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Analysis of Alignment between Secondary Level English Textbooks and National Curriculum: A Comparative Study of Public and Private Schools in Sindh, Pakistan

Farhan Ali Bhutto, Hassan Syed, Abdul Saeed Rajput, Syed Tanweer Shah, & Zulfiqar Chachar

Abstract: The current study aimed to evaluate two different sets of secondary level English textbooks: *Exploring English* used in private schools under the Agha Khan Examination board and *Secondary Stage English* textbooks used in government schools of Sindh province in Pakistan. This study investigated whether these textbooks conformed to the objectives prescribed in the National Curriculum (2006) of Pakistan in terms of reading, writing, speaking, and grammar skills. The study adopted a modified checklist based on an adapted version of Cunningsworth's (1995) checklist to evaluate the textbooks and analyse the data. The results revealed that *Exploring English* textbooks are in greater conformity with the National curriculum 2006 compared to *Secondary Stage English* textbooks. *Exploring English* textbooks meet 75% objectives of reading and speaking skills and 65% objectives of writing and grammar skills, laid down in the national curriculum. On the other hand, *Secondary Stage English* textbooks match 50% objectives of grammar coverage, 30% objectives of reading and writing skills, and only 25% objectives of speaking skill. Specifically, *Secondary Stage English* textbooks do not comply fully with the objectives of the curriculum. The study highlights significant disparities in English language textbooks in public and private sector schools.

Keywords: curriculum, education policy, English language teaching, textbook evaluation

Farhan Ali Bhutto is a senior lecturer in English at Sukkur IBA University. He completed his master's in English language teaching (ELT) in 2019 from the University of Coventry (United Kingdom). He did his master's in linguistics with the National Institute of Modern Languages (NUML) in Islamabad, Pakistan. He has been teaching English for past twenty years. His research interests include teaching English as a second/foreign language and curriculum development.

Hassan Syed is an Associate Professor of applied linguistics in the Department of Education, at Sukkur IBA University, Pakistan. He obtained his Ph.D. in Education in 2016 from the University of York, United Kingdom, in 2016. His courses include English pedagogy, educational change and development, and research methodology in applied linguistics and education. His research interests are willingness to communicate in a second language and motivation.

Abdul Saeed is an Assistant Professor of applied linguistics at the department of English, Sukkur IBA University, Pakistan. He obtained his Ph.D. degree from the University of Canterbury, New Zealand. His research interests include text linguistics, ESL/EFL writing and assessment, syntax, and discourse analysis.

Syed Tanweer Shah is a lecturer in English in the DoE of Sukkur IBA University. He is also pursuing is Ph.D. (Part time) from the Shaheed Zulfiqar Bhutto Institute of Science and Technology (SZABIST), Karachi. His doctoral research focuses on the impact of dynamic assessment on learners' writing skills.

Zulfiqar Chachar is a lecturer in English in the department of mathematics and social science at Sukkur IBA University. He did his MA in English language and literature from Sindh University Jamshoro, Pakistan. His areas of interest are English grammar, communication skills, business communication and technical report writing.

Introduction

Textbooks in Pakistan are supposed to be aligned with the National Curriculum-2006 (NC-2006, henceforth), a document issued by the ministry of education (MOE) that sets the objectives of education in the country (Asghar & Butt, 2018; Azhar et al., 2020; Siddiqui, 2020). NC-2006 "places greater emphasis on the understanding and use of the English language in different academic and social contexts than on acquiring knowledge about the language for its own sake" (p. 2). It focuses on

integrating the four language competencies (or skills): reading, writing, speaking, and grammar. The document further provides the standards, benchmarks and students learning outcomes (SLOs) for each specific skill. Reports have shown that there is a disjuncture between curriculum guidelines (i.e., NC-2006), textbooks, and instruction (Asian Development Bank, 2019; SAHE, 2014). According to a 2014 report by the Society for the Advancement of Education (SAHE), for instance, curriculum developers do not take textbook writers, teachers, and students on board. Textbook writers and teachers, for their part, lack familiarity with the objectives of the curriculum; "the consequence is the inability of teachers and textbook writers to understand the true essence of curricular principles

and goals" (SAHE, 2014, p. 87). Despite its significance in improving the quality of teaching-learning in any English language teaching (ELT) program, textbook evaluation has remained a significantly under-researched area in Pakistan. Many government schools' textbooks have not been evaluated for the last many years (Mahmood, 2010). Recently, however, the government of Sindh, a province of Pakistan, has shown interest in evaluating and making some changes in the government schools' textbooks for secondary and intermediate level. The present study, therefore, aims to contribute to the Sindh government's efforts by evaluating English textbooks being taught at a secondary level (i.e., grade 9 and 10) in both government and private schools of the Sindh province in Pakistan, in terms of their conformity with NC-2006. In what follows, the present article first presents a review of literature on prevalent approaches in textbook evaluation followed by a brief discussion on the state of English language teaching and learning and textbook evaluation in Pakistan. It further presents a detailed discussion on the methods of data collection and analysis, followed by sections on results, discussion, implications, and conclusion.

Literature Review

Evaluating Textbook Alignment with the Curriculum

The curriculum can be described as particular skills and knowledge to be transferred to learners (Cheng, 1994). It serves as a roadmap to how the teaching and learning process should be carried out and what skills and knowledge are to be delivered to students (Pratt, 1994). It is essential to evaluate the conformity of the textbooks with the curriculum as most teachers in Pakistan rely heavily on these textbooks and use them as the primary source of teaching material (Man, 2000; Morris & Adamson, 2010).

Curriculum can be used as a basic instructional reference to develop an evaluation criterion. It can serve as a direction to evaluators to decide what aspects of the textbook to focus on, and assist them in reducing their mistakes (Tomlinson, 2003). Consequently, this specific focus makes the whole evaluation procedure simpler and more practical (Richards, 2001). Since textbooks need to match and follow the guidelines given in the overall curriculum it follows, these directions provide a clear focus to the evaluators as they know in advance what areas to focus on during the evaluation process. This particular focus on some already selected areas, prescribed in the curriculum, makes the whole evaluation procedure simple and saves a considerable amount of time.

Curriculum can also serve as a good basis for comparison, which, Skierso (1991) argues, is essential for the evaluation of textbooks. Users can evaluate the pedagogical significance of a textbook by comparing the content and methods used in it with the suggested curriculum. Another benefit of connecting the evaluation process to a prescribed curriculum is giving it a focus, and hence, avoiding the propensity to grow forever, making its conclusion difficult (Swales, 1980). Since no single existing checklist can meet all the needs of the learners and the evaluators in different contexts, these checklists need to be modified according to the requirements of the learners, as is done in this study. The curriculum suggests areas to be focused on in the textbook. As a result, it helps the evaluator to modify the checklist, and the evaluation criteria, as per the directions prescribed in the curriculum, and keep the checklist short and focused.

Textbook evaluation or material evaluation is a regular feature of a pedagogical process in an ELT program. According to Tomlinson (1998), a textbook evaluation attempts to judge the value and relevance of its content and the way it is presented. Moreover,

a textbook evaluation also makes informed judgments about the effect of a textbook on the learners who are using it (Tomlinson & Masuhara, 2004). Littlejohn (2011) argues that evaluation tries to explore what is there in a textbook.

According to Tomlinson (2003, 2008, 2010), many ELT textbooks are developed for commercial purposes and are not based on principles of language acquisition. Earning profit has become the primary objective for most of the textbook publishers (Litz, 2005; Sheldon, 1988; Tomlinson, 2003). Dendrinos (1992) argues, "Textbooks, like any other book that publishers print, are pieces of merchandise; the ultimate objective of their production is [for] commercial success" (p. 35). These textbooks are often purchased keeping in view the so-called prestige of the publisher or the author rather than their pedagogical significance (McGrath, 2002; Tomlinson, 2010). Clever marketing by some publishers also influences the decision to select a textbook available in the market (McGrath, 2002). There are two major reasons for the pedagogical flaws of these textbooks. First, since these textbooks are published for commercial purposes, public demand is given more importance than quality. This has led to many publishers and textbook writers adding in more formal and lexical items, rather than providing opportunities for learners to practice the language (Tomlinson, 2008).

Secondly, most publishers and authors of these textbooks do not take into account the actual needs of the students, rather they rely heavily on the perceptions of teachers and school heads and publish materials which they think would be appropriate for the learners (Tomlinson, 2008). Moreover, they focus more on attractive covers, design, and packaging of the textbooks rather than including quality materials (Tomlinson, 2003). Since a textbook plays a very important role in the teaching-learning process, the fulfillment of the objectives of an English language teaching (ELT) program depends on the appropriate choice of a textbook. Therefore, it is essential for the curriculum developers and textbook boards to conduct periodic textbook evaluations and provide the local school heads with the best textbooks available (Harbi, 2017).

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Methods and Approaches to Textbook Evaluation

Many researchers have proposed a levelled approach (Cunningsworth, 1995; Ur, 1996) in a textbook evaluation process which should start with an impressionistic method of a quick look into the textbook followed by a comprehensive evaluation referred to as in-depth evaluation of a textbook (Litz, 2005; McGrath, 2002). Cunningsworth (1995) briefly summarises the process of a levelled approach for conducting a textbook evaluation. To start with, an impressionistic method is applied to gain a first impression about the book by looking through it from cover to cover and trying to evaluate its merits and deficiencies (Cunningsworth, 1995). This quick overview gives an idea about the layout, organization, and supplementary materials of the textbook. Any textbook that does not meet these initial criteria is rejected straightaway (McDonough & Shaw, 2003; McGrath, 2002). This quick initial evaluation is followed by a detailed in-depth evaluation of particular items of every textbook, which gives a fair idea of the appropriateness of the textbook in terms of learners' needs (Cunningsworth, 1995; McDonough & Shaw, 2003). In an in-depth evaluation, some selected sections of the textbook

can be analysed in terms of balance of skills and activities found in it (Cunningsworth, 1995).

McGrath (2016) presents three methods of textbook evaluation: the impressionistic method, the checklist method, and the in-depth method. The impressionistic method can provide an overview and a brief opinion about the textbook. An in-depth method provides a detailed analysis of some selected items in the textbook. A checklist method comprises a list of items to be compared, which, according to McGrath (2016), can be more 5ecognize, cost-effective, and explicit.

McDonough and Shaw's (2003) model consists of two stages: a quick external evaluation followed by an in-depth internal evaluation of the textbook. In an external evaluation of the textbook, the cover, introduction, table of contents, and 5ecognized5n of the course book are evaluated as per the claims of the author or publisher in the preface. In the second stage of the evaluation, an in-depth internal evaluation is conducted to assess to what extent the textbook in question is appropriate to the aims and objectives of the teaching program.

Other methods of evaluation are suggested by Ellis (1997), Littlejohn (2011), and McGrath (2002). Ellis (1997) defines two types of materials evaluation: predictive evaluation and retrospective evaluation. Littlejohn (2011) proposes a three-level evaluation checklist method. The focus of his approach is on the content of the materials and learners' needs. McGrath (2002) also proposes a two-stage model of textbook evaluation process. The first stage is referred to as first-glance evaluation, whereas the second stage consists of an in-depth evaluation. A first-glance evaluation is a quick evaluation of the aspects like "practical considerations, support for teaching and learning, context relevance and learner appeal" (McGrath, 2002, p. 37). On the other hand, an in-depth evaluation assesses overall objectives and

materials of the textbook, what students and instructors are required to do, and different approaches used in it (McGrath, 2002). Since the selection of a textbook has a significant impact on the pedagogical process, the textbook writers, local administrators, and language teachers need to know how they can choose a textbook wisely.

Numerous scholars (Daoud & Celce-Murcia, 1979; Ellis, 1997; Grant, 1987; Mukundan, 2007) express contradictory views regarding what could be the most appropriate stage for a textbook evaluation. However, McGrath (2002) argues that each stage of textbook evaluation has its own importance and benefits. According to Tomlinson (2003), pre-use evaluation can help textbook boards and school administrators to have an overall general impression about the textbook. Cunningsworth (1995) suggests that it is a quick and useful method of textbook evaluation for the relevant stakeholders. In contrast, Ellis (1997) argues that the pre-use state as a predictive evaluation is not effective, as a textbook can only be judged once it has been used. An in-use evaluation, however, can help to determine the appropriateness of a textbook being used by critically observing how well it is meeting the needs of the learners (Mukundan, 2007; Tomlinson, 2003). Finally, a post-use evaluation can determine if the textbook has produced the desired results and if the teachers can continue using it as a textbook or not (McGrath, 2002; Tomlinson, 2003). It has been observed, however, that as compared to pre-use and in-use evaluations, the post-use evaluation of a textbook is often ignored by textbook boards, school administrators, and language instructors (Ellis, 1998; Tomlinson, 2003) as a majority of them do not even know if such an evaluation scheme exists (Mukundan, 2007). In addition, there is very limited literature available about how such an evaluation is carried out (Ellis, 1997; McGrath, 2002). One primary reason for not conducting post-use evaluations is that they are difficult to administer (Ellis, 1998; Harmer,

2001; McGrath, 2002). Moreover, many teachers consider it a pointless activity because they have no say in matters regarding selection and evaluation of textbooks; also, they think they already know the appropriateness of the book after using it for many years in the classroom (Ellis, 1998). However, Tomlinson (2003) argues that post-use evaluation is the most significant method of evaluation because it can help to assess both short and long-term effects of the use of the textbook. harmer (2001) has supported post-use evaluation, suggesting the same pre-use evaluation checklist to be used for post-use evaluation.

In spite of having the direct contact with the book, it is noteworthy that teachers have no say regarding text book selection and evaluation in Pakistan, particularly in Sindh province. Since the 18th constitutional amendment in Pakistan in 2010, the provincial Curriculum Wing (CW) and the Sindh Textbook Board (STBB) oversee education matters, including curriculum, textbooks and learning materials, assessment, and research (Asian Development Bank [ADB], 2019). CW and STBB bear the responsibility for textbook evaluation 6ecoge school administrators and teachers have no say in the matter.

Using a Checklist as an Evaluation Tool

Several researchers have 6ecognized the significance of the checklist method and have used it as an evaluation tool to check the appropriateness of a textbook, such as Byrd (2001), Cunningsworth (1995), Daoud and Celce Murcia (1979), Ellis (1997), Harmer (1991, 2001), McDonough and Shaw (2003), Sheldon (1988), Skierso (1991), and Tomlinson (2003; 2008). However, there is a limited supply of relevant literature on it (Litz, 2005; Sheldon, 1988). Followed by an impressionistic method, a comprehensive checklist can be developed for a detailed evaluation

of a textbook to assess its suitability to the specific learners' requirements (Cunningsworth, 1995).

While reviewing several checklists found in literature from 1970 to 2000, Mukundan and Ahour (2010) reveal that qualitative checklists are greater in number than quantitative checklists. Moreover, many of these checklists are either too short or too long and are complex and vague (McGrath, 2002). As a result, evaluators, teachers and/or researchers, find it difficult to apply these checklists to meet their own requirements. However, a close review of the available checklists reveals that despite being created in different parts of the world for different teaching contexts, these checklists contain similar assessment criteria. Some well-acknowledged checklists, like Cunningsworth and Kusel (1991) and Skierso (1991), mainly evaluate identical aspects, such as physical features of the textbooks covering the aims, layout, approaches, and organisation. On the other hand, some other checklists, like those from Cunningsworth (1995), Harmer (1991), Ur (1996) and Zabawa (2001), primarily evaluate the presentation of language skills (listening, speaking, reading, and writing), grammar, and vocabulary in a textbook.

A detailed checklist can be a useful tool to compare different books available and make a wise decision to choose the best textbook available (McGrath, 2002). According to Cunningsworth (1995) and McGrath (2002), it is an organised and economic method to consider all relevant items for evaluation. Another advantage of a checklist is that it can be modified according to the needs of a specific group of learners and their context (Mukundan & Ahour, 2010). Finally, it is an easy and useful tool to compare different sets of textbooks and facilitates in making the right choice (McGrath, 2002). A detailed checklist method is highly relevant for achieving the objectives of the present study comparing two different sets of textbooks in a specific context.

Table 1

Levels of English language learning in government schools in Pakistan

Province	Students who can read a sentence in English (percent of enrolled students)
Azad Jammu & Kashmir	91%
Punjab	71%
Gilgit-Baltistan	65%
Islamabad	64%
Khyber Pakhtunkhwa	60%
Balochistan	40%
KP-Newly merged districts	39%
Sindh	27%

(Source: ASER, 2019)

Modifying existing checklists

There is no universal checklist available for evaluating textbooks regarding the needs of all learners in all contexts. Therefore, teachers and local school administrators are advised to develop their own criteria which can meet the needs in their own contexts (Cunningsworth, 1995; Mukundan, 2007) as no global criteria can meet their local needs without an extensive modification (Sheldon, 1988). Many writers have developed checklists to evaluate textbooks which are readily available for use. However, most of these checklists have basic flaws (McGrath, 2002; Swales, 1980) and tend to lead users into making superficial judgements. Keeping in view the limitations of readily available checklists, it is essential for users to modify them considerably to evaluate the appropriateness of a textbook for a specific group of students (McGrath, 2002; Tomlinson, 2003). In the current study, Cunningsworth's (1995) checklist has been modified to meet the specific objectives of the research.

State of English Language Teaching (ELT) in Pakistan

English is the official language of the country and medium of instruction (MOI) in colleges and universities (Rahman, 2005) in Pakistan. English is taught as a subject from class 1 to 5, and it is a MOI from class 6 onwards in the government sector schools (National Education Policy, 2009). English textbooks from class 1 up to class 12 have to follow the guidelines inscribed in the NC-2006. Reports have shown there is a significant difference between private and government sector schools in terms of the quality of teachers, pedagogical approaches, monitoring and evaluation, technological facilities, and quality of content in textbooks (Society for the advancement of education (SAHE), 2014). Based on the Aptis test, a test of assessing English language proficiency of primary and middle school teachers, 50% of the teachers lacked even basic English language skills (British Council, 2017). What is even more worrisome is that students attending government schools vary significantly in their English language competencies from those attending private schools. For instance, according to the Annual Status of Education Report (ASER, 2019), while 59%

students between the ages of 5 and 16 can read a story in their mother tongue, e.g., Urdu, Sindhi or Pashto, only 55% can read a sentence in English, despite schools using English predominately. This situation in the Sindh province, the context of the current study, is deplorable, since compared to other regions of the country, only 27% of school-enrolled children between 5 and 16 years of age could read a sentence in English. Table 1 above presents a comparison of school-going children's English literacy in the country. While it is not clear why Sindh is lagging behind other provinces, the difference in reading abilities can be attributed to the provision of better textbooks, continuous professional development of school heads and teachers, and monitoring and accountability by the educational authorities. There is hardly any data about the level of competency of students in other language skills in Sindh. Nevertheless, given the level of students' competency in reading, it is not difficult to imagine the levels of their competency in writing, speaking, and listening. Research shows that the effectiveness of NC-2006 for English is only moderately supported by classroom practitioners (Asghar & Butt, 2018; Panezai & Channa, 2017; Saher & Kashif, 2020; Siddiqui, 2020). For example, Panezai and Channa (2017) conducted a study into the perceptions of primary-level teachers about the efficacy of the English curriculum. Participants of the study revealed that insufficient time for language teaching, lack of teachers' training to teach English textbooks, and inadequate teaching resources, were the main factors hindering the implementation of NC-2006 in word and spirit. Endeavours are being made by the federal and provincial governments for the capacity building of teachers. Private organisations, such as the Society of English Language Teachers, Pakistan English Language Teachers Association, Punjab Education and English Instruction, and the Society for the Advancement of Education are engaged in teacher training, workshops, seminars to improve primary and secondary teachers' English pedagogical skills.

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However, the evaluation of the content of English textbooks with respect to the focus on language skills, including reading, writing, speaking, listening, and grammar has been under-explored in Pakistan. It has been observed that private school English textbooks conform to the guidelines of NC-2006 compared to the government school English textbooks. Private sector school textbooks expend focus on all the language skills to varying degrees, while the government school textbooks exclusively focus on reading, followed by writing and speaking respectively. However, there is a lack of empirical evidence based on a thorough analysis of and comparison between the government and the private schools with respect to their conformity with the national education objectives enshrined in NC-2006. There is a need for studies that analyse and evaluate the English language textbooks taught in the government sector schools, which could inform textbook boards, textbook writers, curriculum developers, and education policy makers regarding the current state of the textbooks being used in the government sector schools and the ways to revise them in conformity with NC-2006 guidelines.

Research Questions

Based on the discussion above, this research evaluates and compares secondary stage English textbooks, *Secondary Stage English Book One* and *Book Two*, and *Exploring English for Class IX* and

Class X, being taught in government schools and private schools in the Sindh province in Pakistan respectively, in terms of their conformity to the objectives outlined in the NC-2006. More specifically, the study aims to answer the following research questions:

1. To what extent do the textbooks foster reading skills of the English language as per guidelines of the NC-2006?
2. To what extent do the textbooks foster writing skills of the English language as per guidelines of the NC-2006?
3. To what extent do the textbooks foster speaking skills of the English language as per guidelines of the NC-2006?
4. To what extent do the textbooks cover the grammatical items mentioned for grade-IX and grade-X in the NC-2006?

Considering different studies of textbook evaluations in Pakistan, the following hypotheses of research questions can be made:

Hypothesis 1: There will be a lack of compliance with the objectives of the NC-2006 in the approved government schools' textbooks as it is the case in most of the textbooks in Pakistan related to different subjects (Khalid, 2010).

Hypothesis 2: There will be less focus on speaking skills in government school textbooks as these skills are underdeveloped in Punjab and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (two major and more developed provinces of Pakistan) provinces' English textbooks (Karamouzian et al., ~~Narcey-Combes & Ahmed,~~ 2014).

Methods

Methodological Approach

A quantitative methodological approach was applied in the present study (Mackay & Gass, 2005; O'Cathain et al., 2007). Quantitative methods can be useful to summarise multiple data in order to reach a generalisation, derived from statistics (Babbie, 2008).

Textual Sources Used in the Study

English Textbooks

English textbooks and the NC-2006 document were used as secondary sources for the study. Two sets of English textbooks were evaluated for this study. *Secondary Stage English Book One* and *Book Two* are used in government schools of Sindh province, and *Exploring English for Class IX* and *Class X* are used in private schools of Sindh province under the direction of the Agha Khan Examination board, which is the leading private local examination board in Pakistan. A brief description of these textbooks follows.

Secondary Stage English Book One for Class IX and X. These books are developed for the Sindh textbook board, Jamshoro, which is the provincial textbook board for Sindh province, for classes IX and X. There are no supplementary materials like a teacher's resource book, audio books for the students, or an Internet site available for the textbook. The class IX textbook comprises 111 pages and there are 21 sections in it, including seven poems. The class X textbook comprises 26 sections, including 13 poems, and there are 104 pages in it. Each section includes a text followed by exercises related to reading for comprehension questions, writing exercises, grammar, and vocabulary.

Exploring English for Class IX and X. These textbooks are endorsed by the Agha Khan

University (AKU) Examination Board and are used for classes IX and X secondary students . These books were published in Pakistan by Oxford University Press in 2010. In addition to the textbook, available materials include a teacher's resource book and an audio CD for listening and speaking tasks. There are 147 pages in the textbook, and it includes 10 units in the Class IX textbook. There are 161 pages and 10 units in Class X textbook. Each unit has five components:

1. Reading: texts are given with pre-reading, while-reading, and post-reading exercises to help improve students' reading skills.
2. Listening and Speaking: exercises are given to develop students' oral comprehension and expression in the English language.
3. Writing: begins with paragraph writing and introduces the different types of essays.
4. Grammar: presents the formal aspects of language.
5. Fun Time: presents activities and tasks for the students.

The authors of the textbook claim that the textbook focuses on the student learning outcomes (SLOs) as stated in the NC-2006.

Data Collection

A checklist method was used to collect quantitative data for this research project as it is an organised, cost-effective, and explicit way to evaluate ELT textbooks (McGrath, 2016). Most of the existing checklists have inherent weaknesses and have problems with their length and content (Littlejohn, 2011; McGrath, 2002; Sheldon, 1988; Swales, 1980). Therefore, evaluators are encouraged to either develop their own evaluation criteria, keeping in view their own needs and local context (Cunningsworth, 1995; Mukundan, 2007), or modify an existing checklist to meet the needs of a specific group of learners as "global lists of criteria can never really apply in most local environments, without

considerable modification" (Sheldon, 1988). Most of the existing checklists available in literature focus on the physical attributes of a textbook like aims, layout, methodology, and organisation. As this current study is not aimed at evaluating physical aspects of the textbooks, most of the checklists, like Cunningsworth and Kusel (1991) and Skierso (1991), were not suitable for the study.

For this study, a checklist was constructed based on Cunningsworth's (1995) checklist criteria. According to Cunnigsworth (1995), asking relevant questions and finding their appropriate answers is key to an effective textbook analysis. He argues that an ultimate objective of textbook assessment is to evaluate its strengths and weaknesses, and to replace it with a better textbook, which can achieve the desired pedagogical goals and fulfil the needs of the learners. Cunnigsworth's extensive checklist consists of 44 carefully designed Yes/No questions. The leading questions in the checklist are based on eight broad categories, including aim and approaches, design and organisation, language content, skill, topic, methodology, teacher's book, and practical considerations. However, he recommends that teachers should identify their own needs based on their local context and modify the existing checklists accordingly. Cunningsworth's checklist is aimed at evaluating language skills (listening, speaking, reading, writing) and subskills (grammar, vocabulary, etc.), and hence, is appropriate for this study. However, the checklist has been adapted according to the requirement of this study to compare it with the objectives of the NC-2006, as an effective evaluation depends on asking relevant questions (Cunningsworth, 1995). Moreover, since Cunningsworth's checklist is a qualitative checklist, a rating scale has been added to elicit quantitative data.

The data collected in this study are related to the presentation of speaking, reading, writing, and grammar skills in the textbooks. The data were

Table 2

Themes, categories, and definitions of the checklist

Theme	Category	Definition
Reading	Identification of Text organisation	Topic sentence, supporting details
	Analysing short stories, poems	Setting, plot, themes, characters, events
	Activities	Pre-reading, while-reading, post-reading
	Skills	Skimming, scanning
	Comprehending Graphic organisers	Bar graph, line graph, diagrams
Writing	Writing process	Idea generation, planning, drafting, revising
	Language resources	Punctuation, spellings, layout
	Structures of text types	Comparison & contrast, narrative, persuasive
	Letters and applications	Format, layout, style, tone
	Techniques to influence reader	Writing purpose, audience
Speaking	Variety of Speaking activities	Discussions, role play, interviews, presentations
	Accuracy	Pronunciation, grammar, vocabulary, stress pattern
	Work	Individual, pair, group
	Interaction strategies	Asking for clarification, seeking information, greetings
	Skills	Coherence, cohesion
Grammar	Parts of speech	Nouns, pronouns, verbs, adjectives, adverbs, prepositions

collected through textbook evaluations. The checklist, including rubrics for the analysis, was constructed by the researchers in order to evaluate the conformity of these textbooks to the NC-2006 in terms of speaking, reading, writing, and grammar skills, as mentioned in the NC-2006 document. The checklist consisted of five questions related to each above-mentioned skill. The questions of the checklist were designed keeping in mind the objectives and the intended learning outcomes (ILOs) mentioned in the NC-2006.

Data analysis

The checklist was comprised of 20 questions which were divided into four broad themes, including reading, writing, speaking, and grammar skills. Each theme consisted of five categories. Table 2 above illustrates the themes, categories, and their definitions.

In the NC-2006, each skill is divided into certain benchmarks and then different intended learning outcomes (ILOs) are derived from those benchmarks for every grade learner. All the questions in the

checklist were based on the ILOs given in the NC-2006 related to that skill for class IX and X learners.

A rating scale was used to elicit the quantitative data and each predetermined response was assigned a number from 0 to 4. Each descriptor of the scale was given a code: 4= Excellent; 3= Good; 2=Adequate; 1= Poor; 0= totally lacking. This rating scale of 0-4 is dominant in well-established quantitative checklists (e.g., Daoud & Celce-Murcia, 1979; Skierso, 1991). For every question, a clear criterion was developed by the researchers for in what conditions a particular response (from 0 to 4) could be selected, which was meant to increase the reliability of the checklist. An even-numbered scale was used instead of an odd-numbered scale in order to avoid the problem of central tendency, which is "the inclination to rate people in the middle of the scale even when their performance clearly warrants a substantially higher or lower rating" (Grote, 1996, p. 138).

The checklist was constructed based on a thorough study of previous similar checklists available in the literature to ensure its construct validity, as, in order to increase the validity of an instrument, a researcher needs to be familiar with the relevant theories (Messick, 1994). Moreover, care was taken to keep the questions as simple and clear as possible to strengthen the reliability of the instrument as Tomlinson (2003) recommends avoiding any vague and lengthy questions which could be difficult to interpret. Finally, the aspect of practicality was also considered. The researchers in this study made all efforts to keep the checklist as short and clear as possible. The checklist comprises 370 running words which is relatively more economical when compared to many existing checklists.

This checklist was applied to both sets of the textbooks. *Secondary Stage English Book One* and *Book Two* were treated as one set of textbooks, and *Exploring English for Class IX* and *Class X* were

treated as another set of the textbooks. This was done because class IX and class X are considered as one level in Pakistan and the NC-2006 does not provide separate objectives for them. Every category (skill) comprised five questions and every question carried 0-4 points with a minimum 0 for "Totally Lacking" a and maximum 4 for "Excellent". A zero scale is included because a textbook might lack a skill completely. The score for every single skill for a particular set of textbooks is shown in a bar chart which illustrates the total score of that textbook in the specific skill out of 20 total possible points.

If a textbook got 1-2 points out of twenty in a skill, it was considered very poor in relation to the conformity to the NC-2006. On the contrary, if it got 19-20 points, it was considered outstanding in matching the objectives of the NC-2006. The complete criteria for the level of conformity for a textbook is as follows:

> 1-2 very poor; 3-4 poor; 5-6 marginally adequate; 7-8 moderately adequate; 9-10 adequate; 11-12 quite good; 13-14 good; 15-16 very good; 17-18 excellent; 19-20 outstanding.

The results for all four skills (reading, writing, speaking, and grammar) were collected in numbers for each set of textbooks. The researchers then calculated how much in percentage they matched the objectives of the NC-2006 in total. For instance, if one set of textbooks got 40 points out of a total 80 possible points (20 points maximum for each skill), the textbook was considered to match 50% of objectives of the NC-2006. Any set of textbooks which matched more objectives in relation to the NC-2006 would be considered as more appropriate.

Figure 1

Comparison of Alignment of the Textbooks for all the Four Skills as per NC-2006

Figure 2

Comparison of Alignment of Textbooks to the NC-2006 Objectives for Reading Skills
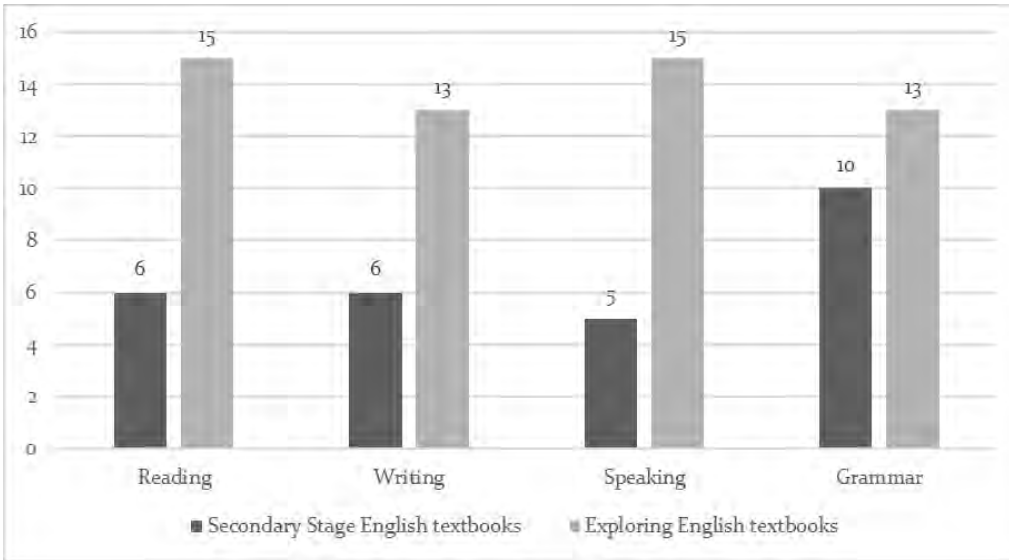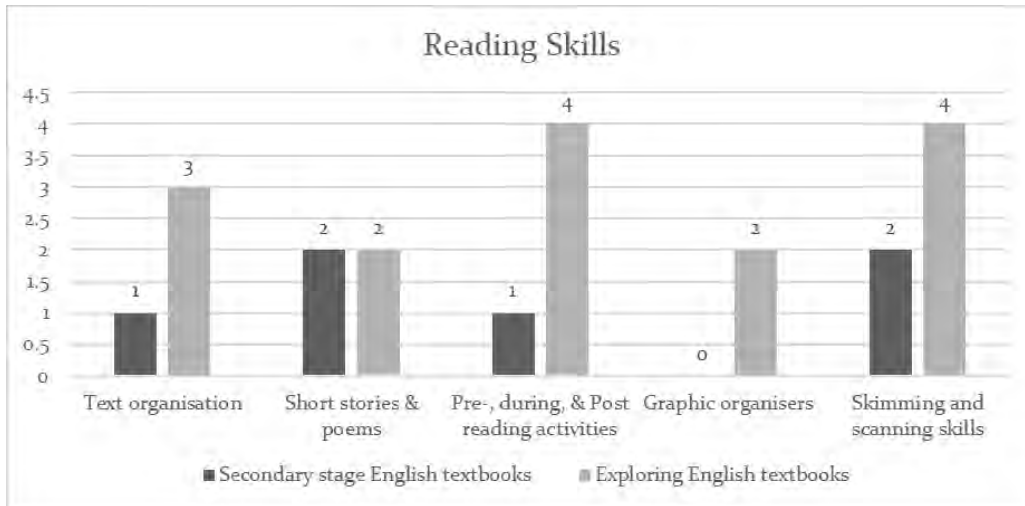

Comparison of Alignment of Textbooks to the NC-2006 Objectives for all Four Skills

Exploring English textbooks used under the Agha Khan Examination board are more appropriate in terms of reading, writing, speaking, and grammar skills than the *Secondary Stage English* textbooks used in government schools, in relation to their conformity to the objectives of the NC-2006. Figure 1 presents a comparison of alignment of the textbooks for all the four skills as per NC-2006 guidelines.

The bar chart clearly shows that *Exploring English* textbooks achieved considerably higher points in all four skills as compared to *Secondary Stage English* textbooks. *Exploring English* textbooks got the highest scores in reading and speaking skills, 15 points out of 20, which is 75% conformity to the NC-2006 in these skills. Similarly, they got 13 points in writing and grammar skills, which is still regarded as "good" according to the criteria of the study. Contrary to the *Exploring English* series, the *Secondary Stage English* textbooks achieved the highest points in grammar, in which they scored 10 points, which is still only considered as "adequate" in this study. They scored lowest in speaking skills (5 points), which is regarded as "marginally adequate"
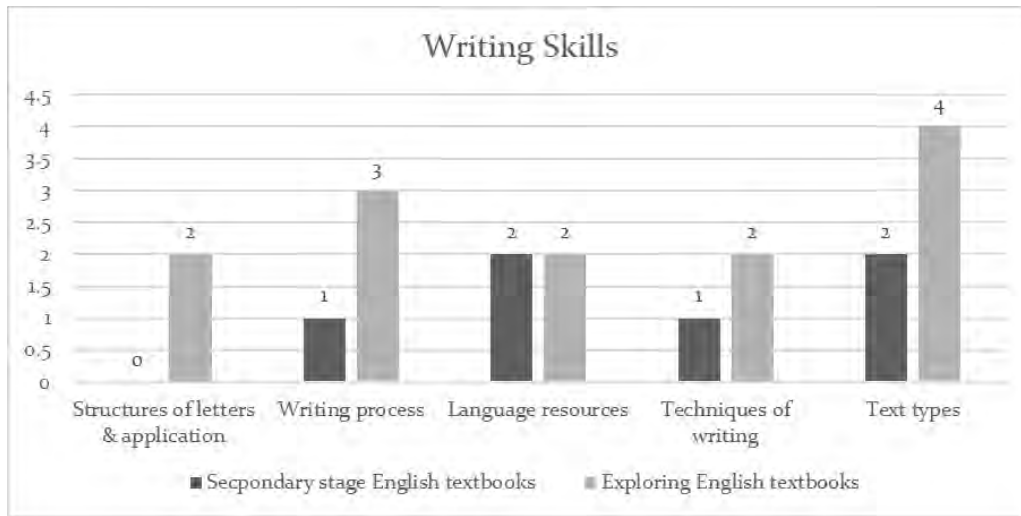
Results

This section presents the results of the study to answer the RQs. The first section presents the combined results of the four skills. Next, each skill and its sub-categories are presented separately.

Figure 3

Comparison of Alignment of Textbooks to the NC-2006 Objectives for Writing Skills

according to the criteria of the study. Overall, *Exploring English* textbooks, which are used in private schools under the AKU examination board, achieved 56 points out of 80, and matched 70% of objectives of the NC-2006. On the other hand, *Secondary Stage English* textbooks, used in government schools, achieved only 27 points out of 80, and matched approximately 34% of objectives of the NC-2006.

To What Extent do the Textbooks Foster Reading Skills?

Figure 2 compares the presentation of reading skills in both sets of textbooks and shows how much they met the objectives of the NC-2006. Each bar chart represents a category.

The bar chart shows that *Exploring English* textbooks, which are used under the AKU Examination board, scored significantly high as compared to the *Secondary Stage English* textbooks, being used in government schools, in relation to their conformity to the NC-2006 objectives for reading skills. The figure reveals that *Exploring English* textbooks

achieved more points in every category except short stories and poems. In this category, both sets of textbooks achieved equal marks. In categories 3 and 5, *Exploring English* textbooks achieved 4 points, which were the highest possible points in those categories. On the contrary, government schools' textbooks got 0 points in category 4, which was related to comprehending graphic organisers. Overall, *Exploring English* textbooks achieved 15 points out of 20, which is considered "very good" according to the set criteria of this study. These textbooks matched 75% of objectives of reading skills prescribed in the NC-2006. On the other hand, *Secondary Stage English* textbooks, used in government schools, got 6 points out of 20, which is considered "marginally adequate" as per the set criteria of the current study. They met only 30% of objectives of the NC-2006.
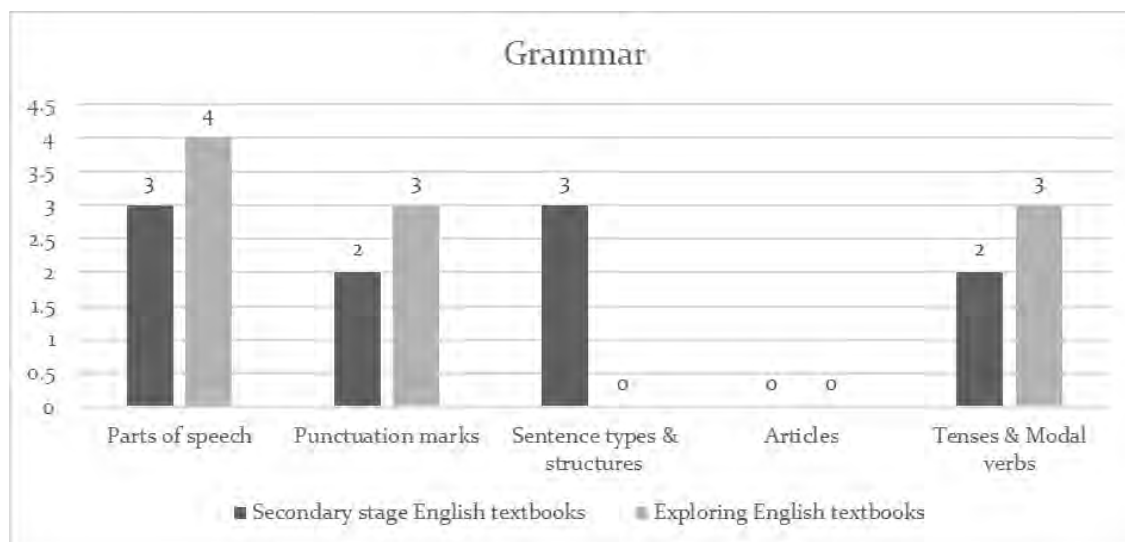
To What Extent do the Textbooks Foster Writing Skills?

Figure 3 compares the writing skills in both sets of textbooks and shows to what extent they conform to the objectives of the NC-2006.

It is apparent that *Exploring English* textbooks achieved higher points in matching objectives for writing skills prescribed in the NC-2006. They scored higher points as compared to *Secondary Stage English* textbooks in all categories except in category 2, which was related to language resources, where both sets of textbooks scored equal points. The data of the bar chart reveal that *Exploring English* textbooks scored

Figure 4

Comparison of Alignment of Textbooks to the NC-2006 Objectives for Speaking Skills

It is apparent from the figure that the *Exploring English* textbooks got significantly higher points in matching the standards set in the NC-2006 for speaking skills. They got higher points than *Secondary Stage English* textbooks in all categories except where both textbooks got equal points in helping learners to acquire accuracy. The bar chart shows that there was no variety of speaking activities in *Secondary Stage English* textbooks as they scored 0 points in category 1. Another notable result is that the *Exploring English* textbooks achieved maximum points in the category of individual, pair, and group work activities as these textbooks had plenty of individual, pair, and group activities. Overall, *Exploring English* textbooks achieved 15 points, which is regarded as "very good" in the study. On the other hand, *Secondary Stage English* textbooks scored only 5 points, which is considered as "marginally adequate" in the study. The first set of textbooks matched 75% of objectives of the NC-2006, whereas the second set of textbooks matched only 25% of objectives.

maximum points in category 5, which was regarding developing insights into the structure of various text types. On the contrary, *Secondary Stage English* textbooks got 0 points in the first category as there was no guideline or practice provided in these textbooks for letter or application writing. Overall, *Exploring English* textbooks, which are used in private schools under the AKU examination board, scored 13 out of 20 points, which is regarded as "good" according to the criteria of the study. They matched 65% of objectives of the NC-2006. On the other hand, *Secondary Stage English* textbooks, used in government schools, achieved a very low score of 6 points, which is considered "marginally adequate" in this study. They matched only 30% of objectives of the NC-2006.

To What Extent do the Textbooks Foster Speaking Skills?

Figure 4 presents the results of quantitative data of presentation of speaking skills of both sets of textbooks and their conformity to the objectives of the NC-2006.

To What Extent do the Textbooks Foster Grammar Skills?

Figure 5 illustrates the coverage of grammar skills in both sets of textbooks in terms of their alignment to the objectives of the NC-2006.

The bar chart shows that *Exploring English* textbooks had a slightly better coverage of grammar in relation to the objectives of the NC-2006. The first result worth pointing out is that both sets of textbooks scored 0 points in category 4. This category was related to coverage of articles, and it was noted that both sets of textbooks had neither any guidelines nor any practice regarding the use of articles. On the other hand, both sets of textbooks had a good coverage of category 1, parts of speech, and *Exploring English* textbooks scored maximum points in category 1, whereas *Secondary Stage English* textbooks achieved 3 points. Similarly, both sets of textbooks scored 3 points in category 3, which was related to the coverage of sentence types and structures. In category 5, *Exploring English* textbooks achieved 3 points in comparison to *Secondary Stage* textbooks, which scored 2 points in that category. Overall, *Exploring English* textbooks achieved 13 points, which is considered as "good" coverage in the criteria of the study. On the other hand, *Secondary Stage English* textbooks scored 10 points, which is regarded as "adequate" in this study.

Figure 5

Comparison of Alignment of Textbooks to the NC-2006 Objectives for Grammar Skills
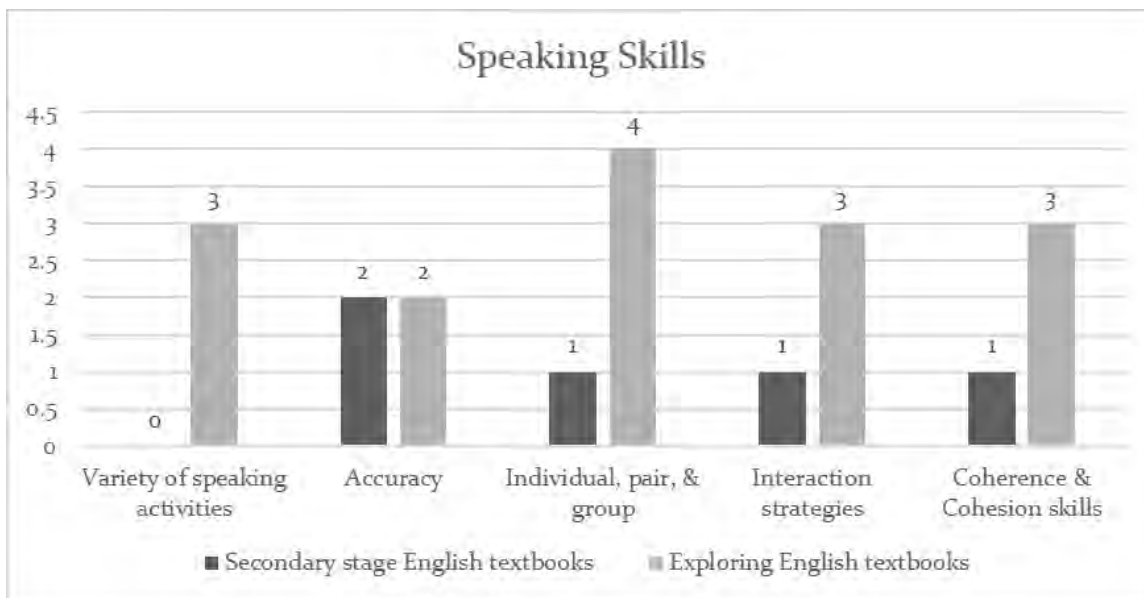
Discussion

Alignment of the Textbooks to the Objectives of the NC-2006

Results of the study show that *Secondary Stage English* textbooks, used in government schools, match only 34% of objectives laid out in the NC-2006 for reading, writing, speaking, and grammar skills. On the other hand, *Exploring English* textbooks, used in private schools, are significantly better in matching the objectives in the NC-2006, with a 70% alignment. These results confirm the first hypothesis of the study which suggested that there would be less compliance with the objectives of the NC-2006 in the textbooks used in government schools. These findings are also consistent with previous studies (Aftab, 2012; Habib & Umar, 2017; Mahmood, 2010). The findings of the study suggest that members of the National Textbook Review Committee (NTRC) need to revisit their mechanism for approving the textbooks, as these textbooks, especially those used in government schools, have failed to comply with the objectives laid out in the NC-2006. Mahmood (2010) also pointed out that merely providing the main contents of the NC-2006 to the authors cannot guarantee maximum coverage of the objectives included in the NC-2006 and

members of the NTRC need to ensure their coverage while approving these textbooks.

Alignment of Reading Skills

With respect to RQ-1, the results suggest that *Exploring English* textbooks match 75% of objectives of reading skills laid out in the NC-2006. These findings are in line with Aftab (2012) who claimed that the English textbooks used in private schools fostered all language skills. On the contrary, *Secondary Stage English* textbooks used in government schools matched only 30% of objectives of reading skills and had many flaws in the approach to encouraging reading skills in learners. The same result was found by Karamouzian et al. (2014) who concluded that reading skills were not developed in secondary school English textbooks used in government schools in Punjab and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa provinces. The current study revealed that these textbooks used in government schools had no pre-reading or while-reading activities, which was in line with the findings of Habib and Umar (2017) who found that the English textbooks being used at the secondary level in government schools did not have any pre-reading or while-reading activities.

Moreover, both sets of textbooks contained post-reading exercises which were mainly based on reading for comprehension questions related to the given text. This approach is contrary to Pennac (2006) who suggested that the primary objective of reading should be pleasure rather than testing the comprehension of learners. Another problem with this reading for comprehension-based approach is that readers are treated as passive recipients of knowledge rather than interacting with the text

(McDonough & Shaw, 2003; Vaezi, 2005). Also, *Secondary Stage English* textbooks did not promote any skimming skill in learners, which is important in helping them to become efficient readers by finding a general overview of the passage (McDonough & Shaw, 2003).

Alignment of Writing Skills

Findings related to RQ-2 reveal *that Exploring English* textbooks conform to 65% of writing objectives of the NC-2006 and have less coverage of these skills as compared to reading and speaking skills, in which these textbooks meet 75% objectives. These findings reflect those of Aftab (2012) who found that writing skills were focused on less as compared to other skills in the textbooks used in private schools. As compared to *Exploring English* textbooks, *Secondary Stage English* textbooks match only 30% of objectives laid out in the NC-2006. These findings are consistent with Karamouzian et al. (2014), who concluded in their studies that writing skills were ignored in secondary level English textbooks used in government schools in Punjab and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa provinces in Pakistan. This is a major weakness of these textbooks as, according to Klapper (2006), writing is the most difficult skill for non-native speakers of English amongst all four skills of language and should be given due focus in the textbooks. The findings suggest that the writing process is not developed in *Secondary Stage English* textbooks and final tasks are given to learners without providing them any guidelines on the different stages of the writing process. Habib and Umar (2017) identified the same problem in English textbooks used in government schools of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province. This is in

> **"The findings suggest that the writing process is not developed in *Secondary Stage English* textbooks and final tasks are given to learners without providing them any guidelines on different stages of the writing process."**

contrast with the views of Klapper (2006), who supported the process approach, saying that it developed the thought process that every writer should go through in producing a piece of writing. Moreover, text organisation, and coherence and cohesion skills are also ignored in these textbooks. These results reflect those of Habib and Umar (2017) who revealed the same findings in their study.

Alignment of Speaking Skills

With reference to RQ-3, it was observed in this study that *Exploring English* textbooks have a good coverage of speaking skills and match 75% of objectives set in the NC-2006. These findings support the study of Aftab (2012) who found that the English textbooks used in private schools promoted and encouraged speaking skills in learners. However, this is not the case with *Secondary Stage English* textbooks used in government schools, which include no real speaking activity and meet only 25% of objectives suggested in the NC-2006. These results support our second hypothesis, which predicted that there would be less focus on speaking skills in government school textbooks. It is important to note that *Secondary Stage English* textbooks achieved the least points in speaking skills.

These findings are in line with the observations in previous studies. Karamouzian et al. (2014) revealed that speaking skills were underestimated in the English textbooks used in government schools of Punjab and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa provinces of Pakistan. Aftab (2012) also pointed out the same problem that speaking activities were not focused on in the textbooks of government schools. Similarly, Ali et al. (2015) also identified in their research that speaking skills were ignored in elementary level English textbooks used in Punjab province. These findings support the views of McDonough and Shaw (2003) who stated that speaking skills are often taken for granted and underestimated in an ELT program.

This study also confirms some of the problems identified by Habib and Umar (2017), who revealed that the English textbooks being used in government schools of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province did not provide knowledge and practice for speaking skills to learners. They further pointed out that those textbooks did not include any guidelines and practice for pronunciation, stress patterns, presentation, and interview skills as prescribed in the NC-2006. This study identifies the same problems in *Secondary Stage English* textbooks used in government schools of Sindh province of Pakistan. It is noteworthy that speaking skill is relatively less attended to in *Secondary Stage* textbooks possibly because unlike grammar, reading, and writing skills, speaking skills are not tested in annual board exams or standardised tests. Thus, textbook publishers and writers publish books that are more closely aligned with exams and tests than the NC-2006.

Coverage of Grammar Skills

As to the last RQ-4, the study finds that *Exploring English* textbooks cover 65% of grammar items mentioned in the NC-2006 as compared to *Secondary Stage English* textbooks which have 50% coverage of them. It is important to note that *Secondary Stage English* textbooks achieve relatively higher points in grammar coverage compared to all other skills. This is in line with Ali et al. (2015), who pointed out that there was adequate information and guidelines about grammar in English textbooks used in government schools. Similar results were found by Karamouzian et al. (2014) who identified that the proportion devoted to grammar was greater than other skills in the English textbooks used in government schools of Punjab and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa provinces. In both sets of textbooks, a traditional approach to grammar teaching is followed in which grammar is considered as a set of forms and structures and is the focus of English textbooks (Newby, 2000). In *Secondary Stage*

English textbooks especially, a major portion of the exercises is devoted to teaching different grammar structures to learners. One possible reason for this may be that for many people language learning is considered learning its grammar (Eisenmann & Summer, 2012). This is particularly true in places like Pakistan where the Grammar Translation Method is still dominating, and learning the grammar of a language is seen as an essential condition for effective language learning (Rutherford & Sherwood Smith, 1988). Moreover, it was observed in both sets of textbooks that grammar items are taught in isolation. This is in contrast with Larsen-Freeman (2003) who suggested that grammar rules should not be taught in isolation and advocated that grammar should instead be taught in a manner that is helpful for learners to understand how language is used. Similarly, learners are not provided any context for these grammar structures, which is in contradiction to Celce-Murcia (2002), who stated that grammar items should be taught through providing relevant context for them.

"Textbook writers must also be aware of the fact that a mere presence or absence of pre-selected activities in a textbook does not guarantee that teachers are using or not using activities along with the texts."

Implications

The focus of this study was to evaluate two different sets of secondary level English textbooks used in public and private schools of Sindh province in Pakistan and investigate if their presentation of reading, writing, speaking, and grammar skills is in line with the objectives laid out in the NC-2006. The findings of this study suggest that *Exploring English* textbooks, used in private schools under the AKU examination board, are more appropriate than *Secondary Stage English* textbooks, used in government schools, in terms of meeting the objectives prescribed in the NC-2006. *Secondary*

Stage English textbooks meet 30% of objectives for reading and writing skills, 50% of objectives for coverage of grammar, and only 25% of objectives for speaking skills respectively. In contrast, *Exploring English* textbooks match 75% of objectives for reading and speaking skills and 65% of objectives for grammar and writing skills. Overall, *Secondary Stage English* textbooks meet only 34% of objectives for these skills, whereas *Exploring English* textbooks match 70% of objectives laid out in NC-2006 for these skills.

The present study, therefore, suggests that textbook developers of the public sector schools in Sindh province need to follow the guidelines provided in the NC-2006. The study also recommends that publishers and textbook writers ought to give equal weight to each competency their textbooks, including reading, writing, oral communication, and grammar. However, textbook writers must also be aware of the fact that a mere presence or absence of pre-selected activities in a textbook does not guarantee that teachers are using or not using activities along with the texts. For instance, it is possible that private school teachers skip the pre-reading and during-reading strategies, even though the textbook makes them available, while public school teachers create their own pre-reading and during-reading activities, even though the textbook excludes them.

Most importantly, in an attempt to satisfy their public/private customers, publishers try to publish books that cover everything, including grammar, vocabulary, and the four skills. As a result, the modern textbooks exert their influence on instructional practices by taking care of even the

minutest details of classroom life, and most of them come with teacher guides that include achievement tests and even all the examples teachers' may need in their classes (Akbari, 2008). On the one hand, these textbooks prove detrimental to teachers' agency and ingenuity, by reducing their role to classroom management. Similarly, given the excessive workload of teachers, it encourages certain teachers to voluntarily pick those textbooks which require less preparation (Dendrinos, 1992; Tomlinson, 2008; 2010). Curriculum developers and textbook writers are, therefore, advised to produce textbooks that ensure teachers' autonomy and provide teachers with basic guidelines that serve as a springboard for teachers to achieve the SLO. Furthermore, in line with the guidelines of NC-2006, textbooks ought to incorporate tasks and activities that engage students in authentic and meaningful use of English in a variety of real life academic and social contexts. Education policy makers, for their part, need to take account of whether the objectives laid out in NC-2006 are being incorporated in the textbooks and translated into practice. However, this can only be possible when policy makers get all the stakeholders, including curriculum developers, textbook writers, publishers, and language teachers, on board before finalising the curriculum (SAHE, 2014).

Limitations

The present study is not without its limitations. First, this study examined only two sets of secondary level English language textbooks with regard to their alignment with NC-2006. Future studies can extend this line of inquiry by examining English language textbooks of primary and intermediate levels to develop a broader perspective on the alignment between NC-2006 and English language textbooks in Sindh, Pakistan. Also, the textbooks of only two textbook boards, namely the Sindh textbook board and the Agha Khan Board, were compared. It would

be worthwhile to analyse and evaluate the English textbooks used under other textbook boards, such as the Cambridge and Catholic boards. The views of the teachers and the students, who are using these textbooks, are not included in this study due to time constraint and their unavailability. Also, since no other participants were involved in this study except for the researchers, the findings can be subjective to some extent. Finally, the findings and implications of this study are related to a context, so generalization from this study should be applied with caution. It is recommended that it would be valuable to investigate teachers' and students' views and opinions in future research regarding these textbooks as they are the key stakeholders. Similarly, the views of the authors of these textbooks and the members of NTRC are also important to include.

Conclusion

The present study has shown that English textbooks used at a secondary level in government schools meet only 34% of objectives of the NC-2006. It is an undeniable fact that disparities in the standard of English textbooks, inter alia, influences the educational achievements and affects economic well-being. Therefore, there is a need for not only democratising English education but also ensuring the all-round development of public sector students' English language skills. This can improve students' chances to attend higher education, contribute to closing the gap between the lower and higher socioeconomic classes, and make the entire body of our youth a valuable resource for the national and global economy. Pakistan's commitment to achieving Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), especially SDG-4 of inclusive and equitable education, will remain a dream without ensuring an inclusive and equitable English language education across all levels of education.

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