

Construction and Validation of Text Book Evaluation Scale Based on Post Method Pedagogy

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Abstract

Textbooks are the important components of a curriculum. Therefore, appropriate textbooks consistent with innovations in teaching are highly required. The review on EFL textbooks evaluation shows that up to the present no scale which takes into account the principles of post method, has been developed. The main objective of the presents study was to develop and validate a book evaluation scale wherein the principles of post method are observed. In doing so, a mixed research design consisting of two phases (Qualitative and quantitative) was used. First, the evaluation checklist consisting of 35 items was constructed and content validated by a group of experts. Second, 300 EFL teachers and learners were selected through convenience sampling. The construct validity of the scale was estimated through a confirmatory factor analysis using LISREL software. Results showed that the scale consists of ten dimensions. The findings have theoretical and practical implications for textbooks developers as well as EFL teachers and learners.

Key words: construct validation, Confirmatory factor analysis, Textbook evaluation, post method

1. Introduction

Textbooks are known as the most important component of any language program (Brown, 2007; Byrd, 2001; Pakkan, 1997, Richards, 2001). Nowadays, evaluation and adaption of materials which best fit the language learners' needs is becoming very vital for almost all levels in language teaching (Radic-Boljanic & Topalav, 2016). Although textbooks are developed by professional text book writers, it is very difficult to find a perfect textbook. As Cunningsworth (1995) believes, a comprehensive evaluation helps to determine to whether the textbook is consistent with the curriculum, whether it meets the language learners' needs, and what aspects of language are taken into account more (Radic-Boljanic & Topalav, 2016).

Language teachers have many reasons for preferring the use of trading textbooks in their classrooms (Brown, 2007; Byrd, 2001; Pakkan, 1997. As Cunningsworth (1994, 1995) believes, there are seven commonly cited considerations to be addressed in textbook evaluation. First, textbooks used for a particular course should fit the curriculum. Secondly, textbooks should meet the needs of the students they are addressing. Thirdly, textbooks should meet teachers' needs. Fourthly, the author's and/or publisher's backgrounds should be considered. As the fifth and sixth considerations, teachers should evaluate textbooks in terms of their physical characteristics and logistics. Lastly, physical conditions of the setting in which the textbook will be used should be kept in mind during evaluation.

Textbook evaluation is a complex process, which is often carried out in two stages: External evaluation and internal evaluation. External evaluation, the first stage, occurs when teachers evaluate the textbook by analyzing its contents, organization, explanations, and exercises. External evaluation can be done in two ways: beginning evaluation and detailed evaluation. In initial evaluation, teachers look at the preface, contents, and the abstract of the textbook often on the back cover, in order to determine whether the textbook is suitable for learners' needs and the purposes of the course. Detailed evaluation, on the other hand, is a process in which teachers use checklists and evaluation forms to complete a more objective evaluation of the textbook.

In the second stage of evaluation, internal evaluation, teachers try to evaluate the effectiveness of textbooks while actually using them in their classes. Macro evaluation' and 'micro evaluation' are two ways of internal evaluation. Macro evaluation can be defined as an overall assessment of whether the textbooks actually work in classroom settings. In micro evaluation, teachers choose one particular unit or a task and evaluate its usefulness and suitability in detail (Ellis, 1997; McDonough & Shaw, 1993; Pakkan, 1997). Teachers can make use of any of these evaluation methods to make sure that the textbook that they may use or that they are using is best suited to their students' needs, their needs as teachers, and institutional requirements.

Using a textbook in language teaching has different advantages (Graves, 2000; Richards, 2001; Tomlinson, 1999; 2001; 2003; 2006; 2008). First of all, textbooks are prepared by experienced and well-qualified professionals. Secondly, textbooks are usually guided in real teaching environments before they are published. As a third reason, Graves (2000), and Tomlinson (1998) recommend that textbooks provide useless help to not experienced teachers and a group of useful opinions, tasks, and activities for high experienced teachers. Textbooks often provide the framework for course syllabi since what will be learned and taught, and the order in which it will be taught, has already been defined by the author(s) of the textbook. Moreover, a language textbook can help teachers to save time textbooks often provide a set of visuals, activities, readings, exercises, tasks, and so on that can be used to arrange class times. Another advantage of using a textbook is that it often provides supporting materials like cassettes, worksheets, audio-visuals, and/or manuals. Maintaining a degree of consistency among teachers who teach the same course is another source of usefulness for using a textbook as individual teachers bring different professional backgrounds and personality traits into the classroom (Graves, 2000; Pakkan, 1997).

Zohrabi (2011) argues that textbooks, should be assessed at each stage of the class in order to find their feebleness in order to make them better. As Tomlinson (2006) explains, no textbook is ideal, since it can be used by different students in different conditions. In assessing a textbook, we need to know how it brings learners' needs. Evaluation might be different from one context to another according to the purposes, needs, and abilities of the evaluators. Assessment of textbooks is an advantageous way of teacher development and gives beneficial perception to the teachers.

Ellis (1997), Grant (1987), McDonough & Shaw (1993), and Pakkan (1997) all agree that looking through a textbook, as part of an initial evaluation, can be a complete individual form of evaluation; therefore, detailed evaluation is needed for more reliable and objective evaluation since it usually supply information about how the materials are organized. Moreover, detailed evaluation shows information about vocabulary, study skills, and functions that are to be covered. In the second type of evaluation, internal evaluation, teachers evaluate the usefulness of textbooks while really using them in their classrooms (Grant, 1987; McDonough & Shaw, 1993). Ellis (1997) and Pakkan (1997) label this type of evaluation as in-use evaluation, or retrospective evaluation. Internal evaluation can be carried out in two ways: macro evaluation and micro evaluation (Ellis, 1997). Macro evaluation is defined as total assessment of whether the textbooks worked well or not during teaching. In micro evaluation, the teacher chooses one particular unit or a teaching task and evaluates it in more detail in terms of its effectiveness and suitability (Ellis, 1997).

Primarily, textbooks should be suitable for the age level and language proficiency of learners (Brown, 1995; Byrd, 2001; McDonough & Shaw, 1993; Pakman, 1997). Brown (1995) suggests that students with no language education background would have difficulty with textbooks that do not supply necessary background knowledge for what is being taught and learned. Teachers should also consider students' aims for learning a language. Students may need the target language to advance in their academic studies or survive when they go abroad. In the first case, textbooks addressing skills and strategies needed to support educational study could be considered as suitable textbooks, whereas, in the second case, textbooks that provide learners with position to the target language culture and general daily usage of the language would be a good match with the needs of the students (Brown, 1995; Byrd, 2001; Graves, 2000; Pakkan, 1997).

Students' attentiveness should also be taken into consideration while assessing a textbook (Brown, 1995; Byrd, 2001; Graves, 2000; McDonough & Shaw, 1993; Pakkan, 1997; Richards, 2001). Ideally, teachers should know a lot about their students (Byrd, 2001; Pakkan, 1997) in order to compare objectively what the textbook offers and the extent to which there is equivalent between the books and students' profits. The textbook should include tasks, activities, and content that interest students so that students become more motivated to learn.

Post method principles Kumaravadivelu (2003) recommended the concept of the “post method era” bring a move further methods. He defined it as: a sustainable state of connections that leads us to construct our view of language teaching and teacher education. It leads us to evaluate the situation and content of classroom teaching in all its instructional and ideological perspectives. It derives us to stream our teacher education by rebuilding the reified relationship between theory and practice. The concept of post method, in contrast to method, is based on the view that none of the methods or approaches seems to deal convincingly with foreign language teaching. That there is not any convincing benefit in using individual method for every particular context of language learning. The supporters of post method believe that language learning and teaching are so important and effective by so many contextual factors that adoption of a particular method is really absurd (Cattel, 2009).

Contrary to the nature of method which considers learners and teachers as slaves, post method suggests that teachers can bring their own methods and theories of practices on the basis of local contextual variables and experiences in their real teaching situations. In this regard, Kumaravadivelu (1994) makes a distinction between the concepts of post method and method; as the latter implies that theorizers construct “knowledge-oriented” theories of instruction such as the previous highlights practitioners’ construction of “classroom-oriented” theories of practices. Thus, while method has its roots in theory and knowledge centeredness, post method derives its guiding principles based on individuality, practicality, and localness of second language situations. Kumaravadivelu (2001) said the three elements of post method as particularity, practicality, and possibility. ‘Particularity’ refers to situational analysis (Elliott, 1993). Instructional practices according to Kumaravadivelu (2001, p.538) are responsive to a specific group of teachers teaching a particular group of learners follow a particular set of aims within a particular situational condition in a specific sociocultural situation. It means language teaching should be reactive to the conditions, which comprises learners, teachers and sociocultural factors. Totally, instruction should be restricted in the sense that teachers need to account all of the linguistic, social, cultural, and political particularities of language pedagogy.

With attention to ‘practicality’, Kumaravadivelu (2001) think that there needs to be harmony between theories and practices. In other words, what teachers hypothesize should correspond with exercises in the real situation of classrooms. Theories and exercises inform and re-inform one another (Zakeri, 2014). Appropriately, a theory is senseless unless it can be used in practice. This dimension of post method pedagogy also calls for teacher autonomy as language teachers perceive good teaching in their own ways. Teachers’ reflection and action can be another focus which is based on teachers’ insights and intuition. By drawing on first and continual experiences, teachers can gain productive ideas about the practice of good teaching. The factor of ‘possibility’ suggests that language teaching and learning should be in relation with sociocultural and political environment outside the classroom. It concerns not only linguistic and cultural knowledge but also identity formation and social transformation. It should supply situations and challenges for learners to search for subjectivity and self-identity. Thus, pedagogy is not like as transmission of information to learners, rather as the relation between linguistic needs and political requirements. It needs to be point out that Kumaravadivelu’s model also requires educational indicators referring to the key participants’ parts in L2 learning and teaching. While their conceptualizations correspond with those three elements, the parts of learners and educators are of paramount importance as they influence all features of pedagogy from take a decision, organization, to implementing the goals and activities. Based on this frame, teachers’ part is important as they construct educational theories according to their own past and present learning theories and experiences, and activities in real conditions. They are also expected to have autonomy, knowledge, skills, and information about theoretical and practical aspects of language teaching and learning.

Learners in Kumaravadivelu’s (2006) post method sense are not mere recipients of knowledge, while they are supposed to actively participate in pedagogic decision making and increase their autonomy through learning to learn. So, learners as analytical thinkers need to be authorized and liberated through recognizing and challenging the sociopolitical conditions which prevent them from recognizing their humanistic potentials.

Furthermore, Kumaravadivelu’s (2006) strategic frame for second language teaching included macro strategies and micro strategies, which present many crucial findings of second language accession research, including output theory, input theory, autonomy, and strategy training (Alemi& Daftarifard, 2010).

The macro strategies which are based on real classroom conditions and data include increasing learning opportunities, facilitating negotiated interaction, minimizing perceptual misunderstanding, activating self-discovery, encouraging learner autonomy, promoting learner consciousness, contextualizing linguistic input, integrating language skills, ensuring social relevance and increasing cultural awareness.

According to Kumaravadivelu (2006), macro strategies are wide guidelines which are theory-neutral and method-neutral because they are not based on underlying assumptions of one specific theory, or on a single set of principles or procedures associated with any language method.

1.1. The present study

The present study aimed at construction and validation of a textbook book evaluation based on the principles of the post method. In doing so, the following research questions were raised:

- 1.1.1 What are the factors (dimensions) of textbook evaluation scale developed based on the principles of post-method pedagogy?
- 1.1.2 To what extent, does the developed scale meet appropriate psychometrics features?

2. Method

2.1. Participants of the Study

Two groups of participants were invited to take part in the study. The first group consisted of 16 assistant or associate professors of TEFL at different universities in Tehran. They were selected to elaborate on the content validity of the developed scale. The second group consisted of 300 EFL teachers at different language institutes in Tehran. The criterion for inclusion of the teachers in the study was teaching experience of no less than five years. The second criterion for inclusion of the teachers was holding at least BA in either TEFL or English language related majors.

2.2. Design

In this study, both qualitative and quantitative research designs were used. Different phases of scale development and validation are described in details as follows.

2.2.1. Phase I

The initial phase of the scale development consisted of three steps. In the first phase, the researchers analyzed the contents of the books and papers on post method pedagogy. In the second phase, the main themes of the each principle were restated in complete sentences. That is, meaningful descriptions of principles were identified, coded, and compared; then, a preliminary classification into categories was performed. In the third step, each item was followed by a 5- point Likert scale: 1 (strongly disagree), 2 (disagree), 3 (neutral), 4 (agree), and 5 (strongly agree).

2.2.2. Phase II

In the first step of this phase, the 35 items were submitted to a panel of 10 experts teaching English as a foreign language. The panel members were asked to determine whether each item was appropriate, accurate, and representative: 1 = irrelevant and should be deleted, 2 = seemingly relevant but large-scale revision was required, 3 = relevant but in need of small adjustments, and 4 = relevant, clear and precise. The instrument was, then, revised accordingly.

In the next step, for the sake of readability and clarity, revisions were made to eliminate awkward wording in some items. Then, the experts categorized the items into 10 main categories, each consisting of three items. After revising the wording, content, and item order, the original 35 items became 30 items.

In the next step, the language of the instrument was reviewed for clarity by 30 EFL teachers who were selected for the study. During the process of completing the survey, the teachers did not express any problems in understanding the item wording and meaning, demonstrating its face validity. In the final step of the second phase, a total of 300 EFL teachers at all education districts in Tehran were selected through multi-phase sampling procedure. The participants at each stage were selected through convenience sampling. The teachers were also informed that they were allowed either fill in the questionnaire or to quit the study.

The questionnaires were anonymous, and the participants' consent was obtained on a tear-off form. The return rate was 95%. The data from the 300 returned questionnaires were analyzed using the Lisrel.

2.3. Data Analysis

The data of the study were analyzed in different ways. In order to estimate the internal consistency of the dimensions of the scale, Cronbach alpha for each dimension was calculated. In addition, the construct validity of the scale and its dimensions were estimated through confirmatory factor analysis using LISREL8.72 software.

3. Results of the study

In this section, results including internal consistency of the scale and its components are presented.

3.1. Internal consistency of the scale

The internal consistency of the 10 factors of the scale was calculated through running Cronbach alpha. The results are shown in Table 1.

As it is shown in the table 1, all dimensions of the scale enjoyed an acceptable internal consistency ($\alpha > 0.8$).

3.2. Results of confirmatory factor analysis (CFA)

In this part of the research, the results of the confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) for each of the variables analyzed by LISREL8.72 software are presented separately. In CFA, the researchers know the items of each variable. That is, there is a conceptual model for each of the research variables. In CFA, the factor loadings (standard coefficients) and the coefficients of significance between the components and the related variables are obtained. The standard coefficients should be more than 0.5, and the high standard coefficient indicates that a high percentage of common variance of the variable is predicted by the factors. Also, the significance coefficients for each path should be higher than 1.96, so that at 95% confidence level, one can claim that the relationship between the components and the mentioned variable are significant (Ramin Mehr & Charstad, 2013).

Confirmatory factor analysis for the questions of all dimensions each containing of three items was run. In Figure 1, the values of the standard coefficient (factor loadings) are shown and in Figure 2 the significance coefficients of the relationship between these variables and their components (questionnaire items) are shown.

The loading factors are presented in Figure 1. Rejection or confirmation of each path of the model depends on the loading factors in standard estimation and the T- values presented in Figure 2. As all values are significant, the relationship between all components and the variable is significant.

The model's fitness indicators are presented in Table 1. The results of the estimation in the Lisrel report indicate that fitness indicators are appropriate. Regarding the results obtained and comparing it with the acceptable range, it can be admitted that all the model's fitness indices are in an acceptable range; therefore, the model is confirmed.

4. Discussion

As presented in Figures 1 & 2 and table 2 all the items of each factors had good and acceptable loadings factors. Moreover, the relationship between all factors and the variable was significant and it can be strongly argued that the scale consisted of 10 factors which are explained in details as follows. It was also shown that the model had an acceptable fitness of goodness.

4.1. Factor One: Maximizing Learning Opportunities

The first macro strategy, increasing learning opportunities, nevertheless, see teaching as a process of creating and using learning chances. If we, as we must, treat classroom activity as a social event which set up by teachers and learners (Breen, 1985), so teachers are inventors of learning opportunities created by learners. As producers of learning chances, it is important that teachers create a balance between their role as designers of teaching acts and their role as mediators of learning acts. Creation of successful learning opportunities thus requires a desire on the part of teachers to adjust their lesson plans constantly on the basis of feedback from their learners. This can be done only if teachers had a predetermined syllabus that is to be confronted to meet specific learner needs, desires, and situations and treat a prescribed text as a material which is to be used as a set in classrooms. As maker of learning opportunities created by learners, it is critical that teachers no longer see "teachers simply as teachers, and learners just as learners, because both are, for good or ill, creators of learning" (Allwright, 1984, p. 156).

4.2. Factor 2: Facilitate Negotiated Interaction

This macro strategy refers to pertinent learner-learner and learner-teacher communication in class. Therefore, it could be strongly argued that EFL Textbook should enable learners to move beyond their current receptive and expressive capacities and modify and restructure their interaction with their interlocutors, should provide learners with group and small-group activities to facilitate negotiation among learners, and should consist of enough referential questions rather than display questions. This finding has been verified by several related studies (e.g., Pica, Holliday, Lewis, & Morgenthaler, 1989; Schmidt & Frota, 1986; Swain, 1985) show that negotiated communication can be easier through several micro strategies.

Designing group activities is one of them. Small-group arrangements by nature produce more interaction than do teacher centered exercises and research shows that native partners produce more frequent negotiations of meaning than do nonnative partners (Varonis & Gass, 1985). Asking referential questions which let open-ended answers, rather than display questions which have presupposed answers, is another micro strategy that can generate meaningful changes among the learners (Brock, 1986).

4.3. Factor 3: Minimize Perceptual Mismatches

A serious factor that determines the success or failure of negotiated communication in the classroom is the perceptual match or mismatch between teacher aims and learner clarification. There are at least 10 main sources of perceptual mismatches that textbook developers should be aware of. They are listed as cognitive, communicative, linguistic, pedagogic, strategic, cultural, evaluative, and, educational, attitudinal, and procedural. Therefore, in line with Kumaraveli (1996), the textbooks content should be designed so meticulously that all sources of the mismatches between language learners and textbooks materials are minimized as much as possible.

4.4. Factor 4: Activate Intuitive Heuristics

All items related to this factor have acceptable loading factors. Therefore, it is argued that the materials in the textbooks should be designed "in such a way as to give free play to those elements that humans bring to the process of language learning and create a linguistic domain for the intuitive heuristics that the human being totally have" (Macintyre, 1970, p. 108). Moreover, the textbooks need to provide enough textual data so that the learner can infer certain underlying grammatical rules, and grammatical information should be conveyed not directly through rules but indirectly through examples. It can also be inferred that the language learners should have the chance to practice the linguistic structure so many times so that "the design of the language may be observed, and its meaning (structural, lexical, and sociocultural) inductively learned from its use in such different situations" (Rivers, 1964, p. 152).

4.5. Factor Five: Fostering Language Awareness

The next principle which also consists of three main themes deals with self-discovery and learners' awareness of awareness of positive and negative aspects of L2 and significance of L1 learning. Moreover, the materials should be designed in such a way that self-discovery activities are preferred to explicit explanation of the rules. The syllabus is arranged in such a way that self-discovery activities are preferred to explicit explanation of the rules. The importance of fostering language awareness was also mentioned by several researchers of the field (Gass, 1991; James & Garret, 1991; Hawkins, 1984; Rutherford, 1987, Smith, 1981, 1991).

4.6. Factor Six: Contextualizing Linguistic Input

Based on the results of the study, as the related items are highly related with this factor, it can be argued that words have to be presented in sentences, and sentences are practiced in meaningful contexts rather than taught as isolation and linguistic input has to be contextualized for learners to benefit from the interactive effects of various linguistic components. Therefore, it can be argued that the phonological forms L2 learners produce, depend crucially on the content of discourse (Avery, Ehrlich, & Yorio, 1985), and syntactic, semantic, and pragmatic features cannot be understood as isolated linguistic elements with a single direction information flow (Gass, 1986).

4.7. Factor Seven: Integrate Language Skills

Three items of the questionnaire belonged to the importance of integrating language skills. Results of confirmatory factor analysis showed that the items were significantly correlated with this factor. Therefore, it can be strongly argued that language skills and sub-skills need to be integrated in the textbooks.

The textbooks need to be provided with activities for both receptive and productive language skills. Moreover, forms and functions of language need to be presented through the textbooks activities. This finding is consistent with studies by some of the researchers (e.g., Arens, & Morgan, 1982; Kost, 1990, Krashen, 1989, Selinker & Tomlin, 1986S).

4.8. Factor 8: Promoting Learner Autonomy

In line with the results of the present study, it can be argued that the textbooks should consist of activities which help language learners learn how to learn, equip language with the means necessary to self-direct their own learning, they should consist of activities which help learners understand what the learning strategies are and how to use them for accomplishing various problem-solving tasks, and finally the textbooks should consist of activities which help learners learn how to monitor their performance and how to assess the outcome of their learning. This finding is also in line with the results of some studies which focused on learner freedom (Cohen, 1990; Ellis & Sinclair, 1989; Wenden, 1991) has prepared us with useful vision into what learners know and do to regulate their own learning process and what teachers should know and can do to promote learner autonomy.

4.9. Factor 9: Raising Cultural Consciousness

The results also show that the three items which show the importance of raising cultural consciousness have good loading factors. Therefore, the material developers have to avoid cultural misunderstandings and miscommunications in the textbooks and make use of language learners' L1 culturally related issues. The textbooks should also consist of the textbooks through which through which language learners can share their cultural knowledge with the other learners and teachers. Thus, as Stern (1992) reiterates, "one of the most important purposes of culture teaching is to help the learner gain an understanding of the native speaker's viewpoint "(p. 215).

4.10. Factor Ten: Ensuring Social Relevance

The last factor emerged is ensuring social relevance. That is, in the EFL text books cross-cultural misunderstandings and miscommunications need to be avoided, they need to be sensitive to the societal, political, economic, and educational environment in which L2 learning/teaching takes place, and the textbook's activities/exercises in target language are complementary or supplementary to the local/regional language(s). The three items have acceptable loading factors. Therefore, it could be strongly argued that ensuring social relevance can be seen as a construct of book evaluation scale. The significance ensuring social relevance of the ELT curriculum has also been confirmed by a couple of researchers (Beebe, 1985; Berns, 1990; Breen, 1985, Kashrut, 1985, Kumaravedelu, 1995; Lowenberg, 1990).

5. Conclusions

In line with the findings of the study, it can be concluded the textbook materials should be designed so carefully that the teachers can maximize learning opportunities and reduce different mismatches among the learners and the content of ELT program. In addition, through the textbooks activities, teachers and language learners can know about the significance of the cultural and their L1 values. Moreover, material developers have to avoid materials and activities biased to a particular ethnicity and detrimental to a group of language learners. Finally, it can be concluded that EFL textbook developers need to be familiar with all principles of post-method pedagogy and they have to do their best to take them all into account while developing a textbook for EFL learners.

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Appendices

Table 1: Internal consistency of the dimensions of the book evaluation scale

Factors	One	Two	Three	Four	Five	Six	Seven	Eight	Nine	Ten
Cronbach alpha	0.83	0.87	0.91	0.92	0.83	0.8	0.861	0.891	0.90	0.92

Table 2: Fitness of book evaluation model

Fitness index	χ^2/df	RMSEA	GFI	AGFI	NFI	NNFI	CFI
Acceptable range	< 3	< 0.1	> 0.9	> 0.9	> 0.9	> 0.9	> 0.9
Result	2.366	0.066	0.97	0.96	0.99	0.98	0.99

Figure 1: Standardized Coefficients of the model

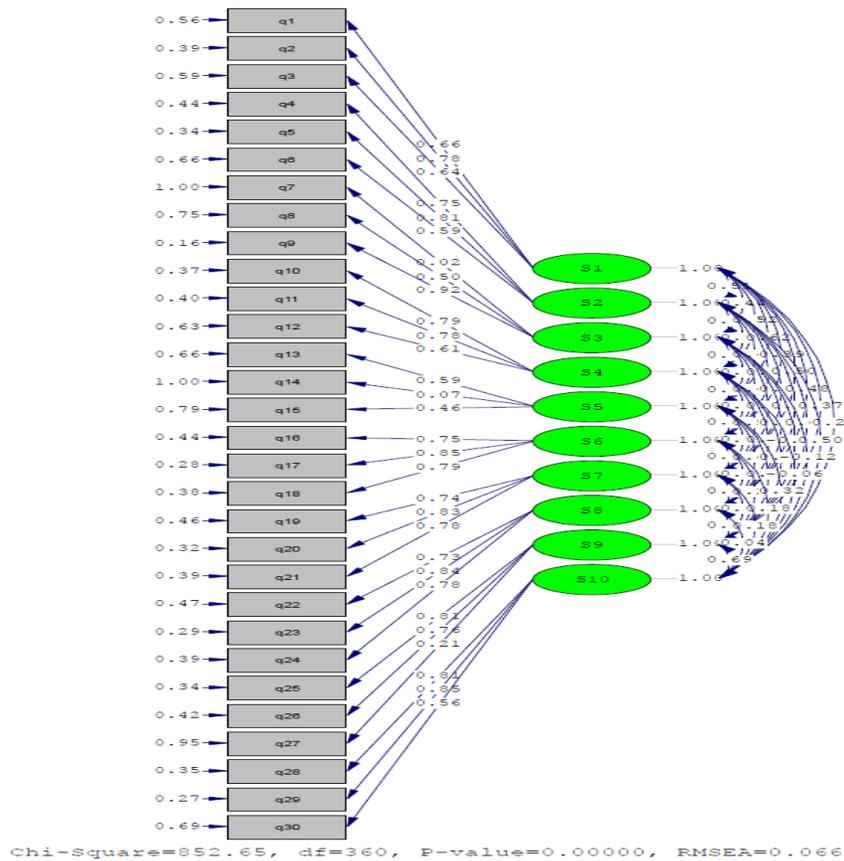
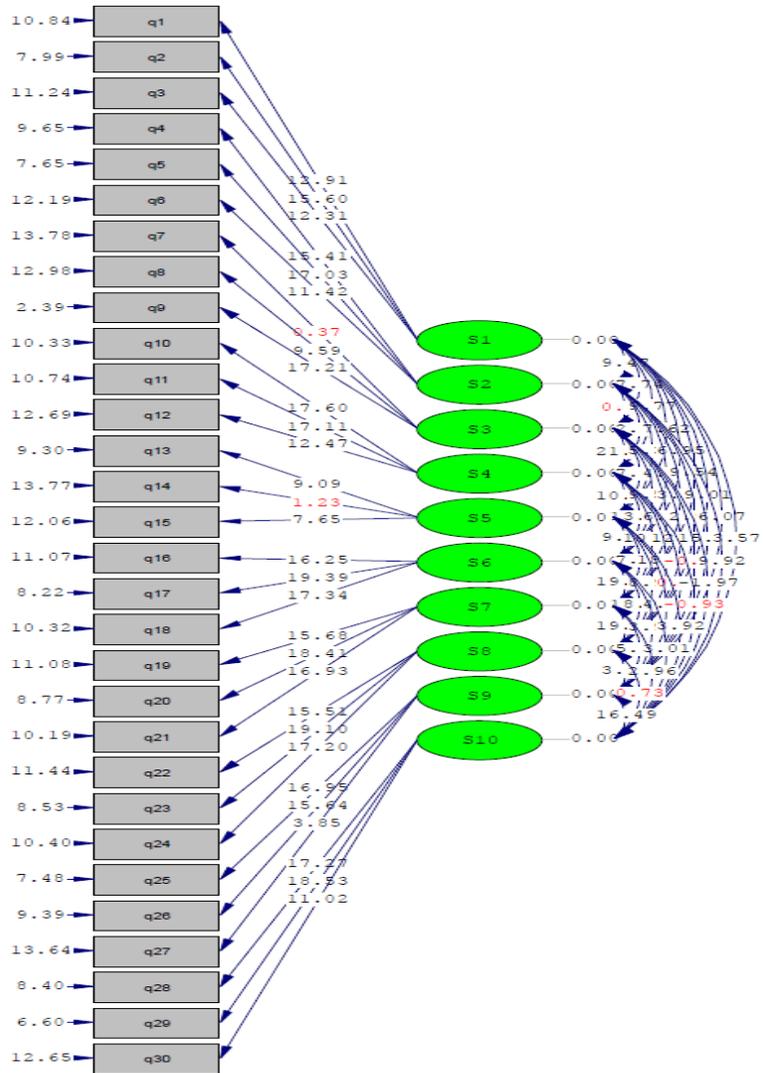


Figure 2: The significance coefficients values



Chi-Square=852.65, df=360, P-value=0.00000, RMSEA=0.066