

A LEXICO-GRAMMATICAL EVALUATION OF GRADE V ENGLISH TEXTBOOK UNDER PAKISTAN'S SINGLE NATIONAL CURRICULUM

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ABSTRACT

This study presents a qualitative lexico-grammatical evaluation of the Grade V English textbook prescribed by the Punjab Textbook Board in Pakistan, with specific reference to the Formal and Lexical Competency standards of the Single National Curriculum (SNC). The purpose of the research is to examine the extent to which grammar and vocabulary content in the textbook aligns with SNC Student Learning Outcomes, and whether these elements are presented in a contextualized and functional manner. Using a qualitative descriptive research design, the textbook was analyzed through an SNC-based evaluation checklist focusing on grammatical progression, contextual use, vocabulary range, recycling, and functional application. The findings reveal that while the textbook adequately covers the prescribed grammatical structures and thematically relevant vocabulary at the content level, instruction remains largely rule-based, decontextualized, and accuracy-oriented. Grammar activities are predominantly mechanical, with limited integration into meaningful discourse, and vocabulary instruction is mostly receptive, lacking systematic recycling and productive use. The textbook only partially fulfills the competency-based philosophy of the SNC. The study highlights a significant gap between curriculum policy and textbook implementation and underscores the need for more context-driven, communicative, and cumulative approaches to lexico-grammatical instruction at the primary level.

Keywords: Grade V English textbook; grammar and vocabulary teaching; Lexico-grammatical competence; Single National Curriculum (SNC); textbook evaluation

1. INTRODUCTION

The use of English language textbooks is critical towards the development of language education in the public-sector schools, and especially where they form the sole instructional medium. In Pakistan, English textbooks play a major role in exposing learners to the grammatical structure and vocabulary which is the building block of language competence. Sheldon (1987) believes that a textbook is not a neutral instructional method but instead they mirror certain pedagogical presuppositions and curricular

agendas. At the first level, the textbooks are anticipated to deliver all linguistic input in an organized and developmentally suitable manner to enable the gradual acquisition of grammar and lexis by the learners (Richards, 2001). The basic elements of linguistic competence are grammar and vocabulary that are necessary to facilitate correct language production and comprehension. Grammar helps the learners to create meaningful sentences and vocabulary offers the lexical means with which to make

sentences (Brown, 2007). Nevertheless, grammar and vocabulary teaching in most English as a Foreign Language (EFL) setting has long been described as the memorization of rules, isolated activities, decontextual word lists, and deprivation of language learners of their capacity to utilize language meaning (Nunan, 2004). These practices are more pronounced in examination based education systems where accuracy in written form of communication is emphasized rather than the use of the language in functions.

Some of the studies carried out in Pakistan have pointed out that English language teaching in the primary level is text-based and structurally oriented, with little regard paid to contextualized grammar and use of functional vocabulary. Students are usually made to memorise grammar rules and vocabulary content without adequate time to use them in real practical situations. Consequently, students can show the superficial level of grammatical awareness but have no skills in applying language in actual life contexts.

Competency-based education in Pakistan took a major step in the introduction of a single national curriculum (SNC) in 2020. The SNC focuses on Formal and Lexical Competency development, the need to teach grammar in context, graded vocabulary acquisition, and sentence constructions appropriate to the age (Ministry of Federal Education and Professional Training [MoFEPT], 2020). At the first level, the curriculum anticipates that textbooks will entwine grammar and vocabulary into texts and activities in a meaningful way, so that they are aligned with well established Student Learning Outcomes (SLOs). In its turn, considering how far the Grade V English textbooks comply with these lexico-grammatical norms will allow seeing how effective the SNC implementation can be.

Research Objectives

1. Examine the extent to which the Grade V English textbook aligns with the Formal and Lexical Competency standards of the Single National Curriculum.
2. Analyze the presentation and sequencing of grammar and vocabulary in the textbook.

3. Evaluate whether grammar and vocabulary are taught in a contextualized and functional manner in accordance with SNC Student Learning Outcomes.

Research Questions

- Q1. What extent does the Grade V English textbook align with the Formal and Lexical Competency requirements of the Single National Curriculum?
- Q2. How are grammar and vocabulary presented and structured in the textbook?
- Q3. Does the textbook promote contextualized and meaningful use of lexico- grammatical structures as prescribed by the SNC?

Significance of the Study

The research is an important contribution to the field because it offers a competency- based assessment of grammar and vocabulary teaching in Grade V English textbook as recommended by the Single National Curriculum. The study can be regarded as contributing to the overall comprehension of the effectiveness of SNC policy goals in the translation into the textbook content by isolating lexico-grammatical competence as an independent field of investigation. It is hoped that the results would help curriculum developers and textbook writers to design and sequence grammar and vocabulary instruction better. Also, the research provides useful pieces of information to teachers and policymakers who are interested in improving the linguistic accuracy and the functional use of the language in primary learners. Research-wise, the paper is a significant contribution to the textbook evaluation literature because it offers an empirical study on the lexico-grammatical correspondence of the primary level of education in Pakistan.

Literature Review

Textbook assessment has been considered as one of the focal points of research in English Language Teaching (ELT) especially in the teaching world where textbooks play the main role of instructing. According to Sheldon (1987), textbooks are ideological and pedagogical products that reflect certain assumptions concerning the language,

learning and teaching. In the same way, Cunningsworth (1995) points out that textbooks need to be analysed not only in terms of their coverage of the content, but also in relation to their ability to meet the curriculum goals and learning requirements of the learner. In primary school where students are predominantly dependant on textbook as source of linguistic input, the quality of lexico grammatical content is determining factor in the determination of language accuracy and acquisition (Richards, 2001).

Vocabulary and grammar form the structural centrality of the language proficiency. Grammar gives the principles which govern the structure of a sentence, and vocabulary gives the lexical means through which one can express his or her thoughts and communicate them to others (Brown, 2007). Ellis (2006) ascertained that grammatical competence would enable learners to know how language operates whereas lexical competence would enable learners to express meaning in an effective manner. The studies on second language learning emphasize that it is crucial to teach grammar and vocabulary using an equal amount of attention to ensure the meaning of using language, especially at the initial levels of language study (Nation, 2001; Richards and Reppen, 2014). Although they are essential, the teaching of grammar and vocabulary in most EFL settings has continued to be overwhelmed with rule-based teaching and memorization. Nunan (2004) notes that grammar is usually taught in isolation and not related to communicative usage and vocabulary teaching is usually restricted to wordlists and to word definitions. These methods have been attacked as encouraging superficial knowledge, instead of functional language competence (Thornbury, 1999). Research has indicated that students that were introduced to decontextualized grammar and vocabulary mostly find it difficult to use language knowledge in practical communication contexts (Ur, 2012).

Certain researchers in the Pakistani context have pointed to the continued ineptitude in grammar and vocabulary training at the primary level. According to Rahman (2002), the teaching of English in Pakistan has long been based on the importance of written

skills and success on examination at the expense of communicative skills. Shamim (2008) and Warsi (2004) also claim that textbooks at the governmental level are characterized by the prevalence of mechanical grammar drills and vocabulary acquisition based on the translation, which leave a little room of using language in context. Because of this, students tend to know grammatical rules well but they are unable to create cohesive and meaningful sentences on their own (Mahboob, 2014).

A similar finding has been reiterated in textbook-based research studies carried out in Pakistan, which has indicated a lack of balance between form and use in English language materials. Scholars of primary and secondary-level textbooks have found that structural grammar activities, including fill-in-the-blanks and sentence-transformation activities, receive too much attention, and are used at the expense of both functional and lexical development. Introduction of vocabulary is not clearly thematically organized, recycled or contextually supported thus restricting retention and meaningful learning (Shamim, 2008; Warsi, 2004).

New curriculum reforms especially the implementation of the Single National Curriculum (SNC) are attempting to relate to these ancient problems through the encouragement of competency based approach to English language teaching. The SNC explicitly focuses on Formal and Lexical Competency that promotes the combination of grammar and vocabulary in real texts and exercises, as opposed to separate drills (Ministry of Federal Education and Professional Training [MoFEPT], 2020). The SNC framework suggests that grammar and vocabulary at the primary level must be developmentally adequate, contextually situated and in conformity to clear cut Student Learning Outcomes (SLOs).

Nevertheless, these reforms become successful to a great extent based on the effectiveness of the use of textbook content concerning the principles of SNC. The evidence of the international studies into curriculum implementation indicates that the policy changes that are implemented frequently fail to do so when the textbooks fail to sufficiently realize the curricular aims (Richards, 2001;

Tomlinson, 2011). Empirical research that assesses or measures SNC-congruent textbooks is also very low in the Pakistani context, especially on lexico-grammatical competence. The previous research has been mostly about the general alignment of the curriculum or mixed methods of learning about various language skills, providing little information about the level and quality of teaching grammar and vocabulary (Mahboob, 2014).

In addition to this, the international textbook assessment models accentuate the significance of graded grammatical development, systematic vocabulary repetition and use of texts in context. According to Nation (2001) to learn vocabulary, one needs a repeated exposure to meaningful situations whereas Ellis (2006) notes that grammar should be taught in a way that helps learners to be accurate and fluent. The textbooks which do not entail these principles are likely to encourage memorization as opposed to the development of a language in a real sense. These observations justify the importance of special analyses of grammar and vocabulary content in textbooks on primary level.

Methodology Research Design

The research design used in this study is the qualitative descriptive research design to assess the lexico-grammatical content of the Grade V English textbook recommended by Punjab Textbook Board. The use of qualitative approach was deemed suitable as it would allow reading into the textbook content with respect to pre-established curriculum standards. The design enabled the study to determine the manner in which grammar and vocabulary are presented, structured and in tandem with the Formal and Lexical Competency of the Single National Curriculum (SNC) without having to utilize numerical assessments or statistical analysis.

Data Sources

The main source of data in this study was the Grade V English textbook published by Punjab Textbook Board and used in the Pakistani state sector schools. The study used the Single National Curriculum (English, Grades I-V) published by the Ministry of Federal Education and Professional Training as the official one to

examine the alignment with the curriculum. The content that was used was limited to the teaching of grammar and vocabulary and made sure that the study was as focused as possible on the lexico-grammatical competence.

Units of Analysis

The units of analysis comprised of every part of the textbook which concerned grammar rules, sentence patterns, syntactic patterns, vocabulary items and word usage in text and exercises. The benchmarks to assess the textbook, Student Learning Outcomes (SLOs) of Formal and Lexical Competency according to the SNC were applied. The individual units were evaluated to identify how the SLOs had been operationalized in the textbook content and whether or not they were.

Research Instrument

The main research instrument was an SNC-based evaluation checklist which is based on the thesis. The indicators of this checklist were grammatical progression, rule accuracy, contextualized grammar use, vocabulary range and relevance, and lexical item recycling. This was done by analyzing each section of the textbook against these indicators in order to establish the extent of compliance with SNC standards and also to establish the areas of strength or weakness.

Data Collection Procedure

Information gathering was done by reviewing records. It was repeatedly done in the Grade V English textbook to ensure that all parts concerning grammar and vocabulary were determined. The evaluation checklist was used to highlight, categorize and map relevant content to the relevant SNC SLOs. This strategy was very beneficial because it provided a thorough coverage of the entire units and reduced chances of missing crucial lexico-grammatical content.

Data Analysis Technique

Qualitative content analysis was used in the analysis of the collected data. The content of grammar and vocabulary was divided into thematic categories, which were structural accuracy, contextual use, vocabulary development, and sequencing. The descriptive interpretation of

the alignment of the textbook content and SNC Formal and Lexical Competency standards were then provided based on the patterns, strengths and weaknesses in the lexico-grammatical teaching.

Results and Analysis

This study shows the results of the lexico-grammatical evaluation of the Grade V Punjab English textbook in relation to the Formal and Lexical Competency standards outlined in the Single National Curriculum (SNC).

Table 1. Alignment of Grammar Content with SNC Formal Competency

Student Learning Outcomes (SNC)

Grammar Topics Covered in Textbook

Evidence from Textbook

Alignment

Use correct parts of Nouns, pronouns, verbs, Explicit grammar

Moderate

speech adjectives sections with exercises

Construct meaningful sentences

Simple and compound sentences

Sentence construction and rewriting tasks

Partial

Use correct verb tenses

Present, past, future tenses

Fill-in-the-blanks and rewriting

Moderate

Apply subject-verb agreement

Agreement rules Mechanical drills

Partial

Use punctuation correctly

Capital letters, commas, full stops

Controlled practice exercises



Moderate

The Grade V English textbook, according to Table 1 reveals that most grammatical structures are prescribed in the SNC Formal Competency. Findings of the thesis indicate that the aspects of grammar, including parts of speech, sentence construction, tenses of verbs, and the use of punctuations are dispersed within the different units, which illustrate the alignment of the

content, in parts, with the requirements of the curriculum. Teaching grammar is, however, mostly rule-based with little introduction of grammar into the realm of meaningful language use. The majority of the activities are devoted to the mechanical correctness instead of communicative use, which leads to the partial satisfaction of SNC expectations of the functional use of grammar.

Table 2. Instructional Practices for Grammar Teaching

Aspect

Presentation of rules

Observations from Textbook

Grammar rules explained explicitly

Evaluation

Strength

Aspect

Link with reading

Observations from Textbook

Evaluation

texts Functional grammar

use

Progression of difficulty

Assessment approach

Minimal contextual linkage

Weak

Rare communicative tasks

Weak

Simple to complex structures

Moderate

Accuracy-focused

Partial

As shown in the table analysis, grammar teaching in the textbook is focused on explicit knowledge of rules instead of the contextual application. Although the grammatical development is clear, the activities are rather decontextualized and examination-based. The theme and text of the units are seldom related to

grammar exercises, which restricts the internalization of a learner to structures based on meaningful exposure. This teaching method is more of the traditional teaching practice unlike the competency based orientation that the SNC advocates.

Table 3. Evaluation of Vocabulary Content under Lexical Competency

Lexical Component

Evidence from Textbook

Observations

Alignment

Thematic vocabulary

Unit-based word lists Topic-related but isolated

Moderate

Vocabulary in context

Words appear in reading texts

Limited follow-up usage

Partial

Productive vocabulary

Sentence-level tasks

Minimal

Weak

use

Vocabulary recycling

Repetition across units

Largely absent

Weak

Lexical Component

Evidence from Textbook

Observations

Alignment Learning strategies

Matching, definitions

Memorization-

based Partial

Vocabulary teaching in Grade V textbook is receptive as it is indicated in Table 3. Whereas vocabulary items are thematically connected with the unit topics and can be found in the reading texts, the learners are hardly expected to find productive applications of newly acquired lexical items. The findings of this paper also reveal that there is a lack of systematic recycles of vocabularies which limits retention and cumulative lexical developments. As a result, the

lexical proficiency is developed at a shallow level instead of with a long-term context interaction, which restricts the correspondence to the SNC principles.

Discussion

The current paper assessed the Grade V Punjab English textbook based on its correspondence to the Formal and Lexical Competency standards of the Single National Curriculum (SNC). The results

indicate that, although the textbook has shown the alignment of the content with the requirements of the curriculum at the content level, specifically, the inclusion of the prescribed grammatical framework and vocabulary, which are age appropriate, the textbook lacked the competence of operationalizing the competency-driven philosophy of the curriculum (MoFEPT, 2020). This disconnect between the purpose of the curriculum and that of the textbooks recalls those expressions of worry in previous research in Pakistan on textbook evaluation (Rahman, 2002; Shamim, 2008; Mahboob, 2014).

The grammatical content analysis suggests that the key grammatical frameworks, including parts of speech, sentence structure, verb tenses, and subject-verb agreement are systematically presented throughout the units of the textbooks. This observation supports the fact that curriculum priorities are frequently represented in the textbooks at the curriculum coverage level (Sheldon, 1987). Nonetheless, in line with Nunan (2004) and Thornbury (1999), the study concluded that the instruction of grammar is still largely rule-based and form-oriented, with much emphasis being on mechanical

activities as fill-in-the-blanks and sentence transformation. Even though accuracy can be improved in this way, it does not adequately encourage functional or communicative application of grammar, which is one of the main goals of the SNC (MoFEPT, 2020).

Moreover, the less intensive combination of grammar and reading texts is the indicator of traditional structural approach to teaching language. Grammar practices are often isolated of textual situations and this minimizes the chances of learners seeing how grammatical practices operate in semantically motivated discourse. As Ellis (2006) stresses, grammatical competence is best developed by a means of repeated exposure to structures in the context and prompted use to make meaning. The results of the current work can be interpreted as the fact that the given principle is not completely achieved in the Grade V textbook, therefore, limiting the possibility of learners to apply grammatical information to the communication in real life.

With regard to lexical competency, the textbook presents a variety of vocabulary items which are normally thematically oriented in unit topics and

developmentally suitable. This indicates that it partially adheres to the guidelines of SNC that emphasize graded development of vocabulary at the primary level (MoFEPT, 2020). Nonetheless, as has also been noted by Nation, (2001), it was observed that vocabulary teaching was mainly receptive with the teaching focus being on recognition of words and recalling of meaning and not on productive use. Activities with vocabulary are usually reduced to matching words and definition or finding a meaning, which gives little chance to learners to apply new words in their original sentences or discourse.

Another important result is the lack of systematic recycling of the vocabulary. New vocabulary terms do not repeat in another unit, which does not allow hairpin exposure and memory. This observation affirms the position of Ur (2012), who says that learning vocabulary is a process that needs to be recycled frequently and reinforced by the context. Other weaknesses in Pakistani English textbooks have been noted by Warsi (2004) and Shamim (2008) who note that there is a tendency of treating lexical items as independent units and not as communicative language use resources.

The results also suggest that both grammar and vocabulary education is still examination-based with the emphasis on the written correctness rather than the practical language application. The given orientation points to an overall systemic problem of the Pakistani education system, in which assessment practices still focus on rote learning and memorizing rules (Rahman, 2002; Mahboob, 2014). Despite the fact that the SNC is aimed at changing the focus on teaching English language to competency-based results, the textbook analysis indicates that the traditional pedagogical assumptions still influence the material design.

The discussion indicates that there is an evident disconnect between the SNC policy goals and performance of textbooks. Although the Grade V English textbook corresponds with the SNC in terms of the material on topics and structural coverage, it does not represent the same curriculum with full focus on the contextualized, functional and cumulative lexicon-grammatical development. The result is in line with the literature in other countries that have found that curriculum reforms tend to have little or no effect when textbooks fail to help turn policy into classroom practice (Richards, 2001;

Tomlinson, 2011). The paper highlights the necessity to develop more principled textbooks that incorporate an adequate level of grammar and vocabulary to the communicative setting, which is also a requirement of the competency-based model of the SNC.

Conclusion

This paper has reviewed how much the Grade V Punjab English textbook complies with the Formal and Lexical Competency standards of the Pakistan Single National Curriculum (SNC). According to the findings, although the textbook has shown compliance with the content-level of the SNC since it contains the necessary grammar frameworks and words that are suitable to the age group, the textbook has not achieved the competency-based orientation of the SNC. Grammar teaching is largely rigid and centered on accuracy and little of the grammar context in meaning or communication. A like manner, vocabulary teaching is still very receptive and does not focus on productive and functional application of vocabulary. Cumulative language development is further curtailed by the absence of systematic vocabulary recycling and less contextualisation of the lexico-grammatical elements. On the whole, the textbook is in accord with the structural requirements of the SNC, but it lacks in the interpretation in the translation of the curriculum policy into the working pedagogic practice, which is a recurrent gap between curriculum design and textbook implementation.

Recommendations

It can be seen, based on the findings, that the next re-write of the Grade V English textbook should follow a more contextual and functional methodology of teaching grammar and vocabulary according to SNC principles. Grammar must be set in context with reading texts and communicative processes that can involve the learner to use structures in a manner that carries meaning and not in a mechanistic manner. The use of vocabulary that is not just a simple series of words should progress towards systematic recycling and constructive use, in the form of sentence structure, thematic tasks, and long language use. The designers of the textbook should also consider sequencing and cumulative reinforcement of the lexico-grammatical content of

various units. Teacher supporting materials and assessment rubrics that revolve around functional language usage needs to be included to enable effective classroom application of competency-based framework of the SNC.

Future Directions

The current study can also be furthered by future research to investigate the classroom application of lexico-grammatical materials in Grade V textbooks of the English language to establish how activities of grammar and vocabulary are perceived and exercised by both teachers and students. These empirical studies would give useful information of practical effectiveness of textbook design other than aligning content.

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