

# THE EVALUATION OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEXTBOOK TAUGHT AT INTERMEDIATE LEVEL

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## ABSTRACT

*Textbook makes an essential component of a classroom for being a guide map for teachers as well as learners. Evaluation of textbooks, therefore, is fundamental for curriculum design and material development. Keeping in view the substantial significance of the English textbooks in particular, this study seeks to evaluate one of the English textbooks prescribed by the Punjab Textbook Board for intermediate level, titled “Intermediate English Book-1 (Short Stories)”, both from the perspective of teachers and learners. A questionnaire adapted from the checklist by Litz (2005) was used to collect data from 100 students and 10 teachers. The English textbook was evaluated from 6 different perspectives i.e. outline and planning, exercises, language skills, type of language, topic and theme, overall view. The results revealed that the English textbook does not cater to needs of Intermediate level students. It has many shortfalls in its organization, outline and planning, subject matter as well as exercises. The students and teachers alike don’t recommend it for future learners. The study concluded that the textbook needs to be revised so it can stand up to the demands of English learners and teachers.*

**Keywords:** *English Textbook, Evaluation, English Language teachers and learners*

## INTRODUCTION

English language being a lingua franca is the need of the day thus it is being taught all over the world either as a foreign language (FL) or the second language (SL). In Pakistan also, it is being taught as a second language and a compulsory subject at every level of education. The latest National Curriculum of English Language (NECL) (2006) has marked the oral communicative skills in English as a fundamental element of the national curriculum. But, despite all, learners are found to be deficient in using English language effectively. One of the reasons is inappropriate textbooks being used in the English language classrooms, especially at college level. In order to enhance learners’ communicative competence, it is considered imperative to provide them with sufficient practice, the right instructional materials and proper assistance by the teachers. One of the main issues regarding English language teaching in Pakistan as highlighted by Shah (2012) is the lack of adequate material for teaching.

The college level is crucial stage in academic career of Pakistani learners for it lays foundation for higher studies while the higher education demands sufficient proficiency in English. In this

backdrop, the present research aims to evaluate how far the English textbook being used at intermediate level in Pakistan provides authentic material for practicing oral skills and developing learners' communicative competence. The selection of English Textbook for intermediate level by Punjab Textbook Board is based on the fact that it is an old textbook and has not been revised until lately. Besides, being taught in all the government colleges of Punjab (the province having the largest population in the country) it has a wider implication. The study has been designed to evaluate the contents as well as the language exercises in the textbook to look into the fact that if they cater to the needs of the learners as prescribed in the National Curriculum of English Language (NCEL).

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

A good English textbook provides the material to work upon all four skills. Davison (1976) recommends that the textbook is the most important component of an ESL classroom. Likewise, Sheldon (1988) commented that it "represent(s) visible heart of ELT program" and is beneficial for learners and teachers alike. According to Ahour (2010), most of the learners learn language by following the textbook and they don't consider classroom a serious learning situation without the textbook. Tomilnson (2010) elaborated on the role of textbook in calling it a guide for learners to prepare for exams, a time saver for teachers in preparing lessons, a guide for the administration to design the course contents. Similarly, Noreen and Samad (2010) asserted that the textbooks are a major resource of target language in an ESL classroom as they not only determine the contents and activities but also help to design an ESL classroom methodology. Agreeing upon the fact that the English textbooks are major source of information for English Language Learners, Ahour and Ahmedi (2012) stressed on their evaluation for socio-culturally appropriate contents. As pointed out by Bahar & Zaman (2013), textbook evaluation is mainly crucial in second language context like Pakistan, Japan and Bangladesh for curriculum development and syllabus design.

Williams (1983) proposed a criterion for selection and evaluation of textbook that includes socio-cultural knowledge as important feature. A variety of checklists have been proposed by different researchers for this matter; for example Mikeley (2005) has suggested the checklist for evaluating textbooks. For him, it is very important to maintain validity and authenticity of teaching materials in ESL classrooms. His checklist focuses on all the aspects of language skills and knowledge. Litz (2005) evaluated the English textbook being taught at SuvyKyun Kwan University in South Korea. His research is rigorously quoted for it examined all aspects of the selected textbook and highlighted its loopholes in a very clear way. On the other hand, Tok (2010) evaluated the "Spot-on" English textbook being used in Turkey and underlined its strengths as well as weaknesses. Most respondents in his study have shown negative responses towards its activities by declaring them meaningless practices for they did not enhance communicative competence. Akef (n.d.) identified that learners and teachers of Baghdad faced a lot of problems in the English classroom.

He evaluated the ESL textbook used at Intermediate level and concluded that the book has many shortcomings in terms of its overall layout, cover page, activities and writing skills.

The book relied on practicing controlled writing, which hindered the development of creativity among learners. Some evaluated EFL textbook from teachers' perspective and clinched that textbook has no helpful tests or procedures to evaluate achievement of students effectively. In Pakistan, Mehmood (2011) asserted that teaching materials would be functional and practical if produced by the respective subject teachers rather than those who have theoretical knowledge about textbook designing in general. Zafar & Mehmood (2016) highlighted that international culture is understated in English textbooks in Pakistan and proposed for inclusion of international culture in it so that the students have the awareness of both national and international cultures. Class 9 English textbook was evaluated by Nasseem, Shah and Tabassum (2015) and it has been concluded that textbook should be revised. Aftab (2011) conducted a multidimensional study in which she conducted a thorough evaluation of Pakistani English textbooks and curriculum. She found that English textbooks being taught at different levels are inadequate as per requirements of Pakistani English Language Learners. She pointed out that textbooks do not fulfill the objectives being proposed in the NCEL. The present study aims to extend this idea of investigating link between contents of selected English textbook and the curriculum objectives set by the NCEL.

## **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

### **Participants**

The participants of the current study includes 100 college students of first year and 10 teachers from Government colleges of Faisalabad those who participated in the study and whose responses were analyzed by using different statistical tools.

### **Material**

The data for the present study was English textbook for First year (book-I). It is a recommended textbook by Government of Punjab and is widely taught all over the province.

### **Instrument**

For the present study, a questionnaire was adapted from the checklist by Litz (2005). It comprised of 6 major sub-scales. These were outline and planning, exercises, language skills, type of language, topic and theme, overall view. These 6 subscales were assessed by posing 30 different questions to the study participants. The questionnaire was modified by the researcher according to the scope of this study. The researcher has replaced some words with their synonyms to make them easier for the participants to comprehend as well as altered some items by keeping in view the objective of the present study.

### **Data Collection**

In this study, quantitative data was obtained through the questionnaires. Data collection procedure was carried out in Faisalabad, Pakistan through randomly selected English college teachers and learners at intermediate level. First of all, a brief introduction of this study was given to the teachers and learners. They were informed about their participation as volunteers and were given the choice to withdraw at any point without giving any reason. The collected data was tabulated through SPSS 21.0. Descriptive statistics, particularly percentages, were used for the analysis of data. For qualitative data, content analysis of English textbook for First year (i.e. book-I) was carried out.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The results of the study depicted teachers' and students' perspective about the effectiveness and appropriateness of English Textbook (book-1) being used at intermediate level in Punjab. Data gathered from the questionnaires have been categorized into 6 main subscales or factors used to measure the efficacy of the book. These were outline and planning, exercises, language skills, type of language, topic and theme, overall view.

### Outline and Planning

The outline and planning refers to the design, organization and layout of the chapters/ units and their objectives in a textbook. Results in percentages about the responses are presented in the following tables.

Table 1: Teacher's Perspective

	Outline and planning	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1	The textbook has a detailed overview of the objectives, structures and lexeme that are discussed in each unit.	20%	20%	0%	30%	30%
2	The outline and designing is appropriate.	10%	20%	10%	30%	30%
3	The textbook is organized efficiently.	10%	20%	0%	20%	50%
4	An adequate vocabulary list or glossary is included.	70%	20%	0%	10%	0%
5	Adequate review sections and exercises are included.	20%	10%	0%	20%	50%
6	An adequate set of evaluation quizzes or testing suggestions is included.	20%	10%	0%	50%	20%
7	The teacher's book contains guidance about how the textbook can be used to the utmost advantage.	10%	30%	0%	40%	20%
8	The materials objectives are apparent to both the teacher and the student.	20%	20%	0%	40%	20%
	Total Result	22.5%	18.75%	1.25%	30%	27.5%

Table 2: Students' Perspective

	Outline and planning	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1	The textbook has a detailed overview of the objectives, structures and lexemes that are discussed in each unit.	16%	19%	4%	23%	48%
2	The outline and designing is appropriate and obvious	5%	4%	20%	34%	37%
3	The textbook is organized efficiently.	6%	13%	6%	10%	65%
4	An adequate vocabulary list or glossary is included.	48%	10%	10%	13%	19%
5	Adequate review sections and exercises are included.	17%	24%	6%	31%	22%
6	An adequate set of evaluation quizzes or testing suggestions is included.	17%	24%	15%	34%	10%
7	Teacher teaches me in proper way by using his/her guidebook.	28%	3%	13%	30%	27%
8	My textbook clearly tells me objectives of learning.	20%	20%	3%	37%	17%
	Total Result	19.62%	14.62%	9.62%	26.5%	30.62%

The results show that more than half of the teachers and students disagreed with the statements stating that the outline and planning of the textbook is appropriate and that the objectives are clear. Both students and teachers were not satisfied with the organization and layout of the chapters in the book. In addition, no teachers' manual is provided with the textbook for the teachers. It was also observed that there is no relationship among units of book on thematic basis. In addition, most of the units i.e. "Button- Button", "Dark They were and Golden Eyed", "Gift of Magi", "A Mild Attack of Locusts" have such a context that is far away from native culture so it is very difficult for the learners to comprehend those texts. As stated by Cunningsworth (1995), ESL texts should have a correspondence among their objectives, contents, exercises as well as the need of the learners while it is lacking in this book. One worth mentioning item in the questionnaire that was agreed upon by the teachers and students alike was about "inclusion of adequate glossary" in the textbook. This response is substantiated from the analysis of the contents of the chapters which identified new vocabulary items in the textbook. This, to some extent gives positive marking to the textbook.

### Exercises

This subscale was aimed at evaluating the effectiveness of exercises and activities in the textbook. The responses showed that two third of the teachers and learners were of the opinion that this book does not cater to the needs of the learners at this level. Content analysis of the exercises of the selected textbook also revealed that all the questions of the exercises focused on grammar i.e. punctuation, correction of tenses or unit- based questions. There were no creative tasks which could enhance the critical thinking of the learners. Same were the findings of the

study conducted by Tok (2010) in Turkey. The study also highlighted that lack of creative tasks is a major flaw in English textbooks being taught in Turkey.

Table 3: Teachers' Perspective

	Exercises	Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree
9	Activities provide a chance to my students use English language for communication in class.	10%	15%	5%	30%	40%
10	The activities encourage my students' sufficient communicative and meaningful practice. E.g. role -play, information gap.	10%	10%	20%	30%	30%
11	Exercises involve my class actively. E.g. Through pair work or group work.	10%	20%	0%	20%	50%
12	The grammar points and vocabulary items are introduced in motivating and realistic contexts.	20%	30%	0%	20%	30%
13	Activities help to evolve creative, new and original responses from my side.	10%	5%	5%	50%	30%
14	The textbook's activities include my cultural practices too.	10%	10%	10%	40%	30%
	Total	11.66%	15%	6.66%	31.66%	35%

Table 4: Students' Perspective

	Exercises	Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree
9	Activities provide me a chance to use English language for communication in class.	15%	5%	10%	30%	40%
10	The activities encourage me sufficient communicative and meaningful practice. E.g. role -play, information gap.	10%	20%	10%	30%	30%
11	Exercises involve me actively. E.g. Through pair work or group work.	20%	0%	10%	20%	50%
12	The grammar points and vocabulary items are introduced in motivating and realistic contexts.	30%	0%	20%	20%	30%
13	Activities help to evolve creative, new and original responses from my side.	5%	5%	10%	50%	30%
14	The textbook's activities include my cultural practices too.	10%	10%	10%	40%	30%
	Total	15%	6.6%	11.67%	31.66%	35%

### Language Skills

The third important sub-scale was Language skills. Two-third of the teachers and learners were not satisfied with this aspect of the book as well for they considered it a book that focuses more on a single skill, that is, reading skills. A close analysis of exercises and units revealed the fact that all units have difficult, innovative vocabulary and complex sentences that made it necessary to give a plenty of time towards reading the text. There was no exercise or activity for practicing listening and communication skills as well as prosodic features have also been ignored. Although

the book has touched upon writing skills but not effectively as every question in exercises requires only 150 -200 words of composition and that also focuses on the contents of the story in the unit and nothing creative and unseen. Similar results were found in the study by Akef (n.d.) which conducted an evaluation of the English textbook being taught at Baghdad at Intermediate level. The study also found that activities in the selected textbook missed the creativity in writing skills and the main focus of the book was on directed and controlled writing.

Table 5: Teachers' Perspective

	Language Skills	Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree
15	The materials include and focus on the skills that my students need to practice.	10%	10%	0%	40%	40%
16	The materials provide an appropriate balance of the four language skills.	10%	10%	10%	30%	40%
17	The textbook pays attention to sub-skills, that is, listening for gist, note-taking, skimming for information. Etc	20%	30%	0%	30%	20%
18	The textbook highlights and practices natural pronunciation (that is, stress and intonation).	10%	20%	30%	20%	20%
	Total	12.5%	17.5%	10%	30%	30%

Table 6: Students' Perspective

	Language skills	Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree
15	The materials include and focus on the skills that I need to practice.	17%	24%	15%	34%	10%
16	The materials provide me a chance to improve my reading, writing, listening and speaking.	6%	10%	6%	13%	65%
17	The textbook pays attention to sub-skills, that is, listening for gist, note-taking, skimming for information. Etc	12%	6%	14%	31%	37%
18	The textbook highlights and practices natural pronunciation (that is, stress and intonation).	37%	4%	20%	34%	5%
	Total	18%	11%	13.75%	28%	29.25%

### Type of Language

From tables 7 and 8 it can be noticed that more than half of the study participants responded negatively. The researcher substantiated this response by observing the textbook closely and found that there was no conversation or dialogue in the textbook that can present realistic situations of the target culture to the learners. As a result, communication competence in English Language is not the learning outcome. Another shortfall in the textbook was that all activities focus on "correction" as "mark punctuation properly" or "choose the right form of verb" which do not provide a brief summary of grammatical points. This book has not followed any language model that is a major need of modern teaching approaches i.e. Community Language teaching,

while an expert of ESL text Development, Catchcart (1989), asserted that Textbooks should be organized by following a language model so that realism can be incorporated in materials as it is essential to hold learners motivation in language learning.

Table 7: Teachers' Perspective

	Type of Language	Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree
19	The language used in the textbook is authentic, that is, like real-life English.	10%	10%	10%	40%	30%
20	The language used is at the right level for my learners' current English ability.	10%	20%	20%	30%	20%
21	The organization and series of grammar points and vocabulary items is appropriate.	20%	20%	10%	20%	30%
22	The grammar points are explained with short and easy examples and explanations.	30%	30%	0%	10%	30%
	Total	17.5%	20%	10%	25%	27.5%

Table 8: Students' Perspective

	Type of Language	Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree
19	The language used in the textbook is authentic, that is, like real-life English.	48%	29%	4%	13%	16%
20	The language used is at the right level for my current English ability.	12%	6%	14%	31%	37%
21	The sequence and series of grammar points and vocabulary items is appropriate.	37%	4%	20%	34%	5%
22	The grammar points are explained with short and easy examples and explanations.	17%	24%	15%	34%	10%
	Total	28.5%	15.75%	13.25%	28%	17%

### Topic and Theme

More than half of the students and the teachers disagreed with the notion that the topics and themes in the textbook are relevant to students' needs, realistic, interesting, challenging and motivating. However, they were to some extent satisfied with the diversity of the topics and themes. They also acknowledged that the textbook is not culturally biased or stereotypical. Content analysis of the book also illustrated that most of the units did not have any authentic situation for Pakistani learners which they can relate to. The contents of the textbook showed that there were diverse themes and vocabulary as well as an objective view of the cultures. It does not portray a biased view of any culture and due to its rich vocabulary it is likely to enhance the lexicon of learners. These results have resemblance with another study conducted by Hooman (2014) targeting Iranian EFL textbooks. This may be due to the same cultural and religious values that negative representation has been avoided in the textbooks in both contexts.



Table 9: Teachers' Perspective

	Topic and Theme	Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree
23	The Topic and Theme of textbook is relevant to students' needs as an English language learner(s).	10%	10%	10%	40%	30%
24	The Topic and Theme of the textbook is generally realistic.	20%	20%	10%	20%	30%
25	The Topics and Themes of the textbook are interesting, challenging and motivating.	20%	10%	20%	20%	20%
26	There is enough diversity in Topic and Theme of the textbook.	30%	30%	10%	20%	10%
27	The materials are not culturally biased and they do not represent any negative stereotypes.	20%	20%	30%	10%	20%
	Total	20%	18%	14%	22%	22%

Table 10: Students' Perspective

	Topic and Theme	Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree
23	The Topic and Theme of the textbook is relevant to my needs as an English language learner(s).	10%	5%	5%	50%	30%
24	The Topic and Theme of the textbook guides me to use language in real situations.	20%	30%	0%	30%	20%
25	The Topics and Themes of the textbook are interesting, challenging and motivating.	10%	15%	5%	30%	40%
26	There is enough diversity in the subject and content of the textbook.	37%	4%	20%	34%	5%
27	The materials are not culturally biased and they do not represent any negative stereotypes.	20%	20%	30%	10%	20%
	Total	19.4%	14.8%	12%	30.8%	23%

### Whole Aspect

Teachers and students out rightly stated that the textbook is not suitable for language learning and they did not recommend for future learners because it does not have clear learning objectives based upon the current study.

Table 11: Teachers' Perspective

	Whole aspect	Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree
28	The textbook is suitable for the language-learning aims of my institution.	10%	10%	0%	60%	20%
29	The textbook increases my (students') interest in English language study.	30%	30%	0%	20%	20%
30	I would choose to teach this textbook again.	10%	20%	10%	30%	30%
	Total	16.67%	20%	3%	36.66%	23.33%

Table 12: Students' Perspective

	Overall view	Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree
28	The textbook is suitable for my objective language learning.	5%	15%	0%	60%	20%
29	The textbook increases my interest in further English language study.	20%	20%	20%	20%	20%
30	I would suggest using this textbook for my juniors.	15%	5%	10%	30%	30%
	Total	13.33%	13.33%	10%	36.66%	23.33%

On the basis of the above results, the major findings are that the selected English Textbook is not appropriate for it does not cater to the needs of the learners at intermediate level. This book has many flaws regarding its content, organization, activities and language skills, which shows that it is an inappropriate teaching material for the respective ESL learners. One major finding was that the exercises given at the end do not offer a chance for practicing oral and listening skills as they majorly include questions on reading comprehension or grammar e.g. punctuation or putting the right form of verbs in blanks. The focus on grammar uncovers obsolete “Grammar Translation Method” being followed by the authors of the textbook while communication Language Teaching and the notion of Communicative Competence has become an influential component of ESL textbooks in current scenario and has also been updated in the NCEL in the country. Another reason of this negative attitude of learners and teachers towards this book is that it does not contain contents which represent a native or realistic situation of the target culture as well as also lacks in everyday conversations which is the basic need of Pakistani ESL learners. It also does not provide sufficient practice of oral skills so it is an inefficient material for the development of communicative competence among intermediate level ESL learners in Pakistan.

## CONCLUSION

On the basis of the findings of the study, it can be concluded that “book-1” provides inadequate material for English Language learners at Intermediate level as it has many shortfalls in its organization, outline and planning, subject matter, exercises and focus on all language skills. Consequently, students and teachers don't recommend it for future learners. The textbook needs to be revised so that it can stand up to the global standards of English Language Teaching. Revised edition of the textbook should have clear learning outcomes and objectives for each unit. Such activities should be added in exercises which can promote pair and group work so to provide learners with authentic oral skills practice. A teachers' guide should be provided with the book so that maximum benefit can be achieved out of it. Ministry of Education should involve college teachers in syllabus designing and selection of texts because, as asserted by Mahmood (2011), textbooks should be formulated according to the perspective of the respective teachers for they have the firsthand knowledge of the classroom.

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