

# National Curriculum and Textbooks: An Evaluation of English Textbook for Class X by Sindh Textbook Board, Jamshoro

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## Abstract

The use of English has been increasing due to new discoveries in science, modern technology, international trade and business, mass communication and world politics. Therefore, its use in education has been increased to make people communicate globally due to its status as lingua franca. Many of the countries in the world use English as medium of instruction in education. English textbooks are one of the important tools and teaching resources in any English language teaching program. They are inevitable part of teacher and learner life. That English textbook is considered the best which caters the language learning needs of students. All English textbooks may not fulfill the requirements of a course. There may occur various drawbacks. Therefore, English textbooks are analyzed, evaluated and revised regularly in order to check how much they fulfill the set objectives of language program and needs of students. In Pakistan, English is used as medium of instruction in many institutions but a very small percentage of population can speak it. Many reasons are behind failure of English language proficiency. Outdated and inappropriate English textbooks are one of those reasons. The current study evaluated 10<sup>th</sup> class English textbook by Sindh Textbook Board, Jamshoro. Data was collected through checklist and thorough observation of language activities given in the textbook. Data is interpreted into charts and graphs. The findings show that the textbook is not free from flaws and has some drawbacks. It does not justify with the equal distribution with the language skills. Recommendations are given for the improvement of the quality of the textbook.

**Keywords:** Textbooks; National Curriculum; competencies; benchmarks; students learning outcomes

**DOI:** 10.7176/JLLL/52-02

## 1. Introduction

Education is not just concerned with the ability to read and write but it is more than it. It makes human to think critically, to evaluate something on the basis of logic and reasons, to choose between right and wrong etc. To get these results a number of people like teachers, administration, policy makers, curriculum developers, course designers, parents etc., and teaching materials such as audio visual aids, teaching resources, exposure to real life experiences etc. are involved. Among all these factors, teachers and textbooks have a profound effect on learners' life inside and outside a classroom.

Textbooks are considered as the heart of an educational program. They are inevitable part of teacher and learner life. Hutchinson and Torres (1994) call textbooks as universal component of teaching because without textbooks teaching and learning seem problematic especially for young kids as they need concrete object to clarify their abstract concepts. Textbooks not only help them to clarify their concepts but also revise the taught concept again and again. Because of this reason, Mahmood (2006) considers textbooks as an essential tool in improving education as they are believed as the basic teaching and learning material while John, Aziz, Ahmed, Sharif & Ishaque (2014) call textbooks one of the most essential English language teaching and learning components in the classroom for teachers and learners. Mahmood (2006) shows importance of textbooks by calling them the base of all classroom material and activities. He is right at his claim about the textbook because most of the teachers use textbooks as the only teaching material and plan their all pedagogical /classroom activities on the demand of their textbooks.

There are many reasons of using textbooks in teaching and learning i.e. they provide an organized and systematic unit of work, they guide teachers and learners to the content which should be taught and learnt, help the concerned parties (teachers and learners) the method of carrying out a lesson or activity because they provide the detailed sequence and order of teaching procedure.

In some situations like in primary as well as secondary classes or any language program textbooks are used as the main element of teaching and learning as Dolorres (2007) points out that commercial textbooks serve as syllabus for English teaching program. In such situations the selection of textbook is of great importance. The choice and selection of right and suitable textbooks help to get desired result from a planned educational program. But inappropriate textbooks can bring trouble not only for teachers but also for learners that is why textbooks are evaluated and modified before, during and after an educational program.

### 1.1. Textbook Evaluation

Cambridge dictionary defines the word evaluation as to judge the quality, importance, value or amount of something. Whereas Oxford defines it as “to form an idea of the amount, number or value of something”, another meaning is given as “to assess something”. Nazeer, Shah & Sarwat (2015) define evaluation as a systematic way of assembling and interpreting data to make decisions about the future. Evaluation has link not only with present situation of any educational program but also with future steps. In this way evaluation is a process of judging the worth, strength and weaknesses of anything. So textbook evaluation concerns with the value, importance, quality, strength and weaknesses of books used in any educational context within the premises of classroom.

The use of textbooks in pedagogy is highly appreciated but situation gets worse at that time when teachers totally depend upon their textbooks and do not use other teaching resources. All textbooks may not fulfill the requirements of a course. There may occur various drawbacks as Grant (1987) says that there is no perfect textbook. Therefore, it is crucial that textbooks should be evaluated before using in an educational context. There should be check and balance of textbooks which helps to get desired aims and objectives through quality textbooks. Similarly Nazeer, Shah & Sarwat (2015) are of the view that evaluation of English teaching material is a necessity to find out their worth and value and how much they are fulfilling the needs and requirements of their users (teachers and learners) in an academic program. It means textbooks are evaluated to find out how much they are suitable or appropriate for a planned course. They are also evaluated to improve the quality of textbooks to make them applicable and ideal for gaining pre-set objectives. On the other hand Cunningsworth (1984) states that no any textbook is totally suitable for a particular education situation. Some of its material may not suit with the particular course or may not be helpful to fulfill its user’s requirements.

### 1.2. English Language Teaching and Textbooks in Pakistan

The use of English has been increasing due to new discoveries in science, modern technology, international trade and business, mass communication and world politics. Therefore, its use in education has been increased to make people communicate globally due to its status as lingua franca. Many of the countries in the world use English as medium of instruction in education. Graddol (1997) claims that the number of people speaking or learning English will be 2 billion in coming decade.

In Pakistan it is also used as medium of instruction in many institutions but in rural areas (Sindh and Punjab) regional language is used widely. According to Aftab (2011) English is treated as the second language in Pakistan but a very small percentage of population can speak it. It is because English is just used in written form in books, magazines, official document, advertisement etc. except elite educational institutions and elite class who uses it in their daily communication.

Akram and Mahmood (2007) are of view that in Pakistan the status of English is prestigious because of its use in government sector, science and technology, law and in education. It is considered as co-official language of Pakistan whereas Urdu is national and official language (ibid: 2007).

English is also considered as the gateway of success in Pakistan by getting education in well reputed institutions and getting white collar jobs. In Pakistan previously teaching of English was started from grade VI but now because of the increasing demand of English as the language of international communication (lingua franca), higher education and better job opportunities, the government of Pakistan has also started and implemented teaching of English from class I in public sector schools (Nation Curriculum for English 2006). It is not only started as a subject but also as the medium of instruction in various subject curriculum. But in spite of all such efforts, the desired results have not yet been achieved. The national curriculum 2006 which is currently in use claims that the current curriculum for English language from class I to XII has been carefully developed after a thorough research and collaboration with language experts from all over Pakistan (ibid:2006). Furthermore, it hopes that the competencies and standards will serve as a roadmap for quality education of English in Pakistan. But Aftab (2011) claims that the prescribed English textbooks in Pakistan are not effective for language proficiency or improving communicative competence and English teaching standard is not up to that level as it should be. Whereas Akram and Mahmood (2007) present a number of causes of failure of English language proficiency or hurdles of achieving described English teaching objectives that include faulty material, outdated books with a lot of grammar and spelling mistakes and without proper illustrations, teaching and learning English in medium of its literature (as a subject) with old teaching methods like grammar translation method (GTM), incompetent teachers of English language, teachers with no awareness of modern teaching techniques because of lack of teachers training or workshops, cramming system instead of creativity, content testing exams instead of testing proficiency of language skills or strands, lack of teaching resources and overcrowded classrooms.

### 1.3. Aim of the Study

The aim of the current study is to evaluate English textbook used for class X published by the Sindh Textbook

Board, Jamshoro and to find out its strength and weaknesses.

## 2. Methodology

### 2.1. Methods of textbook evaluation

A number of methods of textbook evaluation are presented by different scholars of the world. Naseem, Shah and Tabasum (2015) have discussed methods of textbook evaluation into three main categories in their research work which are on the basis of research, processing of data and interpretation of data. The major types of textbook method are 1) Theoretical-analysis method, 2) Empirical-analysis method and 3) Statistical method. In simple terms three common textbook evaluation methods are used proposed by Mc Grath, in his book “Material Evaluation and Design for Language Teaching”, methods are 1) Impressionistic method, 2) Checklist method and 3) In-depth method. Impressionistic method, as its name suggests, describes textbooks at surface level. It obtains overview of the teaching content. An evaluator quickly takes overview of a book by looking at its blurb, content and many other features. In checklist method a list of selected items is used to evaluate a textbook by confirming the presence or absence of any language item or language feature. A rating scale or likert scale is used in checklist method. Mc Grath (2002) suggests using a checklist method before the beginning of a program or course. Checklist method has many advantages, as it is systematic, cost-effective, explicit and convenient and is easy to follow format (Grath, 2002) While in-depth method is used, when researcher/ evaluator wants a thorough and comprehensive examination of English textbook. Mc Grath (2002) encourages to evaluate English textbooks before, while and after a program to get desired objectives or results from the textbook or teaching material.

### 2.2. Material

English textbook for class X prescribed by Sindh textbook board, Jamshoro, was selected for the study. The selected English textbook is based on National Curriculum for English Language 2006. The National Curriculum for English I to XII 2006 is divided into competencies, standards, benchmarks and students learning outcomes. Competency is further divided into five parts like 1) Reading and thinking skills, 2) writing skills, 3) oral communication skills, 4) formal and lexical aspects of language and 5) appropriate ethical and social development (National Curriculum for English language I-XII, 2006: 7). As the selected textbook is based on the national curriculum 2006 so it should fulfill the national curriculum objectives. The selected textbook had 26 units in total. Among them 13 are prose and 13 are of poetry. Every unit contains different language exercises based on competencies of the national curriculum.

### 2.3. Data Collection

The current study followed Naseem, Kazim and Tabasum study on textbook evaluation which was published in 2015 in European Journal of English Language and Literature Studies by European Centre for Research. The selected textbook was evaluated into two steps.

#### Step 1:

In 1<sup>st</sup> step an evaluation of all the exercises and language activities given in the book was performed. Total number of language activities was counted and categorized them in all four language skills, grammar and vocabulary.

#### Step 2:

In second step a checklist proposed by Mukundan, Hajimohammad and Nimehchisalem 2011 was adopted. This checklist is the most up to date checklist used for English textbook evaluation. The checklist was divided into two major parts 1) General Attributes of the textbook and 2) Learning Content of the textbook. The following figure shows the categorization of checklist into different components.

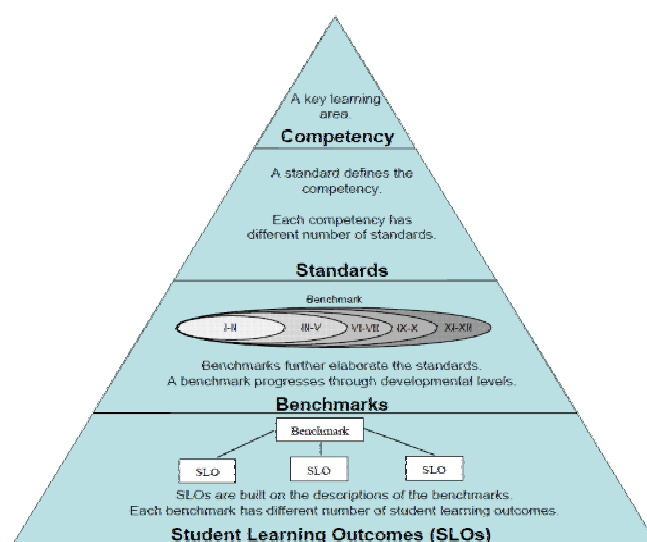


Figure 1. National Curriculum for English Language Grades I-XII, 2006, pg. 6

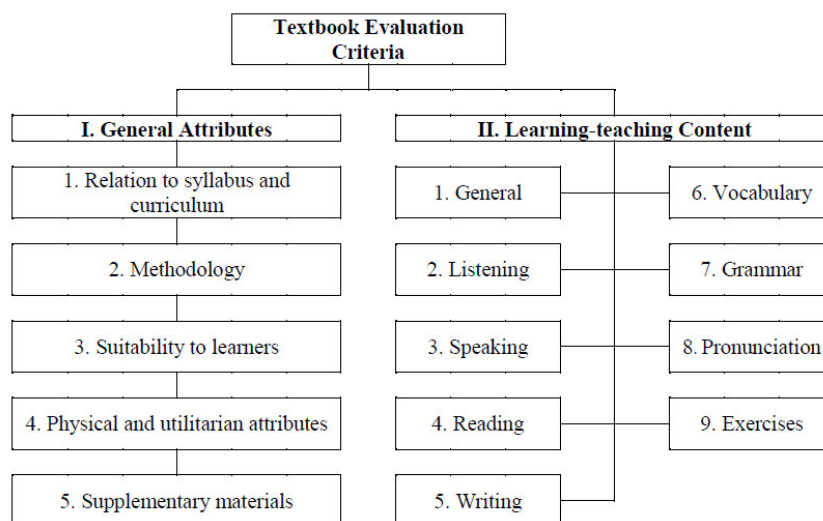


Figure 2. Classification of textbook evaluation checklist criteria developed by Mukundan, Hajimohammad and Nimehchisalem

### 3. Findings

#### 3.1 Findings from analysis step 1

In 1<sup>st</sup> step the language activities/exercises related to reading, writing, listening and speaking skills, grammar and vocabulary given in the English textbook were thoroughly evaluated. There were total 142 exercises which are mentioned below in diagram

Table 1. Over all exercises of the textbook

S. No	Name of exercise	Number of exercises	Total exercises	Percentage
1	Reading Skill	30	142	21.1%
2	Writing Skill	13	.....	9.2%
3	Speaking Skill	02	.....	1.4%
4	Listening Skill	04	.....	2.8%
5	Grammar	35	.....	24.6%
6	Vocabulary	58	.....	40.8%

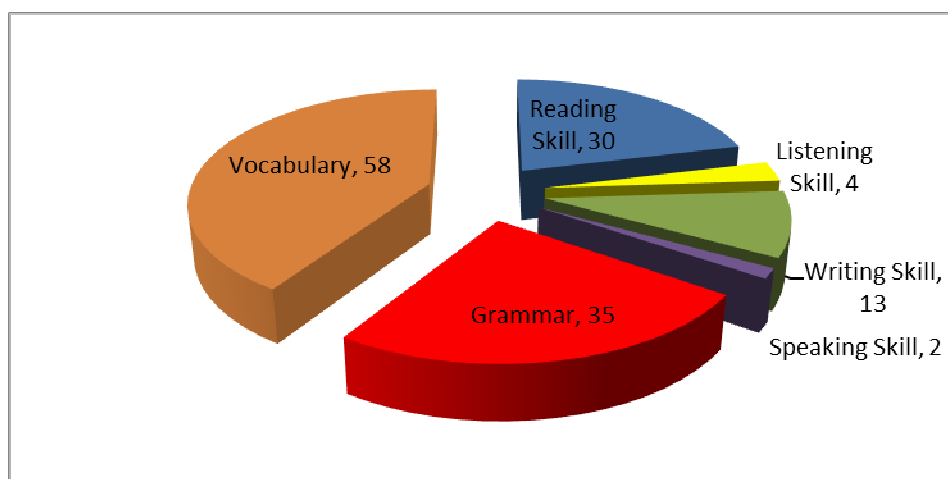


Figure 3. Over all exercises of the textbook

### 3.2. Reading Skill

There were total 30 activities related to reading skill in the textbook which are given below in detail.

Table 2. Reading skill exercises in the textbook

S. No	Name of exercise	Number of exercises	Total exercises	Percentage
1	Comprehension Questions	14	30	46.7%
2	Questions related to poems	13	.....	43.3%
3	Matching answers	01	.....	3.3%
4	Deleting odd sentence	01	.....	3.3%
5	Rewriting sentences	01	.....	3.3%

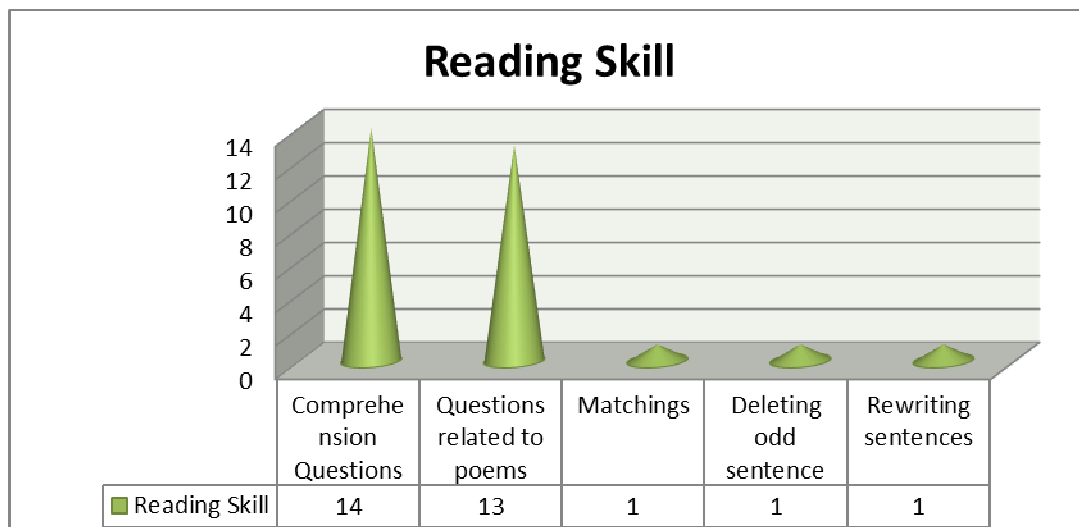


Figure 4. Reading skill exercises in the textbook

### 3.3. Writing Skill

Total 13 activities were designed for the students of class X in the textbook. Details of the activities are mentioned in table 3 and figure 3.

Table 3. Writing skill exercises in the textbook

S. No	Name of exercise	Number of exercises	Total exercises	Percentage
1	Compositions (questions, paragraphs and dialogues)	10	13	76.9%
2	Summary Writing	01	.....	7.7%
3	Translation	02	.....	15.3%

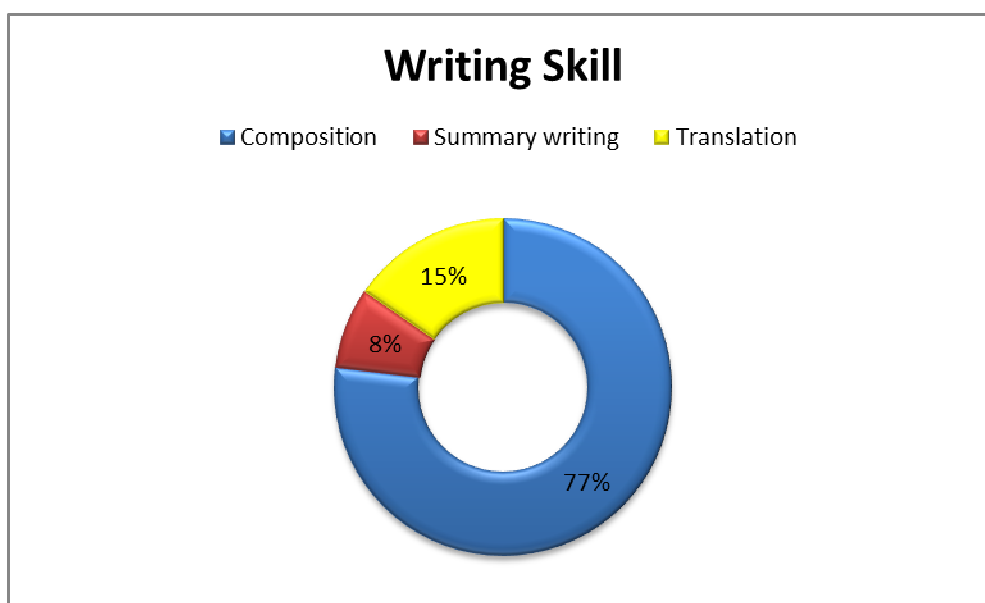


Figure 5. Writing skill exercises in the textbook

### 3.4. Speaking Skill

A very small percentage of activities were of speaking skill. In fact it was the most negligible skill in the textbook. Just 2 exercises were of speaking skill. Details of the activities are given in table 4 and figure 4.

Table 4. Speaking skill exercises in the textbook

S. No	Name of exercise	Number of exercises	Total exercises	Percentage
1	Drill Sentences	1	2	50%
2	Greeting	1	.....	50%

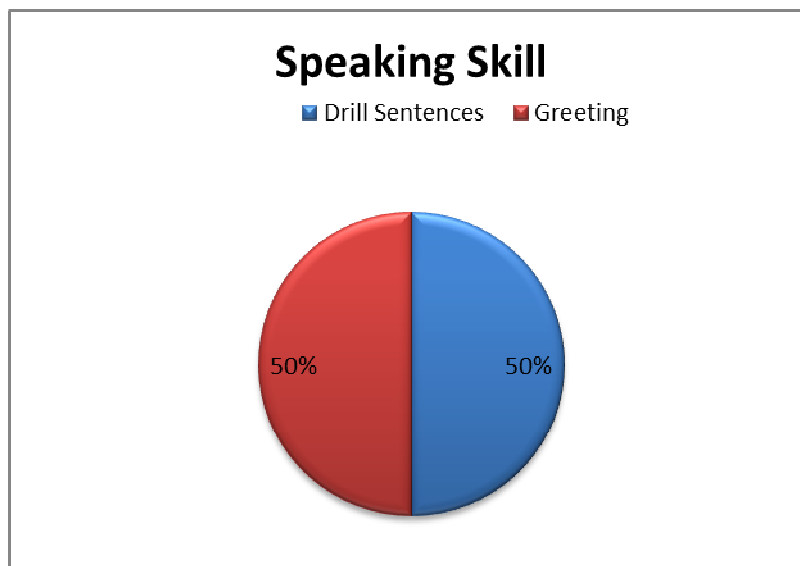


Figure 6. Speaking skill exercises in the textbook

### 3.5. Listening Skill

Just 3 exercises out of 142 were for improving listening skill of the students. Table 5 and figure 5 give the details of the exercises.

Table 5. Listening skill exercises in the textbook

S. No	Name of exercise	Number of exercise	Total exercises	Percentage
1	Passage for dictation	3	3	100%

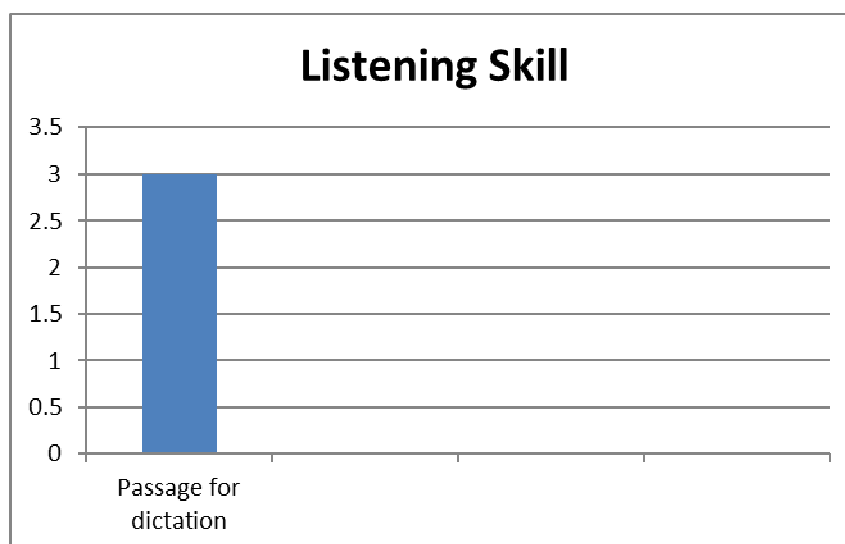


Figure 7. Listening skill exercises in the textbook

### 3.6. Vocabulary

Largest number of exercises was related to enhancing students' vocabulary power. There were total 58 activities of vocabulary. Details are mentioned in table 6 and figure 6.

Table 6. Vocabulary exercises in the textbook

S. No	Name of exercise	Number of exercises	Total exercises	Percentage
1	Spelling and meaning	13	58	22.4%
2	Synonyms	05	.....	8.6%
3	Antonyms	02	.....	3.4%
4	Fill in the blanks	08	.....	13.8%
5	Idioms	11	.....	19%
6	Idiomatic Structure	10	.....	17.2%
7	Phrases	04	.....	6.9%
8	Compound Words	01	.....	1.7%
9	Choosing correct meaning	01	.....	1.7%
10	Phrases into one word	01	.....	1.7%
11	A word for a group of things	01	.....	1.7%
12	Completing the spelling	01	.....	1.7%

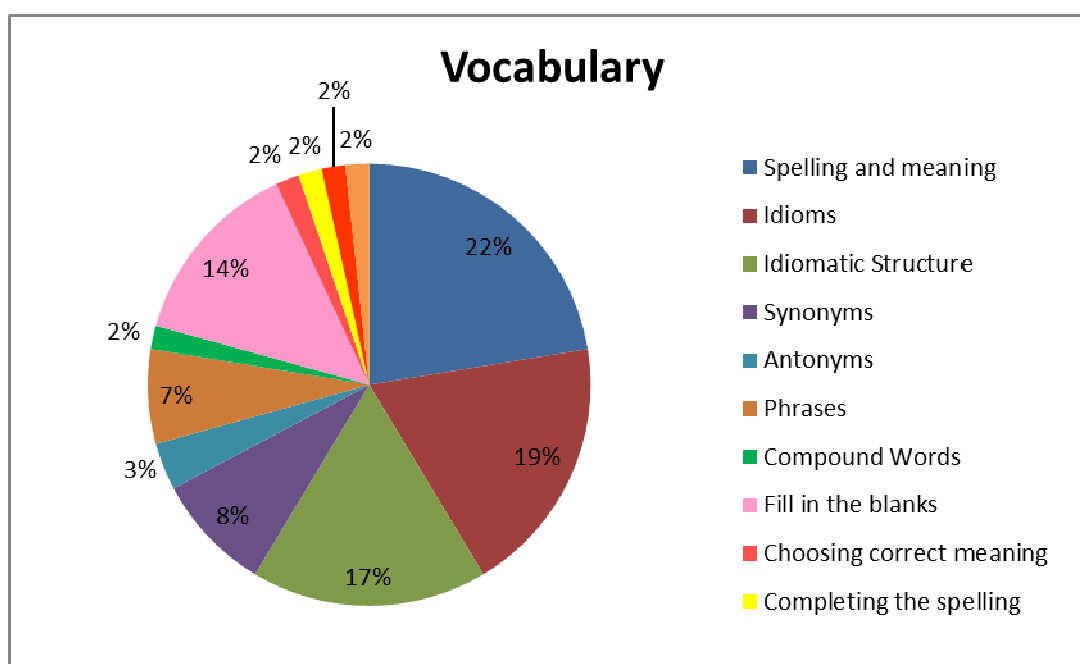


Figure 8. Vocabulary exercises in the textbook

### 3.7. Grammar

There were 35 exercises related to grammar. Detail of the grammar exercises is given in table 7 and figure 7.

Table 7. Grammar exercises in the textbook

S. No	Name of exercise	Number of exercises	Total exercises	Percentage
1	Nouns from verbs	04	35	11.4%
2	Nouns from adjectives	01	.....	2.9%
3	Active into passive voice	03	.....	8.6%
4	Passive into active voice	03	.....	8.6%
5	Verbs	04	.....	11.4%
6	Adjectives	03	.....	8.6%
7	Adverbs	02	.....	5.7%
8	Prepositions	04	.....	11.4%
9	Possessive pronouns	01	.....	2.9%
10	Relative words	01	.....	2.9%
11	Modal verbs	01	.....	2.9%
12	Words used as prepositions and adverbs	01	.....	2.9%
13	Direct and indirect speech	03	.....	8.6%
14	Uses of since and for	01	.....	2.9%
15	Converting present tense into past tense	01	.....	2.9%
16	Miscellaneous exercises	02	.....	5.7%

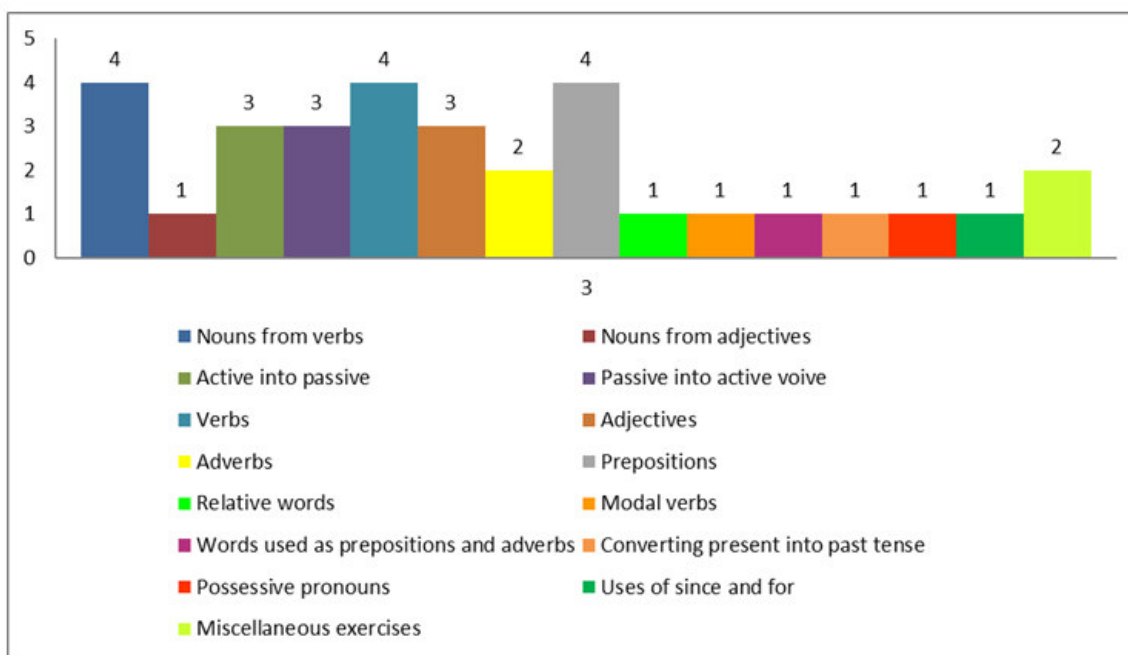


Figure 9. Grammar exercises in the textbook

#### 4. Discussion

English textbook for class X prescribed by Sindh Textbook Board, Jamshoro, was evaluated to find out its strength and weaknesses. Some of flaws along with some qualities were found during evaluation. First thing which attracts someone especially students is general appearance of the book, which was not attractive enough to catch the attention of the students. Font size of the text was fine and easy to comprehend. The material (paper) used for the textbook was of moderate quality, neither of very high quality nor of rough quality. Total 26 units were given which were equally divided into prose and poetry. Among them 13 were poems and 13 prose. A few illustration/ pictures were given in the textbook to clarify students' concepts. Just 7 pictures were presented which were in black and white color that seemed very dull and unattractive. The pictures were of the late king of Saudi Arabia King Faisal, Summit Minar Lahore, students working in a field/ ground depicted as busy in social work, tent-pegging, a fruit shop, African village and Khyber Pass. No audio-visual aids were directed to use in conducting activities. Besides general appearance, there were some shortcomings in the distribution of language tasks. The major portion of the exercises was vocabulary enhancement. On second number grammar tasks got more space in the textbook. Speaking and listening skills were given least importance especially speaking skill was ignored totally. Just two out of one hundred and forty two activities were designed to improve students speaking power. On the other hand, just three activities were of listening skill. Dictation passages were given which could be used for improving listening skill. No other listening activity was developed except them. English teachers need to be smart and skillful enough to use same activity for enhancing different language skills like dialogue activity can be used for improving speaking as well as listening skill. There was not a single activity for improving pronunciation. In most of the vocabulary exercises students were asked to learn the spelling and meaning of the provided words. Textbook writers/developers had a high chance of incorporating pronunciation activities with vocabulary activities. Now it depends upon English teachers how they organize activities to help students to correctly pronounce words. Apart from dialogue activity, all other activities were for individual responses that promote rote learning instead of creativity which is much needed and appreciated in modern education. There was no pair or group activity that could promote sense of cooperation and bonding among students. Reading activities were sufficient. Writing activities focused on producing answers by reading the texts. They lacked critical thinking element which is also encouraged by the National Curriculum 2006 to be used in the class to increase confidence in students to solve their problems in real life. A unit was given on summary making under the title "Making a summary" but students are expected to make just one summary of any paragraph of their textbook. How only a summary can bring the art of making a good summary. In fact, in exams point of view summary making is crucial and every year one question is given to make a summary. If students have enough practice of making summary then they can easily attempt the question but such practice is not encouraged enough in the textbook. The exercise lacked to bring confidence, fluency and critical thinking and writing abilities in students.



#### 4.1 Recommendations

From the findings of the study following suggestions are recommended for the improvement of the textbook;

- 1) The current textbook should be revised to improve its quality.
- 2) As the listening and speaking skill activities are 2.8% and 1.4% respectively in the textbook so, there should be a balance among all four major language skills which are necessary for a learner to be a fluent speaker of the target language. Therefore, the number of speaking and listening activities must be increased.
- 3) Pronunciation is one of the most important elements of English language and National Curriculum 2006 for English also encourages activities concerned with pronunciation but the current textbook fails to include any pronunciation activity so there should be activities in English textbook for class X regarding correct pronunciation of tough and unfamiliar words.
- 4) None of the teaching resources like audio-visual aids are encouraged in the book to be used in the class to make lesson easy and interesting therefore, it is suggested after getting findings from the research language activities should be designed in a way that promotes the use of audio-visual aids.
- 5) Creativity writing has been neglected in the English textbook for class X by Sindh textbook board, so it is recommended that such language activities should be developed which must promote creativity in learners instead of rote learning.
- 6) As summary writing is one of the important tasks for students in exams point of view therefore, it is suggested after the thorough evaluation of the exercises of the textbook that each unit should give a chance to students to write a summary.
- 7) Vocabulary activities in the current textbook which ask learners in every prose unit to just learn the spellings and meanings of the given words must be redesigned to make them interesting and enjoyable.

#### 4.2. Conclusion

The researcher evaluated an English textbook used for matriculation prescribed by Sindh Textbook Board, Jamshoro. The study used two phases in evaluation i.e. in depth evaluation through careful observation and surface evaluation through checklist. The findings show that the textbook is not free from flaws. It does not justify with the equal distribution with the language skills. Activities of speaking and listening skill are ignored. The textbook is unable to meet students and 21<sup>st</sup> century needs to make students competitive users of English language. The National Curriculum 2006 for English language aims to equip students with English language competencies which would help them to use language in their academic and social life confidently and fluently and the curriculum also designed to make them autonomous and long life learners who can respond positively to any change happens at local as well as global level but the textbook fails to fulfill the desired and set objectives of the curriculum. It promotes cramming and rote learning instead of creativity. In the light of the findings, it is the need of the time that the textbook should be revised immediately. The lacking and shortcomings should be focused specially while revising the textbook. The texts and tasks must be interesting enough to engage students in learning the target language. The revised textbook should provide opportunities to students to use language confidently and fluently not only in the class but outside the premises of their school so they would be trained enough to face the challenges on the path of their higher studies.

#### 4.4. Limitations

English is considered as the most important language in Pakistan not only in education but also in trade, economics, politics and development of the country due to its status as “Global Language”. The most significant role of English is in education of Pakistan because it is used as the medium of instruction. English textbooks are the main source of imparting English language in educational institutions of Pakistan. There is need to evaluate every English textbook used in formal education but due to the time limitation, the study was limited to a single English textbook only (matriculation English textbook prescribed by Sindh textbook board, Jamshoro) and that textbook is used just in one province of Pakistan i.e. Sindh.

#### 4.5. Future Research

As English textbooks have been considered as the main source of knowledge for students therefore, it is felt deeply that similar researches must be conducted at larger level to improve the quality of the language textbooks. The result of the present and similar future studies will be helpful for the teachers, learners, textbook designers, material developers, policy makers, researchers etc. in developing and using textbooks in a better way. Such researches will also be proved as helpful in making language teaching and learning process an easy and enjoyable task.

**APPENDIX****Checklist**

How much an item is considered important in the textbook is indicated through the likert scale (0-4) which shows the level of importance of each criterion according to this key:

**1: Very important 2: Important 3: Fairly important 4: Less important 5: Unimportant**

	Criteria of evaluation	Level of importance				
		1	2	3	4	5
<b>I</b>	<b>General Attributes</b>					
<b>A</b>	<b>The book in relation to curriculum</b>					
1.	It matches to the objectives of the curriculum			✓		
<b>B</b>	<b>Methodology</b>					
1.	The activities can be exploited fully and can embrace the various methodologies in ELT				✓	
2.	The activities can work well with methodologies in ELT				✓	
<b>C</b>	<b>Suitability to Learners</b>					
1.	It is compatible to the age of the learners.			✓		
2.	It is compatible to the needs of the learners.				✓	
<b>D</b>	<b>Physical and utilitarian attributes</b>					
1.	Its layout is attractive				✓	
2.	It indicates efficient use of text and visuals.					✓
3.	It is cost-effective.	✓				
<b>E</b>	<b>Efficient outlay of supplementary materials</b>					
1.	The book is supported efficiently by essentials like audio-material					✓
<b>II</b>	<b>Learning-teaching content</b>					
<b>A</b>	<b>General</b>					
1.	Most of the tasks in the book are interesting.					✓
2.	Tasks move from simple to complex.				✓	
3.	The situations created in the dialogues sound natural and real.				✓	
<b>B</b>	<b>Listening</b>					
	The book has appropriate listening tasks with well-defined goals.					✓
	Tasks are efficiently graded according to complexity.					✓
<b>C.</b>	<b>Speaking</b>					
	Activities are developed to imitate meaningful communication.					✓
	Activities are balanced between individual response, pair work and group work.					✓
<b>D</b>	<b>Reading</b>					
	Texts are graded.				✓	
	Texts are interesting.			✓		
<b>E</b>	<b>Writing</b>					
	Tasks have achievable goal and take into consideration learner capabilities.				✓	
	Tasks are interesting.				✓	
<b>F</b>	<b>Vocabulary</b>					
	The load (number of new words in each lesson) is appropriate to the level.				✓	
	There is a good distribution (simple to complex) of vocabulary load across chapters and whole book.				✓	
<b>G</b>	<b>Grammar</b>					
	The spread of grammar is achievable.			✓		
<b>H</b>	<b>Pronunciation</b>					
	Appropriate numbers of pronunciation tasks are given.					✓
<b>I</b>	<b>Exercises</b>					
	They are adequate.	✓				
	They help students who are under/over-achievers.					✓

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