not facilitate the process of my reading. That is, they did not assist me to classify the expressed ideas of the text into certain groups and did not enable me to find the requisite information by reviewing the content of the relevant categories. (Participant 14)

The texts were not really meaningful. They were different from the reading comprehension texts that I had studied in my classes. The ideas were not grouped in the texts. I was not able to find the points that I wanted in an easy way. (Participant 9)

Furthermore, the transcribed interview was analyzed to specify the themes which focused on the learners’ perspectives on their vocabulary learning. The qualitative analysis of the data based on participants’ opinions highlighted the fact that the value and etiquette-based instruction changed their attitudes towards their vocabulary acquisition. The main theme which was extracted based on the analysis of the transcribed data could be named value-and-etiquette-assisted vocabulary learning.

Your texts were really interesting. They made me curious about the meaning of the words (e.g., the word “assist” which was a keyword in the reading with the topic of helping others) that I had not studied. I wanted to know the meaning of the words because they helped me understand the meanings of the various parts of the texts. (Participant 14)

When I read the texts, I realized that the meaning of the new words was important to the comprehension of the texts. As a result, I made an endeavor to guess their meanings with the help of the other words and sentences that were related to them. (Participant 19)

These quotations illustrated that the value-and-etiquette-laden materials attracted the learners’ attention to the vocabulary items and promoted them to learn their meanings by implementing different strategies. Table 10 provides the extracted codes and themes of the obtained interview data:

Codes	Themes
Difficulty in understanding the writers’ intended meanings Inability to determine the main ideas of the texts Overwhelming nature of the information of the texts	Lack of value-and-etiquette-informed reading comprehension
Attraction of attention to the new words of the texts Facilitation of the understanding of vocabulary items with the help of the context Ability to determine the relationships between the vocabulary items	Value-and-etiquette-assisted vocabulary learning

Table 10: The codes and themes of the interview data

Discussion

The results of the quantitative data analysis showed that value-and-etiquette-based instruction did not have a significant positive effect on the participants' reading ability. Nonetheless, based on the results, this kind of instruction significantly improved the participants' vocabulary learning. Finally, the results highlighted the fact that the participants' gender did not interact with value-and-etiquette-based instruction. That is, the interaction between gender and this type of instruction did not significantly influence the participants' reading ability and vocabulary learning in the context of the classroom.

Setyono and Widodo (2019) pointed out that value and etiquette-laden materials might have a high capacity to attract and direct the language learners' attention to specific formal aspects of the target language including diverse kinds of phrasal vocabulary (e.g., collocations), individual words, and grammatical structures among others. They stated that these types of materials arouse the learners' curiosity about the denotative and connotative aspects of the above-mentioned formal aspects of the target language and prompt them to formulate and implement different types of strategies to make educated guesses about their semantic and pragmatic functions in the relevant texts. Considering the Vocabulary learning results, the findings of the current study is in line with the findings obtained by Setyono and Widodo.

On the other hand, Li (2016) argued that value-based and etiquette-based instructional reading texts do not empower language learners to classify the authors' ideas into distinct categories on the basis of their underlying and prominent features. He explained that the lack of systematic organization of the authors' ideas does not expedite the learners' cognitive processing of their content and does not effect their second language reading comprehension. As he concluded, the inherent structural idiosyncrasies of the value-based and etiquette-based reading materials may result in the lack of their instructional supremacy over the commercially produced materials of the target language. It appears that the findings regarding the development of reading skills are consistent with Li's study, whereas the outcomes pertaining to vocabulary acquisition do not align with its conclusions.

The present study found that value-based and etiquette-based reading comprehension texts did not significantly enhance EFL learners' reading skill development, as they did not facilitate faster cognitive processing of the reading materials. On the other hand, these texts improved the learners' vocabulary learning since they attracted and directed their attention to vocabulary items, made them cognizant of the semantic and pragmatic aspects of the relevant words, and exhorted them to develop the mental taxonomies of the ideas of the texts.

The third research question examined the possible modifications in the learners' attitudes toward their reading skills and vocabulary learning which stemmed from the value and etiquette-based reading instruction in the present study. The findings of the qualitative data analysis highlighted the fact that the above-mentioned type of instruction did not affect the learners' attitudes toward the reading skills. Based on the findings, it had a beneficial effect on the learners' attitudes toward vocabulary learning. These results are partially in line with the results of the study carried out by Setyono and Widodo (2019).

The findings of the qualitative data analysis are consistent with Li (2016), who argued that value-laden texts have the potential for raising learners' awareness of the formal aspects of the second language, particularly those that communicate value-laden meanings in reading comprehension texts. Similar to our results, where value- and etiquette-based instruction significantly improved participants' vocabulary learning by attracting their attention to new words and encouraging strategies like contextual guessing, Li noted that such materials direct learners' conscious attention to the relevant vocabulary items used to convey discussed values. This process helps learners to transform textual input into intake, expediting long-term acquisition of words, and fostering positive perspectives on second language form acquisition—mirroring how our participants reported increased curiosity and engagement with vocabulary (e.g., Participant 14's emphasis on understanding keywords like "assist" to grasp text meanings).

In contrast, our findings on reading skills development diverge somewhat from Santrock (2007), who posited that value-based materials do not facilitate the learning process of second language texts, primarily due to the lack of systematic presentation of authors' ideas across text sections. While Santrock explained that these texts fail to classify inherent ideas into specific categories, thereby hindering learners' ability to detect general and specific information and demotivating positive attitudes toward value- and etiquette-laden reading, our quantitative results showed no significant improvement in reading skills. However, this aligns partially with our qualitative data, where participants (e.g., Participant 9) described the texts as lacking clear grouping of ideas, making information retrieval challenging and failing to change attitudes toward

reading—though unlike Santrock's broader developmental focus, our study attributes this to the texts' structural complexities rather than purely motivational deficits in an EFL context.

Considering the above-mentioned issues, it can be stated that in the present study, value and etiquette-based reading instruction did not improve learners' attitudes toward their reading skills since it did not lead the learners to detect general and specific information by examining the relevant categories of ideas in the relevant texts. Nonetheless, it had an advantageous effect on the learners' attitudes towards vocabulary learning due mainly to the fact that it raised their awareness of the vocabulary items of the second language.

Conclusion

This study was conducted to explore the efficacy of value-and-etiquette-based reading materials in improving the reading skills and vocabulary acquisition of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners within the EFL context of Iran. The results showed that the use of value-and-etiquette materials had a significant impact on vocabulary-related learning and the cultivation of positive attitudes toward vocabulary learning despite the influence of gender. The reading texts were found to be engaging by learners because they said they invoked curiosity regarding new word meanings and gave them practice in learning strategies, such as working out meanings from context and relating words to one another. However, the reading materials did not improve the learners' reading skills or develop favorable attitudes toward reading development. In corroboration, the qualitative data reinforced the point that though for vocabulary learning these materials were fascinating since they were felt to be meaningful and value-laden, they had less influence on reading comprehension most likely due to their structural complexities in idea classification and information retrieval.

The results imply that, in EFL contexts, materials centered on value-and-etiquette have great potential as a tool for vocabulary teaching. They encourage students to really interact with the target languages lexical elements by presenting new words and supporting contextual learning. Still, their limited influence on reading ability points up the need for more organized text designs that support cognitive processing and understanding. The limitations of the study—the use of convenience sampling and a somewhat limited number of B1-level students from a given cultural background—suggest caution in applying these findings to more general groups. Concentrating just on one skill level and one cultural environment might also limit the relevance of the results to many EFL contexts.

Further studies should explore value-and-etiquette based teaching at various levels of proficiency, age groups, and in different cultures in order to discover how it functions. Additionally, researchers could investigate its effect on other language skills such as writing, speaking or listening and learner factors such as motivation, self-efficacy or language learning anxiety in order to get a more complete picture. In light of the need for content rich input and vocabulary learning, it was argued here that themes and structured reading frames also represent an important avenue for syllabus designers and teachers to explore in order to maintain a proper balance between the development of reading skills and vocabulary acquisition. Teacher training programs could focus on raising awareness of the hidden values and etiquette in the instructional materials so that teachers can address them thoughtfully. By aligning value-and-etiquette based materials with learners' native cultural frameworks while exposing them to the target language's cultural nuances, EFL instruction can develop linguistic proficiency and cultural competence so learners can navigate the globalized world while staying rooted in their local values and etiquette.

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Appendix 1

Sample of Reading Skills Pre-test and Post-test

Reading Comprehension: Passage 2

How often one hears children wishing they were grown up, and old people wishing they were young again. Each age has its pleasures and its pains, and the happiest person is the one who enjoys what each age gives him properly. Childhood is a time when there are few responsibilities to make life difficult. A child finds pleasure in playing in the rain, or in the snow. But a child has his pain: he is not so free to do as he wishes as he thinks older people are. When the young man starts to earn his own living, he becomes free from the discipline of school and parents. If he breaks the laws of society as he used to break the laws of his parents, he may go to prison. If, however, he works hard, keeps out of trouble, he can have the great happiness of seeing himself make steady progress in his job and of building up for himself his own position in society. With old age should come wisdom and the ability to help others with advice wisely given. They can watch their children and their grandchildren growing up around them. They feel the happiness of having come through the battle of life safely and of having reached a time when they can lie back and rest, leaving others to continue the fight.

- What can be a good topic for this reading?
 - being young is better
 - which age has more pleasure for life
 - in which age should come wisdom
 - feelings about getting older
- According to the passage, the happiest person is the one who...?
 - enjoys the time of his childhood
 - gets the most advantage of his age
 - starts to earn his own living
 - keeps out of trouble all through his life
- What is the main idea of this passage?
 - Childhood is a time when there are few responsibilities to make life difficult.
 - the happiest person is the one who enjoys what each age gives him properly.
 - different ages in life
 - happiness from childhood to being an old person

Appendix 2

Sample of Vocabulary Pre-test and Post-test

Part A: Sample of Select Readings Texts Vocabulary Test Items

Choose the best answer.

- When he saw a street sign, he thought it was a person. So, he was -----.
 A) sleeping B) hallucinating C) imagining D) illustrating
- She chose Oxford House College, mainly because it had ----- fees.
 A) believable B) decent C) illogical D) reasonable
- Ali didn't get the job. The manager told him that he was too-----and they want someone with more experience.
 A) green B) blue C) red D) black and white

Part B: Sample of Value-based Texts Vocabulary Test Items

Choose the best answer.

- He always has a good ----- . He is a very good guy.
 A) attitude B) senior C) victim D) disaster
- You made a ----- choice, by letting your friend get the scholarship instead of you.
 A) mental B) satisfied C) selfless D) blessing
- The exam was ----- I will pass it with good grades
 A) out of the blue B) plain as day C) when pigs fly D) a piece of cake