

Alignment Between Curriculum And Textbooks Of English Language At Secondary Level: An Evaluation Of English Language Curriculum Objectives

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Abstract

The research attempts to explore the alignment of English language curriculum objectives against the content of the textbooks prepared by Punjab Curriculum and Textbook Board (PCTB) which are being used at secondary level in Punjab, Pakistan. The study intends to identify the success of textbooks in achieving what the curriculum directs — examining the issue focused on the extent to which textbooks aid the curriculum in promoting, for instance, reading comprehension, vocabulary, grammar, and writing skills. An analysis through Bloom's Taxonomy looks at textbook questions in terms of Lower-Order Thinking Skills (LOTs) and Higher-Order Thinking Skills (HOTs), focusing in particular on the understanding, applying, analyzing, and evaluating of the content of the curriculum's learning objectives. On an analysis of textbooks of grades 9 & 10, it is observed that most textbook questions relate to LOTs and that much more time is spent writing HOTs, which helps the students critically engage with literary content, grammatical structures, and thematic analysis. Additionally, the paper uncovers gaps in the current alignment, specifically that creative writing and open-ended tasks that enable Creating (the highest level of cognitive skills in Bloom's Taxonomy) are underrepresented in both the Foundational and Creative Learning Areas. Tasks that require critical thinking and creativity, including free writing, analysis of complex texts, and evaluation of real-world applications to help increase the inclusion of HOTs in the classroom, are recommended. Through this study, we provide lessons for educators and curriculum developers on striking a proper balance between LOTs and HOTs to provide a more complete language skills development at the secondary levels.

Keywords: Curriculum alignment, English language textbooks, secondary education, Bloom's Taxonomy.

1. Introduction

Textbooks are aligned with curriculum objectives so that students meet the desired educational goals. Schools use textbooks as primary teaching aids and must establish that the content of textbooks is in concordance with the objectives designated by academic authorities. In our case, English language textbooks need to be aligned with curriculum objectives, which are those skills that have to be developed by our students in the context of secondary-level learning of English: reading comprehension, vocabulary acquisition, grammar, and writing. We learn from textbooks how to structure language within lessons and think critically through the exercises it

presents. The perfect textbook should blend elements of lower-order thinking skills (LOTS), like learning and understanding info, with higher-order thinking skills (HOTS), including the ability to evaluate, analyze, and create new info. However, this balance is necessary for students to proceed from acquiring basic language structures into sophisticated linguistic tasks to deeper learning (Richards, 2015).

This study aims to establish the extent to which the selected English language textbooks at the secondary level correspond with the objectives espoused in the national or state curricula. Using Bloom's Taxonomy, this paper analyses the degree to which textbook content addresses LOTS and HOTS, i.e., whether the textbooks foster language acquisition and critical thinking. This study analyzes these factors and delivers significant findings for educators, curriculum developers, and policymakers on improving textbook curriculum alignment to promote English language learning at the secondary level (Anderson & Krathwohl, 2001; Paul & Elder, 2019).

Moreover, the study investigates the extent to which textbook exercises provide students with cognitive readiness for secondary-level exams in terms of alignment with the English language curriculum's learning objectives. Specifically, this research aims to answer the following question:

- To what extent do the textbooks align with the cognitive objectives of the English curriculum?

2. Literature Review

The alignment between curriculum and textbooks is crucial to educational success, as textbooks often bridge abstract curriculum objectives and tangible student learning experiences. Anderson and Krathwohl (2001) emphasize that curriculum alignment is essential in ensuring that students meet the educational outcomes set by authorities. This alignment also gives teachers a clue on how they may be able to use instruction in order to bring about the acquisition of knowledge and skills in the learners. Textbooks, in particular, are seen as the primary medium through which these goals are realized, often serving as the "hidden curriculum" that implicitly communicates expectations and cultural norms (Richards, 2015). In the context of English language instruction, textbooks should reflect the curriculum's goals by developing core skills such as grammar, vocabulary, reading comprehension, and writing. However, this alignment is not always perfect, with some textbooks focusing more on rote memorization rather than fostering critical thinking and creative expression. For curriculum alignment to be effective, it must ensure that textbooks teach the basics and cultivate higher-order cognitive skills.

Bloom's Taxonomy, introduced in 1956 and revised by Anderson and Krathwohl (2001), is widely used in education to categorize cognitive skills into six levels: Forget not to remember, understand, apply, analyze, evaluate, and create. This means that LOTS and HOTS can be designed to develop learning objectives in a structured manner. This taxonomy serves as a way to achieve a more or less good equilibrium between retention of knowledge and other types of activities that a student does not hesitate to recall, analyze, and even more — to solve. Bloom's Taxonomy is also useful concerning textbook content because it lets teachers identify the level of the materials that promote learning. Paul and Elder (2019) established that the intentional targeting of HOTS, analysis, evaluation, and creation assists teachers in developing critical thinking. Suppose textbooks disproportionately focus on LOTS, such as memorization and comprehension. While implementing F120, students may not be ready to perform higher-order thinking skills essential for accomplishment in school and life.

Several recent studies have explored the alignment between English language textbooks and curriculum objectives, with varying findings regarding their effectiveness. For example, Al-Jarf (2018) found that many English language textbooks at the secondary level need to be more focused on rote learning, with little emphasis on critical thinking and creativity. This disconnect between curriculum objectives and textbook content hinders students' development of the higher-order skills needed for academic and professional success. Similarly, Malik and Iqbal (2019) observed that while the curriculum often emphasizes the development of communicative competencies, the corresponding textbooks lack sufficient activities that encourage students to engage in meaningful dialogue or express original ideas. These studies highlight a persistent gap between the curriculum's goals and the actual learning experiences provided by textbooks, calling into question the effectiveness of curriculum design in promoting comprehensive language development.

Conversely, some studies present a more optimistic view of textbook alignment with curriculum objectives. For instance, Saleem and Rahman (2020) noted that recent revisions in English language textbooks in Pakistan have begun incorporating more activities promoting HOTS, such as critical reading exercises and open-ended writing tasks. These changes are aligned with the curriculum's broader goals of fostering not only linguistic proficiency but also critical thinking and analytical abilities. The researchers highlighted that the inclusion of more thought-provoking content in textbooks encourages students to engage with the material on a deeper level, moving beyond surface understanding to evaluate and create new ideas. However, this alignment is sometimes different at all levels, where the earlier grades are mostly oriented to align to the LOTS (Saleem & Rahman, 2020).

One of the key challenges in achieving alignment between curriculum objectives and textbooks is the tendency for standardized tests to emphasize LOTS over HOTS. In the words of Khan and Shah (2021), many days at the secondary level, teaching do not involve much more than note-taking and having students memorize facts and gain information intuitively rather than rationally. This creates a dissonance between the curriculum's emphasis on developing comprehensive language skills and the actual learning outcomes measured by these exams. As a result, textbooks often reflect this testing bias, focusing more on LOTS to help students perform well in exams. The researchers argue that without a shift in how student achievement is assessed, textbooks will continue to underrepresent activities that promote HOTS, such as analyzing and creating (Khan & Shah, 2021).

A significant gap in the literature on curriculum and textbook alignment is the need for more attention to creative writing and open-ended tasks. This direction of Akhtar (2019) examines that goals adopted in English language curricula to foster creativity are rarely represented in textbooks. This research proved that students are expected to write structured writing assignments, essays, or summaries without any big pressure, encouraging the students to come up with poetry, narratives, or free writing. Failing to envision the language and creativity in abundance remain limited while eradicating creative works stifles students' thinking skills most of the time. As for the textual developers, the students would like to have an opportunity to write in an open-ended conversation more often, as well as to present more language and ideas.

The role of textbooks in shaping educational outcomes cannot be overstated, particularly in language learning. As Aziz and Rehman (2020) suggest, textbooks serve as instructional tools and cultural artifacts that reflect societal values and norms. In their study, the authors examined how English language textbooks in Pakistan aligned with the curriculum's cultural and linguistic objectives. They found that while the textbooks were

generally aligned with the curriculum's linguistic goals, there was a lack of cultural inclusivity, with the content often promoting a narrow view of language use that ignored regional and cultural diversity. This misalignment highlights the need for textbooks to be aligned with cognitive objectives and include the cultural diversity inherent in the English language (Aziz & Rehman, 2020).

3. Methodology

3.1 Research Design

This study employs a qualitative content analysis approach to evaluate the alignment between the English language curriculum objectives and the content of 9th and 10th-class textbooks. The primary aim is to assess how well the textbooks support the learning goals outlined in the curriculum, particularly in developing language skills such as reading comprehension, vocabulary, grammar, and writing. Furthermore, the work is underpinned by Bloom's Taxonomy and Hierarchy of Educational Cognitive Skills from simple to more complex. Anderson and Krathwohl (2001) described such Thinking Skills as belonging to either the lower order Skills as those of remembering and understanding as well as the higher-order Skills of Analysis, Assessment, and Creation. The research seeks to identify the extent to which textbooks emphasize LOTS and HOTS, thus evaluating their effectiveness in promoting both basic language acquisition and critical thinking skills. The research design thoroughly examines textbook content, focusing on how well various exercises, activities, and questions align with the curriculum's cognitive objectives. The content analysis is performed across different sections of the textbooks, such as comprehension exercises, vocabulary-building tasks, grammar activities, and writing prompts. This structured approach ensures a comprehensive understanding of whether the textbooks support the curriculum's intent to foster foundational language skills and more advanced cognitive abilities.

3.2 Data Collection

The data for this study were collected from the English language textbooks prescribed for grade 9 & 10 students developed by PCTB, as approved by educational authorities. Additionally, a curriculum document was obtained from the Ministry of Federal Education and Professional Training to serve as the benchmark for the evaluation. This curriculum document defines the language skills and competencies students are expected to acquire by the end of secondary-level education. The curriculum documents were the primary reference for establishing the desired learning outcomes in English language education. In contrast, the textbooks provided the content to be analyzed for alignment with these goals. Critical sections of the textbooks, including reading passages, vocabulary exercises, grammar drills, and writing activities, were selected for detailed analysis. By focusing on these core areas, the study aimed to evaluate how well the textbooks incorporated and supported the specific objectives laid out in the curriculum.

3.3 Analysis Framework

This study uses a commonly accepted classification of cognitive skills (Bloom's Taxonomy, Anderson & Krathwohl, 2001). Bloom's Taxonomy categorizes cognitive processes into six levels: Hopefully remembering, understanding, applying, analyzing, evaluating, and creating. Each task in the textbooks was analyzed and categorized according to this framework to determine whether it targeted LOTS, such as basic recall and comprehension, or HOTS, such as critical thinking, analysis, and creative writing.

The textbooks were systematically reviewed to identify and code the types of cognitive demands made by each exercise. For example, we evaluated the extent to which comprehension questions were developed and how questions were categorized according to known LOTS and

other HOTS types. The analysis also focused on the complexity of vocabulary, grammar, and tasks. The criteria considered those tasks where the language application or the creative use of language were considered HOTS tasks. Writing performances are studied to determine if children produced or responded artistically to the textual content. This analysis provided a clear picture of how well the textbooks aligned with the cognitive objectives outlined in the curriculum, particularly in promoting a balanced development of both basic language skills and higher-order cognitive abilities.

4. Findings

4.1 LOTS Coverage in Textbooks

The analysis of the English language textbooks for 9th and 10th grades reveals a strong emphasis on Lower-Order Thinking Skills (LOTS), particularly in sections dedicated to vocabulary, grammar, and comprehension exercises. The activities in most of the textbooks focus on LOTS—basic cognitive skills like remembering and understanding—and those are foundational for language acquisition. A nontrivial portion of the material contains deutes calling for students to recall information, memorize terms, and comprehend syntactic-semantic patterns. This emphasis on LOTS reflects the curriculum’s initial goal to build students’ fundamental language abilities. For instance, in most of the vocabulary parts, students have quite often been required to recall words’ connotations and to distinguish whether or not there are other words that are synonyms or antonyms or to write in the blank in the most suitable word based on the little knowledge that they have just practically gained. Grammar exercises also involve applying rules to form correct sentences, identifying mistakes that fall within the LOTS category of Bloom’s Taxonomy, or doing the opposite and identifying and correcting mistakes within a series of sentences. Although these exercises are necessary to lay the groundwork for language education, they end before reaching the stage where one can understand language fundamentally enough by practicing; rather, it’s only about easy application. That gap generates a lack of preparation for a greater order of cognitive processes. Below is a table summarizing the distribution of LOTS-focused tasks across key sections of the textbooks:

Table 1 LOTS-focused tasks across key sections of the textbooks

Section	Number of Activities	Percentage of LOTS Tasks
Vocabulary	40	85%
Grammar	45	88%
Comprehension	30	70%
Writing	25	60%
Overall Coverage	140	76%

The data in the table demonstrate the extent to which LOTS dominate the instructional activities in the textbooks. For example, 85% of vocabulary exercises focus on rote learning to get students to recall or understand meanings. Grammar exercises, which comprise a substantial portion of the textbooks, show an even higher emphasis on LOTS, with 88% of tasks centered on remembering and applying basic grammatical rules. Sometimes, the comprehension exercises are very LOTS, with 70% of the activities involving student responses showing understanding of the text with straightforward questions. Although slightly more balanced, writing tasks continue to demonstrate that 60% of the activities concern LOTS, where most of the questions follow structured formats or require students to provide some basic factual information.

As LOTS is essential in vocabulary and grammar exercises, the question arises of developing more advanced cognitive skills. Even when memory and understanding are important components for learning language, this method may restrict students' capacity to interact with the material to a more engaging degree. The textbooks frequently rely on exercises that prompt students to recall information or follow prescriptive grammatical rules, which may not sufficiently prepare them for real-world communication challenges that require critical thinking and creativity. For example, as vocabulary activities, dictionary meanings are often looked up, or words are matched. However, the students rarely use the words in presentable sentences or engage in contextually based learning that requires deeper cognitive processing. Another similarity is that grammar tasks are essential to rule-based applications rather than encourage students to discover more sophisticated language constructions or investigate various syntactic patterns.

The pattern is similar in the comprehension section, where most tasks are to see the basic understanding rather than in the analysis or interpretation. Comprehension questions that ask students to recall explicit information from the text instead of trying to guess meanings or themes or evaluate characters' motives are more typical. While this approach guarantees that students can concur with the main points of a passage, it does not evoke the students to explore the passage further. This finding aligns with previous research, which has shown that English language textbooks often prioritize LOTS to ensure that students master foundational skills, sometimes at the expense of fostering critical thinking (Al-Jarf, 2018).

Since the LOTS part of the writing tasks is not quite as high in other sections as one might think, many still belong to this category. Passages are written for many writing tasks. Students are asked to write summaries of, describe events, or respond in a written format to set prompts. While these are good activities for helping students 'brush up' their basic writing skills, they seldom foster the development of student arguments, their opinions, or their creative composition. As a result, students may be able to write grammatically correct pieces of writing. Still, they might not receive enough opportunities to engage in higher-order skills such as evaluating, analyzing, and creating original content.

4.2 HOTS Coverage in Textbooks

The analysis of Higher-Order Thinking Skills (HOTS) in the English language textbooks for 9th and 10th grades reveals a moderate but significant presence of activities designed to engage students in more complex cognitive processes. While the textbooks primarily focus on Lower-Order Thinking Skills (LOTS), they also incorporate tasks to develop skills such as analyzing, evaluating, and creating. HOTS are critical to helping students come to critical thinking and pushing students beyond rote memorization and basic comprehension. Including tasks that require interpretation, evaluation of texts, and creative writing indicates an effort to align with the curriculum's broader goals of developing both language proficiency and critical and imaginative capacities. For example, some students' comprehension exercises require that they analyze the character's motives or assess the themes of a given text so they become more involved in the material. Yet, while HOTS exist, the distribution relative to the HOTS is relatively tiny compared to LOTS-based activities. The following table summarizes the distribution of HOTS-focused tasks across critical sections of the textbooks:

Table 2 HOTS-focused tasks across key sections of the textbooks

Section	Number of Activities	Percentage of HOTS Tasks
Vocabulary	10	15%
Grammar	8	12%

Comprehension	12	30%
Writing	20	40%
Overall Coverage	50	24%

As the table shows, only a quarter (24%) of textbook tasks target Higher-Order Thinking Skills. The most apparent coverage of HOTS is done by writing exercises, with 40% of the tasks requiring students to do some form of creative or analytical writing. Tasks often included in these activities involve forming and defending an argument in composing essays, analyzing a literary text, or describing ideas in personal interpretations of themes and characters. HOTS also encompass tasks concerning writing student narratives or generating student stories from prompts, which require originality and independent thinking. Yet even with this relatively higher percentage, the overall constraints on HOTS remain, with most writing tasks continuing to be structured and cognitively less demanding.

Comprehension questions were analyzed in terms of comprehension, and they were found to have the majority (30%) of the comprehension questions requiring higher level thinking. However, these tasks tend to get students to interpret the underlying themes, find inferences, or assess the success of the use of a literary device in a passage. Questions that ask students to think about a character's decision-making process or the moral implications of a story do not just involve recall but engage students in the critical viewing, reflection, and discussion of the text. While these exercises are useful for learning analytical skills, most of these comprehension tasks are about more fundamental questions. This imbalance hints at critical thinking opportunities but then shows that they are not as available — or at least not as much so — as they should be, considering the importance of such skills to language learning.

The vocabulary and grammar sections place a minor emphasis on HOTS, as only 15 percent (or 12 percent) of tasks push students to analyze or creatively use language. However, there are few real vocabulary tasks with word definitions, matching exercises, or fill-in-the-blank questions that are not designed to get students thinking critically about language content. Nevertheless, some vocabulary activities encourage HOTS by employing new words in previously unseen sentences, considering the differences between synonyms in subtle ways, or examining how word choice affects tone and meaning in a particular passage. These tasks help students achieve a more sophisticated understanding of vocabulary but are rare compared to the immense number of them, which are focused on LOTs. In terms of grammar sections, although most tasks involve using rules or correcting sentences, a few exercises ask students to examine sentence structures more closely or determine the existing grammatical constructions in certain situations.

4.3 Curriculum Objectives vs. Textbook Content

The alignment between curriculum objectives and textbook content is essential in determining how well instructional materials support the intended learning outcomes for students. In the case of secondary-level English language instruction, the curriculum typically outlines specific objectives focused on developing core language skills, such as reading comprehension, vocabulary acquisition, grammar proficiency, writing, and oral communication. The objectives in these aspects constitute the establishment that students will attain the basic provincial linguistic competency and the power to think creatively and critically in English. An effective alignment between curriculum and textbook content ensures that classroom learning is structured to progressively build students' language skills while fostering higher-order thinking. In this section, we evaluate how well the content of the 9th and 10th-grade textbooks matches the curriculum's stated objectives. Through a detailed content analysis, the study reveals that

while the textbooks address many of the curriculum's language learning goals, there needs to be more gaps in how they incorporate higher-level objectives such as critical thinking and creativity.

The table below illustrates the alignment between specific curriculum objectives and textbook content based on the key language skills covered in the curriculum:

Table 3 Alignment between Specific Curriculum Objectives and Textbook Content

Curriculum Objectives	Key Textbook Content	Percentage of Coverage in Textbook
Reading Comprehension (Understanding texts and themes)	Comprehension passages and questions	75%
Vocabulary Acquisition (Expanding linguistic range)	Vocabulary exercises	70%
Grammar Proficiency (Mastering grammatical rules)	Grammar drills and sentence correction tasks	85%
Writing Skills (Coherent writing and creativity)	Writing tasks (essays, summaries)	60%
Oral Communication (Fluency in speaking and listening)	Discussion prompts and dialogues	50%

The table demonstrates that the textbooks provide relatively strong coverage of key curriculum objectives, particularly in grammar proficiency and reading comprehension. Grammar exercises cover 85% of the curriculum objectives, providing students extensive opportunities to practice sentence correction, verb agreement, and other core grammatical skills. This strong alignment guarantees that students understand the most basic English language rules to enable them to both speak and write the language. Similarly, comprehension passages in the textbooks cover approximately 75% of the reading comprehension objectives outlined in the curriculum, emphasizing students' ability to understand and analyze essential text content. Though these exercises succeed in fostering some elementary skills in students, they leave much to be desired in their promotion of deeper cognitive engagement, and too many tasks seem geared towards checking for understanding rather than enhancing critical analysis.

In contrast, the coverage of writing skills in the textbooks could be better, with only 60% of the curriculum's objectives for writing being addressed. Although the textbooks provide a range of writing tasks, such as essay writing and summaries, many of these activities focus on structured writing that emphasizes correctness over creativity. The curriculum calls for developing coherent writing and creative expression, yet the textbook content is more heavily weighted toward formulaic writing tasks. Pupil practice involves writing summaries of reading passages or answering particular questions; there is limited time to elaborate, write, and think in their own ways. This limited focus on creative writing suggests a misalignment with the curriculum's broader goal of fostering imaginative and independent thinking.

Vocabulary acquisition is another area where the textbooks moderately align with curriculum objectives. About 70% of the vocabulary-related objectives are covered in the textbooks, with exercises designed to expand students' linguistic range through tasks such as matching words with definitions or identifying synonyms and antonyms. Though these activities impact students' use of the words, the students are not encouraged to use the acquired words in meaningful ways. The curriculum emphasizes not only the memorization of

vocabulary but also the ability to use new words effectively in communication, whether in writing or speaking. In this respect, the textbooks fall short, as many vocabulary exercises focus on isolated word meanings without offering opportunities for students to practice these words in real-world scenarios or within complex sentence structures.

Oral communication, critical for developing fluency in speaking and listening, is the least emphasized in the textbooks, with only 50% of the curriculum objectives being covered. The curriculum stresses the importance of students being able to engage in dialogues, discussions, and other interactive speaking activities, but the textbooks need to provide more exercises to support this. Examples and scoring techniques are suggested, and conversation materials are provided; however, scope and frequency cannot eradicate such an example. Moreover, the absence of more advanced speaking tasks that involve critical thinking, such as debates or presentations, indicates a gap in how textbooks support the development of oral communication skills. Although it is a necessary variable for natural language use, it may hamper the students' opportunity to practice.

5. Discussion

The findings of this study suggest that the English language textbooks used at the secondary level in Pakistan align moderately well with the curriculum's cognitive objectives, particularly in developing foundational language skills. The textbooks strongly focus on Lower-Order Thinking Skills (LOTS), including tasks related to remembering and understanding. These classes made students learn some other things. In sections that consider vocabulary and grammar, the student has to make header definitions, review grammatical rules, and express an elementary understanding of texts. These exercises align well with the curriculum's objectives of ensuring students acquire essential linguistic knowledge and are proficient in the basics of English language use. However, the analysis reveals a less consistent emphasis on Higher-Order Thinking Skills (HOTS), such as analyzing, evaluating, and creating, which are also critical components of the curriculum's goals. While the textbooks include some tasks that engage students in critical thinking, these are less prevalent than LOTS-focused exercises, indicating a gap in alignment with the curriculum's broader cognitive objectives (Anderson & Krathwohl, 2001).

In cognition, LOTS and HOTS are essential in language acquisition, and achieving that balance between the two is considered central to language learning. Language acquisition facilitated by lots consists of fact retrieval and grammar comprehension. However, tests have occurred in Corequisite with the emergence of HOTS, analytic and evaluative/critical thinking, and language use in divergent and complicated contexts. (Richards, 2015). The limited emphasis on HOTS in the textbooks suggests that students may be underprepared for tasks that require higher-order cognitive skills, such as interpreting literary texts, developing original arguments, and engaging in creative writing. This finding is consistent with previous research highlighting a tendency in English language textbooks to prioritize factual recall over critical engagement (Al-Jarf, 2018).

Despite the gaps in promoting HOTS, the textbooks exhibit several strengths in meeting the curriculum's goals, particularly in grammar, vocabulary, and reading comprehension. The analysis indicates that 85% of the grammar tasks in the textbooks align with the curriculum's objectives, providing students with ample opportunities to practice essential grammatical structures. Another great point is leaning heavily on grammatical exercises to make language proficiency as it goes even further and gains a solid foundation in speaking and writing language communication. The textbooks also demonstrate strong

vocabulary coverage, with 70% of vocabulary tasks aligned with curriculum objectives. These exercises aid students in moving into the linguistic range essential for reading comprehension and expressive writing (Malik & Iqbal, 2019).

Additionally, the textbooks foster basic reading comprehension skills, which are fundamental to developing literacy. Approximately 75% of readings place students reading material about the text content, working with inferences, answering questions, etc. These tasks are aligned with the curriculum's objectives of ensuring that students can grasp the main ideas of passages and respond to questions that test their understanding. This strong emphasis on reading comprehension is a positive feature of textbooks, as it prepares students for the types of reading tasks they are likely to encounter in exams and practical, everyday use of the language (Khan & Shah, 2021).

While the textbooks excel in covering basic language skills, they need to improve in encouraging HOTS, such as analyzing, evaluating, and creating. The analysis shows that only 24% of the tasks in the textbooks focus on these higher-order skills, which is significantly lower than what is needed to align with the curriculum's goals fully. For instance, in those problem sets related to understanding (comprehension sections), students must answer questions regarding the texts, which generally do not ask for deeper interpretation or analysis. Typically, students rarely have to reflect on the utility of literary devices, much less mull over a text's moral or philosophical underpinnings; the latter would activate more complicated thought (Paul & Elder, 2019).

Another significant gap is the representation of creative writing tasks. The curriculum emphasizes the importance of creativity and self-expression as part of students' language development, yet only 40% of textbook writing tasks allow for creative engagement. Writing tasks are mostly dictionaries, where students should stick to the set format instead of freely creating their ideas or writing. It limits opportunities for students to experiment with language and develop their voices as writers, costing us one of the most essential parts of the creative process. The lack of open-ended tasks that require students to create original content is an apparent misalignment with the curriculum's objective of promoting innovative and critical thinking (Saleem & Rahman, 2020).

Several changes could be made to incorporate more tasks that push students to apply higher-level thinking skills to improve alignment between the curriculum and the textbooks. An implication is that comprehension questions of the sort requiring students to analyze texts critically should be included more frequently in the texts. Comprehension exercises don't ask students to remember facts or to find the main idea but to judge the validity of an author's argument, decipher the symbolic meanings of a literary work, and differentiate between various viewpoints within a text. The proposed structure would facilitate a deeper engagement with reading material and help students develop the needed skills for higher-order cognitive processing (Aziz & Rehman, 2020).

In the area of writing, the textbooks would benefit from more open-ended and creative tasks. Wouldn't it encourage students to write their own stories or poems or to think about current issues through essays? In addition to helping students become better able to think creatively, these tasks would foster critical thought as they would need to structure and organize their thoughts, build cogent arguments, and present their ideas convincingly. Writing prompts encouraging personal reflection or opinion writing would also align more closely with the curriculum's goal of fostering self-expression (Akhtar, 2019).

Additionally, the textbooks could improve in the area of oral communication by including more interactive speaking tasks. The curriculum highlights the importance of developing students' speaking and listening skills, yet the textbooks must provide sufficient exercises to practice these skills in dynamic, real-world contexts. Tasks can be included, such as debates, role-playing, and group discussions for practicing fluent speaking and critical listening in addition to being actions that also offer students the opportunity to think in a higher order, like evaluating, synthesizing information, and responding to differing viewpoints in actual time, as Thornbury (2005) has indicated.

The findings of this study contribute to the growing body of literature that examines the alignment between curriculum objectives and textbook content in language education. Previous research has highlighted the tendency for textbooks to focus on LOTS at the expense of HOTS, and this study reinforces those findings by showing that English language textbooks at the secondary level are no exception (Al-Jarf, 2018; Paul & Elder, 2019). However, this study also provides new insights by offering a detailed analysis of specific areas where textbooks either succeed or fall short in meeting the curriculum's broader cognitive goals. By identifying strengths in grammar and vocabulary instruction and gaps in creative writing and critical reading tasks, this research offers a nuanced understanding of how textbooks can be improved to better align with curriculum objectives.

The study also adds to existing knowledge by providing empirical data on the distribution of LOTS and HOTS across different sections of the textbooks. This data-driven approach allows for a more precise evaluation of the extent to which textbooks support or hinder the development of higher-order cognitive skills. Moreover, the study's recommendations offer practical solutions for improving textbook content, making it a valuable resource for educators, curriculum developers, and policymakers looking to enhance the quality of language education in secondary schools (Anderson & Krathwohl, 2001).

Subsequent studies may investigate how teachers modify or extend what is in those textbooks to teach HOTS and creative writing. Additionally, this study is limited to the English language curriculum and textbooks used in Pakistan; future research could explore whether similar patterns of alignment or misalignment exist in other countries or educational contexts (Malik & Iqbal, 2019).

6. Conclusion

The evaluation of English language textbooks at the secondary level reveals a mixed alignment with the curriculum's cognitive objectives. While the textbooks effectively promote foundational language skills through a strong focus on Lower-Order Thinking Skills (LOTS), such as remembering and understanding, they fall short of fostering Higher-Order Thinking Skills (HOTS), including analyzing, evaluating, and creating. The curriculum emphasizes the development of basic linguistic competence and the enhancement of critical thinking and creative abilities. However, the kind of content the textbooks provide does not give much of an opportunity for one to learn more profoundly, more critically, on one's own terms.

One of the strengths of the textbooks is their strong alignment with curriculum objectives related to grammar, vocabulary, and reading comprehension. These sections allow the students to practice important language skills like grammar rules, reading, and vocabulary expansion. But building on it, a basis for future linguistic tasks, links LOTS to the learning environment in language learning. However, the limited incorporation of HOTS into the curriculum remains a significant gap. Tasks less frequently engage students in critical reading,

creative writing, and independent thinking that restrict how deeply students can apply their knowledge in ways that may be new and provocative.

To better align with the curriculum's broader goals, textbooks should incorporate more tasks that require students to analyze, evaluate, and create. This also includes providing more difficult reading exercises in which students analyze and evaluate the outcomes of using literary devices and writing more prompts in which students create new material and ideas. However, with focused gains in speaking and listening skills, there must be an increase in the variety, intensity and authenticity of oral communication activities that require students to engage in debating, discussion, and arguing.

In conclusion, while the textbooks effectively meet many of the curriculum's objectives related to essential language acquisition, there is a clear need for improvement in promoting higher-order cognitive skills. By incorporating more tasks that challenge students to think critically and creatively, textbooks can better prepare students for the complex linguistic and cognitive demands they will face in academic and professional environments. This study contributes valuable insights into the strengths and gaps of English language textbooks at the secondary level. It provides practical recommendations for educators, textbook developers, and policymakers to enhance the alignment between textbooks and curriculum objectives. More empirical studies will be conducted to determine how instructional materials can be developed to support positive language education such that both the initial skills and the higher-order learning abilities are facilitated.

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