

2. An Analysis of Grade V Punjab Textbook with the Single National Curriculum: An Evaluation of Listening and Speaking Competency

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Abstract

Textbooks play a central role in shaping primary-level English language learning in Pakistan, particularly under the Single National Curriculum (SNC), which emphasizes listening and speaking as foundational competencies. The study qualitatively examines the alignment of the Grade V Punjab Textbook Board English textbook with SNC listening and speaking benchmarks. Using a competency-based evaluation checklist, the research analyzed textbook content, including dialogues, oral exercises, and teacher-guided activities, in relation to Student Learning Outcomes (SLOs) specified in the SNC. Findings reveal that while the textbook partially addresses pronunciation, stress, intonation, and basic oral interactions, listening activities remain largely implicit, and speaking tasks are predominantly teacher-centered. Moreover, the textbook lacks systematic sequencing, communicative scaffolding, and assessment criteria, limiting learners' opportunities for authentic language use and independent oral proficiency. The study highlights a gap between curriculum intentions and textbook implementation, emphasizing the need for explicit, student centered listening and speaking activities, guided practice, and performance assessment to fully realize SNC objectives. These insights provide practical guidance for curriculum developers, textbook authors, and educators to enhance oral communication instruction in primary English education.

Keywords: Assessment, Communicative Competence, English Textbook, Listening, Oral Communication, Punjab Textbook Board, Single National Curriculum, Speaking, Student Learning Outcomes.

Introduction

In Pakistan, the system of public education has textbooks as the main instructional file and it decisively determines the linguistic and communicative competence of the learners. Textbooks are usually used as the primary tool in relaying curriculum goals and directing classroom practice in situations where the teaching of English is considered as a foreign language (Cunningsworth, 1995; Richards, 2001). Sheldon (1987) defines textbooks as instructional resources with the structure of those sources serving to increase the linguistic and communicative skills of learners in order to illustrate the priority of the pedagogies in addition to the combined language ideologies. Textbooks in teaching of the English language, and especially in primary level, serve as a guide to the instructional process, since up-to-young learners depend mostly on the systematic presentation of material to learn the language (Tomlinson, 2011).

The situation in Pakistan is different since English has a special position among the official languages and official medium of instruction; therefore, effective oral communication skills are the key to successful academic progress and social mobility (Rahman, 2002). Although of such importance, English is taught primarily as a foreign language in the public sector schools with the traditional emphasis laid in rote learning, translation and practice in the written grammar instead of communicative use of the language (Shamim, 2008; Warsi, 2004). As a result, listening and speaking skills have not been well developed, which makes the learners to have poor oral proficiency despite years of teaching and learning English, especially in government schools (Mahboob, 2014).

In an effort to fix the unequal distribution levels of quality education as well as to level in terms of learning outcomes, the Government of Pakistan developed the Single National Curriculum (SNC) in 2020 with the philosophy of one nation, one curriculum (Ministry of Federal Education and Professional Training [MoFEPT], 2020). The SNC has five main language competencies, one of which is Listening and Speaking (Oral Communication Skills), which is mentioned as the initial competency in language

acquisition at the primary level. The curriculum emphasizes on the role of oral language as foundational to building of literacy and meaningful language use in academic and social settings (MoFEPT, 2020).

In the teaching of English language textbooks are a major teaching element, especially within the government-run schools where it is the main language input and classroom teaching tool. According to Sheldon, (1987), textbooks are order planned resources that are aimed at improving language and communication skills of learners. The Pakistani educational setting uses textbooks not as addition but as the basic tools, with which, curriculum objectives, learning outcomes, and the pedagogical practices are implemented. When dealing with learners at the earlier stages of language acquisition, at the entry level, textbooks have even a greater role to play towards defining the basic communication skills.

The English language has taken a unique place in Pakistan as one of the official languages and a major medium of instruction. Nonetheless, this position notwithstanding, English is mostly acquired as a foreign language, especially in government schools, in which teaching methods were customarily based on memorization, reading comprehension, and written grammar, and not oral communication. This leads to poor development of listening and speaking skills whereby learners are now characterized by poor communicative competence despite years of being taught by their teacher. This disparity has also added to a further distance gap between curricular goals and real use of language in the scholarly and social life.

Additionally, as a reaction to historically high educational inequalities, the Government of Pakistan presented the Single National Curriculum (SNC) in 2020 with the “one nation, one curriculum” motto in mind. The SNC focuses on standardization of educational quality in both the state and the privately operating institutions and highly emphasizes competency-based learning of language. In the English curriculum, listening and speaking are determined as the basic skills, especially at the primary level. The SNC directly portrays the relationship between the development of pronunciation, stress and intonation patterns, functional speaking language, and interactive communication in Grade III to Grade V developed in a pair and group activities. Such competencies are outlined in the form of strongly stated Student Learning Outcomes (SLOs) that textbooks are supposed to be covering systematically.

Nevertheless, even though oral communication is highly pragmatic in the SNC, it is becoming increasingly emphasized that there is an increasing worry about the degree to which the competencies are well supported by the textbooks currently in use. Listening activities are either presumed or teacher reliant in most classrooms and more often speaking tasks are restricted to controlled or scripted tasks. Consequently, the practical implementation of the SNC oral communication standards is still quite questionable, especially those textbooks published in Grade V and designed to be used in schools of the public sector.

Research Gap

An overview of the literature on assessing English textbooks in Pakistan also shows that most researches have been carried out in general terms, such as curriculum alignment, grammar lessons, reading, or the quality of the textbooks on the whole. Although there are studies that have covered the four language skills as a collective, there have been cases where listening and speaking have been given some light treatment or subsumed under the general skills which may be general listening and general speaking. One can observe the apparent gap in the competency-focused and in-depth analysis of the way that oral communication skills (in particular, listening comprehension, pronunciation, and spoken intercourse) are operationalized through the textbook-based work at the primary level. In particular, there has not been any holistic qualitative analysis done to determine the correspondence of the Grade V Punjab Textbook Board English textbook to the Listening and Speaking competency of the Single National Curriculum.

Research Objectives

1. To evaluate the alignment of the Grade V Punjab English textbook with the Single National Curriculum (SNC) listening and speaking competencies.
2. To identify the strengths and gaps in the textbook's design regarding the development of oral communication skills.

Research Questions

- Q1. To what extent does the Grade V Punjab English textbook address the listening and speaking competencies outlined in the SNC?

Q2. What are the key strengths and shortcomings of the textbook in supporting students' oral communication development?

Significance of the Study

The current research is relevant because it provides a competency-based image of the listening and speaking skills in the Grade V English textbook as a component of the Single National Curriculum. The fact that oral communication is a distinct sphere of analysis gives the study comprehensive information about the pros and cons of textbook design reflecting against the standard of SNC and Student Learning Outcomes. The results should help the curriculum developers, textbook authors and policymakers know what areas have to be revised or improved to facilitate effective oral language development.

Moreover, the research adds to the current literature on the theme of implementing SNCs by offering the primary education setting evidence. To educators and researchers, this study reveals the significance of integrating activities of listening and speaking into textbooks systematically to complement communicative language teaching and enhance oral competence of learners at the early level.

Literature Review

The issue of textbook assessment has traditionally been considered an extremely important field of research in the sphere of English Language Teaching (ELT), especially in those situations when textbooks are used as a major didactic resource. Sheldon (1987) points out that the text is not an inert asset but an indicator of underlying ideologies that guide the pedagogy of a particular curriculum, what is given importance in the curriculum and what is not. Textbooks are used in prominent ways to define pedagogical processes in the former education systems like the Pakistan education system and thus, their concord to curricular goals is crucial in achieving successful language learning results. According to scholars, on the primary level, the development of all language skills (with the specific focus on the listening and speaking as the basic skills) should be achieved through the textbook, which should be used as the foundational key to the development of other language skills (Richards, 2001).

Listening and speaking are also the most common components of communicative competence. As Brown (2007) points out, learners get linguistic input majorly through listening and through speech, learners are able to negotiate meaning, and show their command of the language. The levels of research in acquiring the second language regularly point out that, beginning the oral language at a tender age has a profound impact on pronunciation of learners, their fluency as well as their confidence. In spite of it, there is a tendency to downplay listening and speaking as EFL activities, as the systems that focus on examinations favor reading and writing as the primary means of teaching (Nunan, 2004).

At the Pakistani phase, a number of studies have been done on English textbooks vis-à-vis the fact that they are aligned with the curriculum and integrated skills. The general trend in these studies is to overemphasize structural grammar and written activities, and no or little usage of oral language. According to researchers, present listening activities are often missing or implied, and speaking activities are often regulated, premeditated and teacher directed. This means that learning gets the learners limited opportunities to interact in real spoken language or to develop pronunciation and competence on discourse level.

Recent curriculum changes especially the implementation of SNC has been an attempt to fill these flaws through promoting competency-based approach to teaching of languages. Listening and speaking are explicitly formulated in the SNC as key competencies at the primary level and they focus on pronunciation, stress and intonation, practical language use and interactive communication. In curriculum documents, emphasis is laid on the significance of instruction based on activities and learner-centered, and the use of pair and group work in enhancing oral proficiency. But success of such reforms greatly relies on the level to which the textbook material represents and realizes the recommended SLOs.

There is also a paucity of empirical studies that compared SNC-aligned textbooks. The current studies have mostly centered on the conformity of curriculum in general or have examined several language competencies as a single unit, providing superficial information on oral communication. In the areas of listening and speaking, they are, as a rule, addressed in a short manner and not systematically analyzed in terms of the textbook activities and support in instruction as well as alignment to a particular SLO. There is therefore a lack of empirical data materials to establish whether the existing Grade V

English textbooks are helpful in promoting the acquisition of oral communication skills as projected by the SNC.

Moreover, international systems of textbook assessment also emphasize pronounced listening instruction, speech sounding direction and communicative speaking exercises. The scholars claim that the development of oral skills should be organized by means of listening activities, contact with real spoken communication, and the possibility to use language in spontaneous. However, textbooks based largely on reading aloud or written response do not contribute to any meaningful oral interaction. This information leads to the conclusion that primary-level textbooks should be carefully analyzed to determine the extent of pedagogical assistance in the development of listening and speaking.

Considering these issues, the current research is based on the previous literature by providing a deliberate, competency-based study of listening and speaking skills in Grade V Punjab Textbook Board English textbook. The study meets the demands of increased detail and empirical assessments of oral communication teaching in primary school by matching textbook content with SNC listening and speaking standards.

Research Methodology

Research Design

The research design used in the study was qualitative descriptive research design aimed to determine how the Grade V English textbook published by the Punjab Textbook Board met the Listening and Speaking competency of the SNC. The analysis of textbooks qualitatively was found to be relevant because it allows conducting systematic analysis of textual materials of the textbooks and referencing them to specific established curricular standards and learning outcomes. The design enabled a detailed review of the representation, the operationalization, and the support of the oral communication skills in the textbook.

Data Source

The main source of information to be used in the study was the Grade V English textbook which is used in the public-sector schools of Pakistan prescribed by the Punjab Textbook Board. The evaluation grid adopted was SNC document of English (in Grades I–V) released by the Ministry of Federal Education and Professional Training. The review was

also restricted to the content which is related to Listening and Speaking (Oral Communication Skills) and involves dialogues, exercises, classroom instructions, and proposed activities as part of the textbook units.

Unit of Analysis

The objects of investigation included SLOs that pertained to both listening and speaking in accordance with the SNC and related textbook content that was supposed to cover these outcomes. Categories that were considered special were oral work, dialogue texts, discussion suggestions, pronunciation-based materials, or any teaching hint that involved the building of listening understanding or verbal communication. All the relevant contents were analyzed in order to identify their compliance with SNC benchmarks.

Research Instrument

The analysis of the main research tool was an SNC-based assessment checklist based on the framework utilized in the thesis. The checklist consisted of the indicators based on the listening and speaking standards of the SNC i.e., pronunciation, stress and intonation, functional language use, interactive communication, as well as the learner participation. All textbook units were rated based on these indicators as to the presence, sufficient, and clarity of oral communication activities.

Data Collection Procedure

The systematic analysis of documents was used to collect the data. It was also read several times to trace all the examples concerning listening and speaking skills. The evaluation checklist was used to highlight, categorize, and match the relevant content with the relevant SNC SLOs. This was done to make sure that there was complete coverage of the textbook content and less chance of omission or bias interpretation.

Data Analysis

The data that were collected were analyzed qualitatively by content analysis. The information on textbooks was grouped into thematic units that included support of pronunciation, exposure to listening, speaking, and communicative interaction. This level of fit between textbook tasks and SNC listening/speaking criterion was then subjectively understood. Trends, strong points, and weaknesses of the oral communication skill representation were located and delivered in table and narrative (story) format.

Results and Analysis

Competency 1- Listening and Speaking Skills

The competency spoils the listeners to enhance systemized listening and speaking skills. In English textbook grade V, the listening and speaking. Table 1 observes the SLOs of the SNC based on the evidence from the textbook. There are not many guidelines regarding the instructions of the students.

Standard 1: Students understand and pronounce accurately, stress and intonation pattern of English language used for communicative purposes.

Benchmark 1: Identify and practice sound pattern and stress in words, and basic intonation patterns in statements and questions as they take place in classroom.

Table 1

Alignment of Listening and Speaking Competency (SNC) with Grade V Punjab English Textbook

Sr no.	Student Learning Outcomes	Evidence in Textbook	Instruction in Textbook
1.	Articulate words with silent letters such as ‘t’ in switch, ‘g’ sound in ‘high’.	Unit 1: ‘Patience’, P.04 “Read the given sentences and pronounce the words with silent letters.”	Explain to students about the concept of silent letters. Arrange students in order and ask them to provide silent letters examples.
2.	Classify words that begin or end with the same consonant clusters.	Unit 6: Fit and Healthy Life p. 56 Read the given constant cluster with their words. Such as consonant clusters in initial position.	Encourage students to provide examples of consonants clusters begin with initial and final positions.
3.	Identify and articulate ‘ed’ three sounds i.e., /d/, /t/, /id/.	Unit 9: Patriotism p.86 “Read the given sentences and pronounce ‘-ed’ sound ending correctly.”	Found
4.	Use a dictionary to find out how words are divided into syllables	Unit 11: Let’s be Helpful p.97 “Look and read the dictionary page to	Explain to students the uses of dictionary. Instruct the numbers of

		understand how syllables of words in words are divided into syllables.” dictionary.
5.	Listen and respond appropriately to the sentences with rising and falling intonation patterns.	Unit 13: ‘When Something Went Wrong’ p, 138. Read the sentence and notice the use of Falling intonation and Rising intonation.
6.	Articulate and practice the pattern of rhythm, stress and intonation by revising poems and stories in class.	Unit 14: ‘Together We Live’ p,138. “Read the given poem with proper rhythm, stress and intonation.”
7.	Listen and respond appropriately to the sentences with rising and falling intonation patterns.	Unit 13: ‘When Something Went Wrong’ p, 138. Read the sentence and notice the use of Falling intonation and Rising intonation.

Table 1 shows how the Grade V Punjab English textbook aligns with Standard 1 of the SNC that emphasizes correct pronunciation, stress, and intonation patterns, as effective means of communication. The discussion shows that the textbook has an average degree of compliance with this standard. The results indicate that a number of SLOs associated with pronunciation are achieved by using textbook activities. They consist of pronunciation of silent letters, the training on the basis of long and short vowels, the recognition of diphthongs, and the use of consonant complexes in the initial and final orations. The occurrence of these activities is spread across various portions of the textbook, which strongly indicates that phonological awareness was to be introduced in the textbook in a progressive manner.

Nevertheless, it is also clear when analyzing them that the majority of listening and speaking activities are teacher-centered and instruction-based, with the basis on reading aloud and repetition. Although these activities contribute to precision in pronunciation, the practice leaves few chances of engaging in natural listening sessions, including having exposure to different accents or rather audio-based content, as the SNC advocates.

Listening skills are very implicit and there are no distinct or out-lined listening understanding tasks. Moreover, the textbook does not contain specific information on stress and intonation patterns, except some fundamentals of pronunciation exercises, despite the availability of the instructions related to the pronunciation. Assessment criteria/ performance indicators are not clearly stated to determine the progress of oral communication by the students.

Table 2 observes the alignment of Standard 2 and demonstrates the social usage and academics standards and patterns to communicate effectively through role play, discussion and conversations based on the evidence from the textbook.

Standard 2: Students use appropriate social and academic conventions of spoken discourse for effective oral communication in group or individual, formal or informal settings.

Benchmark 2: Usage of linguistic components to manage communication appropriately for both functional and co-functional purposes such as opinions, apologies, requests, and instructions in class and school contexts.

Table 2

Alignment of Standard 2, the Social Usage and Academics Standards and Patterns to Communicate Effectively through Role Play, Discussion and Conversations

Sr no.	Student Learning Outcomes	Evidence in Textbook	Instruction in Textbook
1.	Respond to opinion	Unit 2: 'Be Grateful' p. 15 students will be able to express their opinions and responds to others' opinions politely by using expressions such as I think, in my opinion.	Found
2.	Engage in conversation	Unit 7: What goes around comes around p. 69 Students will discuss their favorite stories. Engage students in different kind of activities by asking different questions.	Found
3.	Take turns	Unit 8: Do What's Right p. 78 "Make a group of four students and conduct a role play activity on how to take turns using the words first, next, later etc".	The teacher should guide students what does turn talking means and how can turn taking impact on behavior.
4.	Polite expressions	Unit 9 Patriotism, p. 87	Teacher should explain the value of

		Students should perform role play activity on “Benefits of Education”. Student should use polite expression to seek attention.	Education and role of education in our society. So that, students will be able to grasp the knowledge and easy for them to communicate in topic
5.	Leave	Unit 13: When Something Went Wrong p.128 students have to practice the dialogue that are about to take leave for different reasons by using polite words.	Found
6.	Express joy, anger	Unit 12: Our National Animal p. 119 arranges students in pair and ask them to express their unforgettable moments of lives by using expression such as joy, sadness or anger.	Found

Table 2 compares the Grade V Punjab English textbook according to the Standard 2 of the Single National Curriculum (SNC), which underlines the use of proper social and academic conventions of spoken discourse in both formal and informal experiences. The results show that there is a moderate correspondence of the textbook to this standard. As the analysis demonstrates, the textbook also involves various speaking activities that enable the learners to train using practical language, such as using greetings, stating thoughts, making requests, giving apologies, and following oral instructions. These communicative functions are ingrained in various units and they are generally delivered via short dialogues, activities of role playing, and classroom interaction with the teacher. Such activities also favor the capacity of the students to be able to engage themselves in simple types of social communication, which aligns with the standards of the benchmark requirements of the SNC.

These communicative functions do not come together systematically or progressively. The textbook lacks a direct division of the activities based on communicative best purposes of request, apologies or opinions nor does it give any evident linguistic model or sentence frame on which students should focus on. Consequently, the verbal interaction of students is more facilitated by the teacher than communicative competence. There is a little possibility of extended group conversation or impromptu speech because most speaking activities are confined to highly supervised classroom activities. There are also no evaluation rubrics or clear evaluation standards in spoken conversation that

undermines the effectiveness of these activities in assessing the oral communication skills of students as the SNC had projected.

Discussion

The current study analyzed how the Grade V Punjab English textbook meets the SNC standards on the listening and speaking skills. It was found out that although the textbook shows a partial adherence to SNC standards, there are major areas of gaps in systematic development of oral communication skills. Such results are correlated with previous research on textbook evaluation carried out on the Pakistani context, which all indicate a lack of correspondence between curriculum intentions and textbook implementation (Kattel, 2021; Mohammadi, 2014; Tok, 2010).

The SNC (2020) believes that listening and speaking are the competencies upon which effective communicating, ethical interaction, and social participation are provided. As the analysis of the Standard 1 demonstrates, the textbook includes the activities that are focused on pronunciation, i.e., silent letters, vowel sounds, diphthongs, and consonant clusters. These results do not contradict SNC, which has a focus on phonological awareness and correct pronunciation to communicate (SNC, 2020, p. 13). Koehler and Wild (2019) notice a similar observation and believe that with structured phonological activities, learners can be more accurate in oral skills on the primary level.

Nevertheless, even though there are drills on the pronunciation, there is little to be said about listening skills that are still mostly underdeveloped. The lack of explicit listening comprehension exercises, sounds materials and different listening inputs restrict the exposure of the students to the real use of the language. This helps validate the fact that listening is an action process where it needs one to be active and not passive as stated by Dewey (Evans, 2001). The SNC also states that listening is part of the conflict resolution, as well as, understanding the other person (SNC, 2020, p. 2), but these issues are not discussed well in the textbook.

The outcomes which pertain to the Standard 2 suggest that the textbook covers social and academic conventions of spoken language moderately. There are activities associated with greetings, apologies, requests, and opinion expression, which indicates that the SNC is centered on application of functional languages in real-life situations (SNC, 2020, pp.

97103). This justifies past results by Serasi et al. (2021), who emphasized the role of communicative functions in the formation of oral proficiency in primary learners.

However, these communicative components are not arranged in proper order or clearly designated based on their purposes. Students are made to do speaking activities and they often lack scaffold in the linguistic and they lack performance expectations. Sheldon (1987) observes that good textbooks must offer systematic points of guiding the learners to the point of managing to practice what they can communicate independently. Teacher mediation also impairs learner autonomy to some extent, which Khalid et al. (2023) also express in their research on Grade V English textbooks in the category of SNC.

It is also clear that speaking activities are based on such ethical and moral values as honesty, patience, gratitude, and respect, which are reflected in the overall vision of the SNC ethical communication and social responsibility (SNC, 2020, pp. 99-103). Although this integration aids in developing the characters, communicative capability of such themes is not exploited because there are no lengthy discussions, arguments, or reflective conversations. Similar arguments are made by Jamil et al. (2024) who point out that there should also be moral works in textbooks with the involvement of interactive oral work to develop critical and communicative competence.

In general, the results indicate that the Grade V Punjab English textbook mirrors ideological plans of the Single National Curriculum however, it is not successful in practical implementation of listening and speaking skills. Such a disparity between curriculum development and textbook implementation is reminiscent of other curriculum evaluation research in Pakistan (Hanif & Naseem, 2023; Hashim et al., 2017). The research supports the argument that textbook writers must include very clear listening exercises, communicative activities with speaking and criteria of assessment to ensure complete functionality of the SNC standards.

Conclusion

This paper has discussed the correspondence between the Grade V Punjab English textbook and the Single National Curriculum (SNC), with specific reference to listening and speaking skills. The results show that the textbook illustrates partial correspondence with SNC standards, especially in the process of covering the aspects of pronouncing which include silent letters, sound vowels, diphthongs, and simple oral reactions, but

fails in operationalizing the integrated approach based on skills as planned in the curriculum. The skills of listening include an insignificant explicit listening comprehension activity and deficient development of the skills involved in listening because it is not clearly explained that the activity should be performed through listening to something authentic, whereas speaking activity, however, is present, but is more teacher-oriented and limited in scale. Moreover, the absence of systematic development, student control and explicit evaluation criteria limits the efficiency of teaching in oral communication. In general, the textbook is a reflection of the ideological aims of the SNC, yet it lacks in transferring these aims to the full scale and communicative classroom practices and this lack of translation of the aim to the textbook practices demonstrates a disconnecting between the aim of the curriculum and the textbook practice.

Recommendations

Considering the results of the study, the revision of the Grade V textbook on Punjab English in the future should be enriched with specific and systematic listening tasks with the help of audio resources to improve auditory comprehension of learners. Communicative, student-centered tasks (like role plays, discussions, joint speaking activities, etc.) should be made to provide more balance between listening and speaking skills and provide stimulation toward the use of authentic language. There should be clear linguistic scaffolding that consists of functional expressions and model dialogues to aid in independent oral production and the assessment rubrics should be included in order to assess listening and speaking performance. The teacher training programs will also need to be intensified to enable proper application of oral communication activities in classrooms, hence complete accomplishment of the objectives of the Single National Curriculum.

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