



EXPLORING THE COMPREHENSIVENESS OF VOCABULARY AND GRAMMAR IN THE GRADE 9 SINDH BOARD ENGLISH TEXTBOOK

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Abstract

A textbook is a key tool that can be used to teach learners in different subjects. And textbook evaluation is an important matter to be considered to check whether the textbook is suitable for the learners. This study tends to explore the vocabulary and grammar topics and rules presented in the grade nine English textbook Jamshoro Sindh. This study also aims to explore how much vocabulary is helpful to the students for their studies and how effectively grammar topics and rules are presented in the textbook. In this study, the researcher intends to explore the teachers and students' perspectives and study the textbook to explore the effectiveness of the vocabulary and the grammar topics presented in the textbook. It is also important to mention that this study assesses the effectiveness of the vocabulary and the grammar topics based on two main criteria of textbook evaluation adopted from cunningworth theory of textbook evaluation (1995): the textbook is effective according to vocabulary presentations, the textbook is effective according to grammar presentations.

Keywords: *Textbook Analysis, Vocabulary, Grammar, Language, Perspectives, Textbooks*

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1. Introduction

In many language programs, textbooks play a significant role in the curriculum. It has been noted that textbooks are the only means of teaching English and influencing students' linguistic growth, particularly in the province of Sindh, where a substantial portion of the population lacks access to the internet and instructional materials. It is crucial to assess whether the language content (vocabulary and grammar structure) utilized in the textbook satisfies the needs of the students because it is a crucial part of teaching languages (Sheldon 1988). The two main criteria used to evaluate textbooks are grammatical organization and lexical range (Cunning Worth 1995).

This study investigates whether the Grade 9 textbook offers thorough vocabulary and grammar coverage that is in line with both learner needs and worldwide standards. Additionally, this study uses the known textbook assessment frameworks of Cunnings Worth textbook evaluation 1995 to examine the comprehensiveness and pedagogical effectiveness of vocabulary and grammar in the Grade 9 Sindh Board English textbook. As the textbook functions as the primary source of teaching and learning due to limited access to the digital literacy tool. Besides this issue, it is also a matter of use of these digital tools as some of the private schools have digital classrooms, but most of the teachers are unaware of the use of these tools, such as speaking and listening applications. So that students and teachers heavily rely on the textbook, which influences students' vocabulary development, grammar structure, and other areas of the textbook.

1.1. Background

It is essential to evaluate textbooks, particularly language textbooks, to ascertain whether the content is appropriate for the intended use. Researchers like Hutchinson and Waters (1987), Sheldon (1988), Cunningsworth (1995), and Ellis (1997) stress that assessment should look at textbooks both before and after they are used in the classroom (Hicham Laabidi and Abdelhamid Nfissi). Although little research has been done on textbook evaluation in Pakistan, many government school textbooks have not been evaluated for several years (Mahmood, 2010). By contrasting a textbook's methodology and content with the suggested curriculum, users can assess the textbook's educational importance (Hassan Syed, Farhan, 2022).

2. Literature Review

Textbooks are the major source of teaching the English language in Pakistan, so most of the students rely on textbooks to develop their language competency. Even most teachers in Pakistan rely heavily on these textbooks and use them as the primary source of teaching materials (Man, 2000; Morris & Adamson, 2010, et al.; Farhan Ali Bhutto 2023). Because of this reason and to make the textbook effective for the learners, it is mandatory to evaluate the book to determine whether it meets the needs of the students. However, there is no specific criterion for evaluating textbooks, but it is context-dependent;

evaluation must consider learners' needs, cultural relevance, and pedagogical effectiveness (Cunningworth, 1995). Several studies have evaluated textbooks using various tools, including Cunningham's (1995) checklist. According to numerous studies, the core criteria for evaluating textbooks focus on both the language content and the learners' needs. Therefore, this study has been conducted on the Cunninghamworth evaluating textbook theory (1995) by using two key components of evaluating textbooks: language content (vocabulary and grammar) and learners' needs. A study was conducted by Mahnoor Sheikh and Dr. Shumaila Memon (2021) on a comparative analysis of the grade 10 English textbook boards and the Cambridge "O Level" from the perspective of revised Bloom's taxonomy. Furthermore, a checklist based on revised Bloom's taxonomy was used as an instrument for the study. The study found zero frequency and a percentage of creativity and understanding in the Grade 10 Sindh textbook board. Additionally, a previous study reveals that only rote exercises are taught in grade nine books, which confines students' and teachers' learning and is not very fruitful according to the modern needs of the English language. As English is now a globally recognized language among countries, novel words and phrases are being introduced continuously. In this way, the vocabulary used in textbooks must meet the global standard.

In addition, the study was conducted on locally produced English textbooks in Vietnam. The study found that these books tend to focus on preparing students to use English for communication (Roby Marlina, 2020), and vocabulary is a key tool for better communication. If someone has a limited vocabulary, they will not be able to communicate effectively in that language. However, the Grade 9 English textbook of the Sindh board contains a limited vocabulary, which is not extremely useful for effective language use, either written or spoken. It is also not sufficient for higher studies. It has been observed that students who completed matriculation under the Sindh board are not familiar with novel words and phrases that are frequently used in English, and sometimes they are unable to use words appropriately because there are no specific exercises that enable students to use vocabulary effectively. Moreover, English as a global lingua franca requires learners to develop intercultural communicative competence (ICC) and cultural awareness for socially appropriate communication, which underscores the long-recognized need for multicultural education in language classrooms (Sun-Young Kim & Jiwon Paek, 2015). This means that other cultural aspects should be included in language classes to make learners aware of other cultures. However, in the Grade 9 English textbook, the only cultural aspects that are included are related to local, provincial, and traditional aspects. There is not even a single text that shows multicultural aspects in the textbook. Because of this reason, the students who read this textbook have little knowledge about other cultures and traditions.

Furthermore, it is also studied that the physical attributes of textbooks, including layout, readability, and design, can affect students' motivation and learning outcomes (Laghari, 2023). If we go through the Sindh textbook grade nine, it is observed that students are not very satisfied with the alignment of the topics presented in the book, especially the exercises given in the book, and they perceive the physical attributes of the textbook are not as good as it could be. But it is particularly important to set up the textbook design economically for the students. This may result in the ineffective alignment of the textbook as perceived by the students.

3. Research Methodology

The study is conducted with eight English language teachers who use a secondary textbook to instruct students during the 2025-2026 academic year in Karachi, Sindh. The data collection instrument for this research is semi-structured interviews aimed at assessing the overall effectiveness of vocabulary and grammar in the textbook, from the teachers' perspectives. It is important to note that the interviews focus exclusively on high school teachers who utilize this textbook for instruction. A total of eight English teachers working in high schools in Karachi participated in the study. This study is based on convenience sampling, and all the participants use the "Grade 9 English Sindh Board" textbook, which is approved by the Sindh Textbook Board, Jamshoro, Sindh.

Among the total number of participants, there are five female secondary school teachers and three male secondary school teachers who participated in the study.

3.1. Research Objectives

- To explore the comprehensiveness of vocabulary presented in the grade nine Sindh textbook board.
- To examine the presentation of the grammar topics and rules

3.2. Research Questions

- How effective is the textbook according to vocabulary comprehensiveness?
- How effective is the textbook in the grammar topics presentation?

3.3. Research framework

This study used Cunningsworth's (1995) theory of textbook evaluation. The theory is presented in a way that it is a guideline to evaluate a textbook in a comprehensive way. In this textbook evaluation theory, he designed nine standardized questions to check the quality of textbooks, such as content, vocabulary, learners' needs, and cultural aspects, etc. Besides the nine questions, Cunningsworth (1995) also presents some checklists as well. This study adopted two components of Cunningsworth's (1995) theory of textbook evaluation, which are:

- To what extent is the textbook effective according to vocabulary comprehensiveness?

- To what extent is the textbook effective according to the language (grammar) presentation in the textbook?

Through these two questions of vocabulary and language (grammar) content presented by Cunningham, this study explores the effectiveness of vocabulary and content of grammar presented in the grade nine English Sindh textbook of the Sindh Textbook Board, Jamshoro, Sindh.

3.4. Data Collection Tool

In this study, the data were collected through semi-structured interviews from the secondary school teachers in Karachi, Sindh, Pakistan.

Interview 1

This interview was conducted with a male secondary school teacher who has been teaching the secondary English Sindh textbook board for 7 years at different institutions in Karachi. Moreover, he gives brief statements according to his experience that the English textbook for grade 9 is not fit for the class level. It may be used for primary classes. He added that the vocabulary used in the textbook is not amazingly effective for the secondary level. It may limit the understanding of the students of these limited words. Furthermore, he also discussed the grammar topics presentation in the textbook. He explained that grammar is essential for the language structure, but he said that he has never seen the structured grammar in the grade 9 Sindh textbook.

Interview 2

An interview is conducted with a secondary school teacher in Karachi. She has been teaching English to secondary classes for 9 years. She stated that the only source of teaching English she has is a textbook, which is not amazingly effective, especially in terms of grammar topics, presentation, and content. She added that textual content is extremely limited to the intercultural aspects, which makes it inaccessible for students to understand diverse cultures and ethnicities. She added that the vocabulary used in the textbook is not very advanced, but it gives a better understanding to the students who have a weak academic background. But for those students who are struggling to achieve higher study goals, this kind of vocabulary sets them back. She also stated that, if we compare the Oxford textbook for grade 6, we will find advanced words and their understanding as well.

Interview 3

This interview was conducted with a male secondary school teacher who has 6 years of experience in teaching secondary English. He has done his BS in English language and literature. He stated that in the English textbook, grade vocabulary is not used in an extensive way. He added that, with this kind of vocabulary, the students will not be able to write an effective piece of writing. In addition, he said that vocabulary is a key component of language learning, whether written or spoken. But in the book, vocabulary is used in an amazingly simple and effortless way. Because of the simplicity and traditional

words and phrases used in the book, the students are unable to speak in English fluently. Moreover, in the grammar topics presentation, he states that some of the topics that are included are important for writing, such as types of sentences. He added that these kinds of topics should be included so that students can understand the language structure in a proper way.

Interview 4

This interview was conducted with a female English teacher. She has been teaching English to secondary classes for 7 years in Karachi, Sindh. She said that the vocabulary in the Grade 9 Sindh Board English textbook is not good. The chosen words are extremely easy and outdated, and they do not expose students to the kind of rich and modern vocabulary, which is why the students have very ineffective writing skills. She added that the vocabulary used in the book cannot help them in higher studies or real-life communication. Students often complain that they cannot connect the vocabulary with their daily experiences, which makes learning less engaging. Similarly, the grammar is not comprehensive. The topics are randomly presented in a limited way, without proper sequencing or explanation, so the students face difficulties in achieving effective language skills. This lack of clarity makes students confused, and they are struggling to develop strong writing skills.

Interview 5

This interview was conducted with a male teacher. He has been teaching secondary English for eleven years in different schools and colleges in Karachi. He stated that the vocabulary used in the grade 9 English textbook is good for those who have a weak academic background, but this kind of vocabulary is not good for those who are good in language. He added that, at the secondary level, students should be taught unfamiliar words and phrases. It will help students to increase their language skills, especially in writing. Besides the vocabulary discussion, he also discussed grammar content as well. He added that the topics of grammar are not in sequence but randomly presented in the book, which may disintegrate students' concepts of grammar topics. In addition, he said that the grammar topics are not explained in a comprehensive way, but only statements are given in the book, which creates a lack of understanding of the concepts of the topics.

Interview 6

This interview was conducted with the principal of a private school in Karachi. She has been teaching English for eighteen years in the private sector. Unlike previous interviewees who have a negative opinion regarding the vocabulary used in the textbook, she discussed extremely healthy points regarding the matter. She said, " Vocabulary is good. It is very related to everyday and normal use of language, but we cannot say that it is advanced. It may reduce the students' understanding because the vocabulary used in the textbook is not very advanced.

Similarly, she said that teachers and students should not be forced to follow the textbook to learn grammar topics. They can also use some other resources to learn grammar. They may learn the topics that are presented in the textbook, but they should not be dependent on the textbook.

Interview 7

This interview was conducted with a female teacher in Karachi. He has been teaching English to secondary level for six years. She gave her opinion regarding the vocabulary and grammar lessons presented in the textbook. She said many of the words are outdated and quite common. It seems like a formal presentation of vocabulary, but it is not much related to academic writing. She also added that it is good for those who are weaker learners. Moreover, she suggests that vocabulary should be related to the modern world of technology, science, and social issues.

She also discussed the issues related to grammar topics presented in the textbook, which are presented in isolation, which becomes a challenge for students to grasp the whole concept of the given topics. She also suggests that there should be written text for understanding the language structure rather than topic by topic.

Interview 8

This interview was also conducted with a female secondary school teacher in Karachi. She has been teaching English for 12 years at different schools and colleges in Karachi. She expresses her feelings regarding the vocabulary and grammar topics presentation in the textbook. She said that the vocabulary is not rich, but it provides simple and easy words to help the weaker student understand. She also presents some suggestions regarding vocabulary that the textbook should introduce advanced words related to modern-day language. In addition, she discussed that, like vocabulary, grammar topics should also be revised because, through such randomly presented topics, they cannot be helpful for the students' understanding.

3.5. Data analysis

This study used a thematic analysis technique to analyses the data collected through semi-structured interviews with secondary-level English teachers in Karachi.

3.6. Vocabulary Weakness

Vocabulary is an important aspect in the teachers' reflections on the grade 9 English textbook, Sindh board. It is observed through interviews that vocabulary is not effective for the secondary level and limits the students' comprehensive understanding of the texts. So, this data observed a critical weakness in the textbook. In the textbook, there is a lack of rich vocabulary, which means the vocabulary used in the book is quite common, and sometimes it becomes useless when students go for higher studies because such kind of simple words are very normal and seem ineffective to the readers at this level. It is also emphasized that exposure to varied vocabulary is critical for developing fluency in the

language Schmitt 2014), but the data shows that there is no variety of vocabulary used in the textbook, and the absence of richness has been found. At the secondary level, students expect that they need to learn something in advance for their upcoming academic journey. But this thing emerged as there are no special words and phrases used at an advanced level, but the limited contextual vocabulary is used in the textbook. However, the recycling of the familiar words and expressions offers some exposure to the limited aspects of vocabulary, such as synonyms, antonyms, idiomatic expressions, and subject-limited terminology. But it is observed that extraordinarily little repetition occurred throughout the texts in the textbook. For example, in the chapter “The Last Sermon of the Holy Prophet,” words such as “hypocrite,” “consolidated,” and “astray ” are used only once in the whole chapter. No repetition of these words is found in the chapter. In another chapter, “Shah Abdul Latif Bhittai,” there is a musical instrument named *Tambooro*, which is invented by the sufi saint Shah Abdul Latif Bhittai, and is presented only once in the entire text. Besides the textbook's vocabulary weaknesses as perceived by the teachers, a few teachers also acknowledged that this type of vocabulary is beneficial for weak students/learners. I enable the text to be more accessible to the students. And it is also stated that this type of vocabulary use may be disadvantageous for the stronger students who need advanced language use. Thus, the textbook may fail to address the secondary level learners’ needs. In addition, it is also stated that a limited vocabulary prevents learners from learning the lexical bank, which is essential for students in all four domains of the language. Laufer (1997). Similarly, it is also studied by Qureshi (2019) that Pakistani ESL classrooms struggle with vocabulary enhancement because of simple and traditional texts.

3.8. Random and non-sequential grammar presentation

According to the teachers’ perception, the textbook presents the grammar in sequence. Besides the fragmentation of the grammar topics, it is also observed that the textbook presents incomplete grammar topics, such as parts of speech, which are considered the foundation of grammar is not even properly presented in a single chapter in the textbook. Without following the sequence of the topics, it is presented in a dispersed manner. Thus, it shows that the textbook presents random topics, such as types of sentences. Similarly, a few model verbs’ rules and usage are presented in the textbook.

Moreover, another most important chapter of the grammar is tenses, which are unfortunately missing from the textbook. However, in Sindh, most of the teachers and students are focused on this critical chapter of the grammar. It is also studied that a vast number of students have a keen interest in learning this chapter, which is essential in terms of reading and writing. Besides the other topics of the language, it also plays a vital role in shaping students' language skills. But in the grade nine English textbook, which is prescribed by the Sindh textbook Jamshoro, it is not even mentioned in the index. Some

of the interviewees stated that grammar rules in the textbook are presented just as statements, which creates lacks in students' understanding and due to this gap in the topics, the students who use this textbook are facing problems to develop their language proficiency. In this way, it is also stated that Sindh board textbooks are lacking in the alignment with the designed curriculum of the language, and it fails to present effective grammar instruction (Farhan ali Bhutto. et al), 2021.

Moreover, some of the teachers also criticized the activities given in the textbook. They state that the exercises are given without any proper grammar instruction, in addition, they state that grammar is presented totally in isolation which hinders writing skills as students are making so many grammatical mistakes, such as use of tense, preposition and punctuation. Besides criticism, some of the teachers also explain their views in a very humble way, that it is not mandatory to learn the language through the rules and statements of the topics, but students can learn language by the extensive use of the language. Although grammar rules are important to use the correct language structure, it is not decided that the grammar rules are the only source to learn the language skills. However, this study is concerned with the Sindh context where students have poor access to the digital technologies, because of this reason they mostly rely on the textbooks for study. That is why it is crucial to set up the proper presentation of the grammar topics in very sequential way. So that students can learn the language use. Like Bhutto et al. 2021, Balouch et al. (2022) also state that in Pakistani English textbooks grammar is not related to real-life use of language. To overcome these barriers in language, the textbook should provide grammar topics in a sequence, also with communicative language tasks, and present clear and easy explanations of the topic rather than just statements of the topics. This will help students to understand the language rules in a proper way.

4. Findings and Suggestions

This study reveals especially important findings from the grade nine English textbook which shows that how much the textbook is effective in terms of vocabulary presentation in the texts and how the grammar topics and rules are presented in the textbook. As the data of this study is conducted through semi-structured interviews with secondary English school teachers in Karachi. That data reveals that the textbook does not meet the needs of the secondary level students. According to some interviewees' perception that this textbook can be used for the elementary classes as, in the textbook the way vocabulary and other language content is presented seems like it is for the beginners. This is because of many of the teachers consistently arguing that the textbook and the vocabulary used in the textbook is quite common and does not meet the global standard of English language. It is also found that this textbook also has some lacks in terms of cultural representation in the texts. Teachers were arguing that the cultural aspects are presented in the textbook based on the provincial level, and no multicultural information is found in the

textbook. This type of limited literary content confined the students' cultural knowledge and limited them to one culture presented in the textbook.

Although, we have Pakistani English writers and poets like, toufiq rafat and some other who have also contributed to the English literature but in the grade nine English textbook there is no work of any Pakistani English writer has been found. Poet like shah abdul latif bhittai, he is also known as a sufi saint of Sindh is well portrayed in the textbook. Moreover, some teachers praised that it is a good thing to include the renowned and historical and literary figures like Shah Abdul Latif Bhittai, as he is worldwide recognized poet in world. Similarly, Dr. Allama Mohammad Iqbal and Quaid e Azam Mohammad Ali Jinnah are also presented in the textbook. Their contribution to the making of Pakistan and their political acumen and achievements are also discussed in the textbook. But as far as this study is concerned with English textbooks, the teachers consistently emphasized that multicultural and international works and figures should be included to help students achieve higher study goals.

However, the findings of this study reveal that grammar and vocabulary are presented in an extremely limited and traditional way. It has also been found that grammar topics and the rules of grammar are just presented in statements. On the other hand, vocabulary is outdated and limited. It is found that no repetition of the words occurs throughout the chapters, which makes students forget about those words. This dual weakness of grammar rules and vocabulary in the textbook makes students less proficient in language skills.

5. Conclusion

This study explores the vocabulary, the grammar topics, and the rules of grammar presented in the grade nine English textbook in Sindh. The data was collected through semi-structured interviews with the secondary English school teacher in Karachi. The results show that although teachers agreed on the point that the type of vocabulary used in the texts is beneficial for the weak students but also limits the students' comprehension ability, as most of the vocabulary is outdated and irrelevant to new technological, literary, and scientific words. Similarly, the grammar is also presented in isolation and in fragmentation. And it shows that teachers and students were not satisfied with the alignment of the grammar topics and with the outdated vocabulary. Therefore, the authority and the board of Sindh textbook Jamshoro is highly recommended to give much importance to the grammar topics and advanced vocabulary.

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