

## **A Comparative Study of Assessment Techniques in Grade 5 English Textbooks of Sindh Textbook Board and Cambridge Curriculum**

Sidra Ghafoor<sup>1</sup>, Dr Fayyaz Ahmed Shaheen<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> M.Phil. Education 2nd Semester, Hamdard University. Email: [sidraghafoor08@gmail.com](mailto:sidraghafoor08@gmail.com)

<sup>2</sup> Assistant professor Hamdard University Email: [Dr.fayyazshaheen@gmail.com](mailto:Dr.fayyazshaheen@gmail.com)

Correspondent: [sidraghafoor08@gmail.com](mailto:sidraghafoor08@gmail.com)

**DOI:** <https://doi.org/10.70670/sra.v4i2.2269>

### **Abstract**

The study was intended to identify and compare the assessment strategies used in Grade 5 English learning in STB textbooks and Cambridge Primary English curriculum (Stage 5). It explored how learners' cognitive skills, language skills, and critical thinking skills are assessed in both curricula. The study used qualitative content analysis methodology based on revised Bloom's Taxonomy. It analyzed all the learning tasks, including exercises, comprehension, grammar, writing, and end-of-the-unit assessment in both sets of textbooks. The results indicated that majority of the assessment tasks in STB English learning for Grade 5 were related to lower-order cognitive processes of remembering and understanding and accounted for around 78% of total assessment tasks. In contrast, around 54% of total assessment tasks in the Cambridge Primary English Stage 5 accounted for higher-order thinking processes. The study revealed significant differences among both sets of textbooks in terms of level of skill integration, variety of tasks, and relationship with intended learning outcomes. The findings of the study suggested that using student-centered and balanced assessment strategies could play significant and positive roles in improving English language learning outcomes in Pakistani educational system. The study provided practical recommendations for curriculum developers, teachers, and education policy makers working in public educational institutions of Sindh province for improving assessment practices in public schools.

**Keywords:** assessment techniques, Bloom's Taxonomy, Sindh Textbook Board, Cambridge curriculum, Grade 5 English, content analysis, higher-order thinking, Pakistan education

### **Introduction**

Assessment is said to be an important part of good teaching. It is a means to evaluate student learning, inform teaching and learning practices and improve educational quality. In language education, the importance of assessment is even higher, because it reflects numerous features of language learning, such as, comprehension, writing, grammar, and vocabulary development, as well as language communication (Black & Wiliam., 2009; Wiliam., 2018).

The education system in the context of Pakistan is known for accommodating the presence of multiple curricula, out of which the Sindh Textbook Board (STB) and the Cambridge curriculum stand out remarkably. The STB is mainly used in public sector schools of Sindh province and is mostly

traditional in its teaching and assessment methods. The Cambridge curriculum is known for its focus on a learner-centered approach to education, critical thinking, and internationally benchmarked standards (Cambridge Assessment International Education [CAIE]., 2023) and is extensively approved in private schools.

Assessment techniques are important factors that donate to the development of student's learning behaviors. If the assessment is only about memorizing or recalling, then the students will use surface learning strategies. However, assessments that focus on analysis, application, and creation lead students to deeper and more meaningful learning (Brookhart., 2010; Darling-Hammond et al., 2020). Grade 5 is a pivotal point in a student's educational experience in Pakistan, as it symbolizes the transition from primary to middle school and lays the groundwork for future learning.

Although both curricula are being taught across Pakistan, there is a deficiency of scholarly understanding regarding the difference in assessment method of the two curricula at Grade 5. Shaikh and Memon., 2021) analyzed the cognitive levels of reading comprehension questions on Grade 10 STB and Cambridge O Level English books based on Bloom's Revised Taxonomy, but there is no similar study at the primary level, which only focuses on Grade 5 assessment tasks in the post-Single National Curriculum (SNC) context. This study aims to overcome this deficiency by analyzing assessment techniques focused on the content, which is done with the primary focus of the analysis, Bloom's Taxonomy.

The importance of this study unfolds many stages. It suggests empirical mark to curriculum developers and policymakers on the cognitive demand levels of STB assessments so far, which can be used for revision in STB in line with the objective of the SNC (2020). It offers a comparative method that can support educators reflect on the assessment tasks they use with students day-to-day. It improves the existing literature on curriculum quality and assessment reform (Ahmed et al., 2023; Bhutto et al., 2022) in wider English language education in Pakistan.

## **Research Objectives and Questions**

### **Research Objectives**

The main objectives of this study are:

1. To analyze the types and cognitive levels of assessment techniques used in Grade 5 English textbooks of the Sindh Textbook Board and the Cambridge curriculum.
2. To compare the distribution of lower-order and higher-order cognitive tasks across both curricula using Bloom's Revised Taxonomy.
3. To examine the degree to which assessment techniques in both textbooks promote integrated language skill development and critical thinking.

### **Research Questions**

- What types of assessment techniques are used in Grade 5 English textbooks of the Sindh Textbook Board and the Cambridge curriculum?
- How do the assessment tasks in both textbooks differ in terms of cognitive demand, as categorized by Bloom's Revised Taxonomy?
- To what extent does each curriculum's assessment design support integrated language skill development and higher-order thinking?

## **Literature Review**

### **The Role of Assessment in Language Education**

Assessment is one of the central methods of the teaching and learning process, especially when it comes to English language learning where at the same time different skills have to be assessed. Recent research has highlighted the usefulness of assessment not just as a measurement of learning but as a substance for deeper learning, thoughtful and engagement with the learning process (Black &

Wiliam, 2009; Wiliam, 2018). Current research also emphasizes the fact that assessment approaches have a noteworthy impact on the strategies students use to learn tasks and gain proficiency in a language (Panadero et al., 2018).

In majority of the developing countries like Pakistan, the assessment system is basically summative in nature like Examination and Text Book work. These methods tend to focus on memorizing and recalling facts, without much thought given to conceptual understanding. Studies in South Asian educational settings have found that such practices stifle and hinder students' cognitive growth and actively inhibit analytical thinking (Darling-Hammond et al., 2020). It is often the case in the English language classrooms that students spend time memorizing the rules of grammar and answers to the questions in the textbooks without really acquiring the communicative competence.

### **Bloom's Revised Taxonomy as an Analytical Framework**

Bloom's Revised Taxonomy (Anderson & Krathwohl., 2001) is one of the most important theoretical approaches used to inform the design of assessments in the contemporary classroom. This taxonomy is a set of six cognitive processes that are organized hierarchically as remembering, understanding, applying, analyzing, evaluating, and creating. Current study emphasizes the need to create assessments that focus on higher order thinking skills such as analysis, evaluation, and creation (Brookhart., 2010; Darling-Hammond et al., 2020). The following table (Table 1) summarizes these levels and provides some examples to illustrate them in the context of English language assessment

**Table 1: Bloom's Revised Taxonomy Levels with English Language Assessment Examples**

<b>Level</b>	<b>Cognitive Process</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>ELA Example</b>
1	Remembering	Recall of facts and basic concepts	"Write the meaning of the word 'elaborate'."
2	Understanding	Explaining ideas or concepts	"Answer in one sentence: What happened in the story?"
3	Applying	Using information in new situations	"Use the word 'rapidly' in your own sentence."
4	Analyzing	Breaking down information; drawing connections	"Why did the author use this metaphor? Explain."
5	Evaluating	Justifying decisions or positions	"Do you agree with the character's choice? Give reasons."
6	Creating	Producing original work	"Write a letter from the perspective of the story's villain."

Note. Adapted from Anderson & Krathwohl (2001).

Several studies consistently reveal that most assessments conducted at the school level are focused on remembering and understanding, with few focusing on the higher-order levels of analysis and

evaluation, and creation (Mansoor., 2023; Ahmed et al., 2023). The study of SNC level English textbooks at primary level in Pakistan revealed that there are very few questions of analysis, evaluation and creating level and only 89.8% questions in primary level English textbooks were of lower order thinking skills (Ahmed et al., 2023).

### **Assessment Practices in Pakistani Education**

Assessment practices in Pakistan have been heavily criticised as being too focused on rote learning and summative assessments. An examination of public-sector textbooks, such as those available from the provincial boards, shows that there are frequently repeated and limited diversity of assessment tasks. These exercises usually involve straightforward multiple-choice, short-answer and direct comprehension exercises, and do not promote critical thinking or creativity. Moreover, the link between learning objectives and assessment tasks in such textbooks is weak which leads to superficial learning outcomes (Bhutto et al., 2022).

The study undertaken specifically on Sindh Textbook Board materials, reveals that there are some issues related to the quality of assessment and its match with the contemporary education standards. (Shaikh and Memon., 2021) compared the cognitive level of reading comprehension questions, found that 100% of the questions from grade 10 STB were at the remembering level, while the questions in the Cambridge O Level were spread across the levels with the dominating level being understanding (75.5%) followed by remembering (11.1%) and the least being at the analyzing level (0.74%). This is the same as STB assessment design is still at the lowest level of Bloom's Taxonomy in the secondary level.

It was found that the majority of the assessment questions in the primary level English textbooks developed under the Single National Curriculum were related to lower order thinking skills and were very few in numbers in higher order thinking skills (analyzing, evaluating, creating) (Ahmed, Lashari, and Golo.,2023). Similarly, (mansoor.,2023) analyzed the exercises of SNC Grade V English textbook published by the Punjab Textbook Board and observed that most of the exercises in these textbooks were lower order cognitive activities, thus, he suggested that the exercises should be activity oriented to include higher order thinking. In sum, these studies indicate a pattern of LOTS dominance across primary English textbooks in Pakistan irrespective of the provincial board, suggesting it is a systemic, not institutional problem.

Another issue is whether the curriculum goals and objectives are aligned with the actual assessment items. Secondary level English textbooks of public and private schools were compared in Sindh by (Bhutto et al.,2022) and the results showed that textbooks from the government sector were able to realize lesser national curriculum goals than the private sector textbooks; especially in the reading and speaking skills. (Darling-Hammond et al.,2020) claim that this mismatch is inherently detrimental to the quality of education and the attainment of the learning outcomes that are most beneficial for students.

### **The Cambridge Curriculum and Progressive Assessment**

The Cambridge Primary curriculum, on the other hand, is a more progressive and student-centred approach to assessment. Cambridge Assessment International Education (2023) highlights the connection between assessment and learning outcomes, and the encouragement of higher-order thinking throughout. Assessment tasks in this system are open-ended questions, extended writing tasks and project-based tasks in which students need to analyse, evaluate and produce a response. These strategies will focus on the development of linguistic skills in addition to the development of critical thinking and problem-solving skills.

Such assessment methods have been proved effective in language learning through research. (Green.,2014) emphasized that the students' language ability and willingness are more enhanced

through the use of performance-based and communicative assessment. Coombe et al.,2012 also made a similar argument that design-oriented assessments that are based on authentic language use yield richer and more lasting learning outcomes. While there is no single best way to assess student learning, evidence from OECD international comparative data (2022) shows that instruction in higher order assessment tasks is correlated with higher levels of analytical ability and understanding across subject areas.

### **Skill Integration in Assessment**

The integration of language skills is an important aspect of effective EL assessment. (Harding and Kremmel.,2016) contend that integrated assessment, which integrates reading, writing, speaking and listening in one task, is a more valid language ability assessment and represents more authentic communication. Traditional assessment systems, on the other hand, are more likely to measure these skills individually, and as a result they are likely to give students a fragmented understanding of language use, as well as limiting their communicative competence.

### **Identified Research Gap**

The literature review identified an obvious and actionable gap in the literature. Although there are studies that have focused on secondary (Shaikh and Memon.,2021) and primary levels (Ahmed et al.,2023) respective cognitive levels in Pakistani English textbook assessment, a task level cognitive analysis of any English textbook assessment items in the context of the recently introduced SNC (2020) policy framework in Sindh has not been carried out using Bloom's Revised Taxonomy as coding instrument. This study directly fills this gap.

### **Methodology**

#### **Research Design**

The type of research design used in this research is qualitative comparative content analysis. Content analysis is a research method that is systematic and repeatable that can make inferences from a text that have been predetermined through explicit coding rules (Krippendorff., 2018). A qualitative approach was chosen as the method employed because the research questions called for an interpretive judgment about the cognitive demand and pedagogical intent of the assessment tasks; this judgment was not easily quantifiable and was accompanied by frequency data in support of the qualitative analysis.

This study is interpretist in nature which recognizes that the classification of cognitive levels of assessment tasks requires contextual judgment based on the explicit wording of tasks, as well as their position in the pedagogical sequence of the textbook used. Systematic comparison of the two curricula is offered through the comparative design, where the two designs are analyzed under the same conditions to provide a criterion-referenced comparison rather than an impression-based one.

#### **Sample Selection and Justification**

Two Grade 5 English textbooks were selected as the primary data sources for this study:

- **Sindh Textbook Board English Book, Grade 5** (STB, 2020 edition, revised in accordance with the Single National Curriculum 2020 guidelines).
- **Cambridge Primary English, Stage 5** (Cambridge University Press, 2021 edition, authored by Bingham and Glover), used in Cambridge-affiliated schools across Pakistan.

The textbooks have been chosen as they are the two most widely used educational systems in the urban and peri-urban areas of Pakistan. The choice of grade 5 was made as it is the final grade level of primary education in Pakistan's 5-3-2-2 system and the assessment level at this grade has the most significant impact on the academic journey of students.

## Unit of Analysis

The unit of analysis in this study is the individual assessment task, which is any item, question or activity that requires a student to produce a response to be evaluated. This may be but is not restricted to: individual questions in a comprehension activity, individual grammar points, individual writing prompts, and individual vocabulary tasks. Instructions/headings for which a student response was not expected were not included in the analysis. In both textbooks, there were 312 discrete assessment tasks identified and coded: 164 tasks from the STB textbook and 148 tasks from the Cambridge textbook.

## Data Collection

The following elements from each textbook were identified and gathered for assessment tasks: chapter-end exercises, review activities, reading comprehension, grammar and vocabulary tasks, guided and independent writing tasks, and formal and self-assessment tasks. All tasks were copied word-for-word, and the metadata (such as the textbook source, unit number, task type category, and page number) were recorded in a structured coding spreadsheet.

## Coding Instrument and Procedure

Four analytic dimensions were coded for each task: (1) type of task, (2) Bloom's cognitive level, (3) language skill focus, and (4) whether the skill was integrated or not.

**Table 2: Coding Rubric for Assessment Task Analysis**

Dimension	Categories	Coding Decision Rule
Task Type	MCQ; Fill-in-the-blank; Short answer; Open-ended; Creative writing; Project/research; Matching; True/False	Classify based on the response format required by the task.
Bloom's Level	1-Remembering; 2-Understanding; 3-Applying; 4-Analyzing; 5-Evaluating; 6-Creating	Assign the highest cognitive level genuinely required to produce a correct response.
Skill Focus	Reading; Writing; Grammar; Vocabulary; Listening; Speaking; Integrated	Assign primary skill; mark 'Integrated' if 2 or more skills are simultaneously required.
Skill Integration	Isolated (single skill); Partially integrated (2 skills); Fully integrated (3+ skills)	Count the number of distinct language skills required in a single task.

Note. MCQ = multiple-choice question. Bloom's levels based on Anderson & Krathwohl (2001).

The primary researcher performed coding. Inter-rater reliability was obtained by having a different rater, a qualified English language teacher who has experience designing curriculum, independently code a sub-sample of 15% (47 tasks) of all tasks. To test the level of agreement between the two raters, Cohen's kappa coefficient was computed. The inter-rater agreement was strong (Landis & Koch., 1977) and resulted in a kappa value of  $\kappa = .81$ . Disagreements were settled by discussion and mediated with the coding rubric definitions.

## Data Analysis

All coded data was analyzed with both frequency analysis and interpretive comparison. The number of scores for each coding dimension was calculated and presented as percentages for each textbook

for easy direct quantitative comparison. The quantitative summaries were then interpreted qualitatively, using specific illustrative and substantiating task examples from each textbook.

### Ethical Considerations

The research was of a document analysis type and all of the textbooks were used in this study are publicly available educational material. No human participants were involved in data collection and so formal ethical clearance was not necessary. The books are cited completely in the bibliography and are examined for scholarly and non-commercial research in accordance with the principles of academic fair use.

### Limitations

There are a number of limitations to be noted with this study. First, the analysis is limited to two textbooks, and cannot be extrapolated to all STB or Cambridge textbooks at other grade levels. Second, the study only focuses on the written assessment task texts; it does not consider the way the assessment tasks are actually used in the classroom. Thirdly, because there is no student performance data, the identified cognitive demand from the coding cannot be directly tied to desired student results. Fourth, Bloom's levels have been applied to tasks, and even the reliability check of inter-rater judgments cannot completely remove the interpretive judgment.

### Findings

The results are reported on four factors: (1) distribution of task types, (2) distribution of the cognitive levels in Bloom's Revised Taxonomy, (3) focus and integration of language skills, and (4) the match between tasks and the stated learning objectives.

### Task Type Distribution

**Table 3: Distribution of Assessment Task Types — STB vs. Cambridge**

Task Type	STB (n)	STB (%)	Cambridge (n)	Cambridge (%)
Fill-in-the-blank	42	25.6	12	8.1
Multiple-choice (MCQ)	35	21.3	14	9.5
Short answer	38	23.2	28	18.9
Matching / True-False	22	13.4	8	5.4
Open-ended question	15	9.1	36	24.3
Guided writing	9	5.5	22	14.9
Creative writing / project	3	1.8	28	18.9
<b>Total</b>	<b>164</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>148</b>	<b>100</b>

Note. Percentages may not total exactly 100 due to rounding.

Fill-in-the-blank (25.6%), MCQ (21.3%) and short-answer questions (23.2%) are the most frequently used closed-ended, structured formats in the STB, and together make up 70.1% of all STB assessment tasks. In contrast, the combination of open-ended questions (24.3%) and creative writing and project tasks (18.9%) and guided writing (14.9%) accounted for 58.1% of Cambridge tasks. The most striking

contrast is in the creative writing and project-based tasks: there are 28 creative writing and/or project-based tasks in the Cambridge textbook (18.9%) compared to 3 in the STB textbook (1.8%). The pattern is similar to the results obtained by Ahmed et al. (2023) and Mansoor (2023) which found the closed-ended dominance in the primary English textbooks of Pakistan.

### Cognitive Level Distribution (Bloom's Taxonomy)

**Table 4: Cognitive Level Distribution of Assessment Tasks — STB vs. Cambridge**

Bloom's Level	STB (n)	STB (%)	Cambridge (n)	Cambridge (%)
1. Remembering	72	43.9	18	12.2
2. Understanding	56	34.1	32	21.6
3. Applying	22	13.4	30	20.3
4. Analyzing	8	4.9	36	24.3
5. Evaluating	4	2.4	22	14.9
6. Creating	2	1.2	10	6.8
<b>Total</b>	<b>164</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>148</b>	<b>100</b>

Note. LOTS = Levels 1–3; HOTS = Levels 4–6.

The lower order cognitive domain tasks are represented by remembering (43.9%) and understanding (34.1%) which make up 78.0% of all the assessment tasks in the STB textbook; there are 8.5% of all tasks at any of the 3 higher order cognitive tasks. Compared to this, in the Cambridge textbook, the distribution is much more balanced: 54.1% of tasks involve lower order levels, and 46.0% involve higher order cognitive processes. This is consistent with the trend observed during the Pakistan-based English textbook research of primary schools (Ahmed et al., 2023; Mansoor, 2023; Shaikh & Memon, 2021), which shows that LOTS dominance is a systemic phenomenon of the English textbooks used in the public schools of Pakistan.

The following examples illustrate this contrast concretely:

#### **STB textbook examples (Unit 3, Grade 5 English, STB 2020):**

- Level 1 (Remembering): "Write the meanings of the following words: earnest, flourish, grief." Straightforward lexical recall with no interpretive demand.
- Level 2 (Understanding): "Answer: (i) What was the name of the boy in the story? (ii) Where did he live?" Retrieval of explicitly stated textual information.
- Level 3 (Applying, rare): "Use the following words in sentences of your own: brave, lonely, shelter." Formulaic productive task with minimal contextual constraint.

#### **Cambridge textbook examples (Unit 5, Cambridge Primary English Stage 5, 2021):**

- Level 4 (Analyzing): "Re-read paragraphs 3 and 4. How does the author use descriptive language to create a sense of danger? Give two examples and explain the effect of each." Requires locating and interpreting authorial choices.
- Level 5 (Evaluating): "Do you think the character made the right decision at the end of the story? Write a paragraph giving your opinion supported by evidence from the text." Requires a reasoned, substantiated judgment.

- Level 6 (Creating): "Imagine you are a travel writer who has just visited the setting of this story. Write a travel blog entry of 150–200 words describing what you saw and felt." Original composition in a specified genre.

### Language Skill Focus and Integration

**Table 5: Language Skill Focus and Integration — STB vs. Cambridge**

Skill Focus	STB (n)	STB (%)	Cambridge (n)	Cambridge (%)
Reading only	48	29.3	22	14.9
Writing only	35	21.3	18	12.2
Grammar only	52	31.7	14	9.5
Vocabulary only	20	12.2	12	8.1
Listening / Speaking	2	1.2	14	9.5
Integrated (2+ skills)	7	4.3	68	45.9
<b>Total</b>	<b>164</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>148</b>	<b>100</b>

Note. Integrated tasks require the simultaneous use of two or more language skills.

95.7% of the assessment activities in the STB textbook focus on one isolated language skill. Classifying grammar tasks as per the following classification, the single largest category is grammar tasks (31.7%) followed by reading-only tasks (29.3%). There are only 7 tasks (4.3%) in the whole STB textbook that involve two or more language skills. Oral skills (listening and speaking) are almost completely missing (1.2%). By comparison, 45.9% of Cambridge assessments tasks are integrated. The result is consistent with the argument of Harding and Kremmel.,2016 that the assessment of language proficiency through integrated assessment is more valid because it reflects the use of language in the real communication process.

### Discussion

This result of 78% of STB Grade 5 English assessment tasks operating at the remembering and understanding levels of Bloom's Taxonomy corroborates previous studies which criticized the quality of assessment in public school textbooks in Pakistan. The presence of LOTS has been reported by Ahmed et al., 2023 where 89.8% of SNC primary English books were dominated by LOTS, Mansoor.,2023 found a similar trend in the grade V exercises published by Punjab Textbook Board, and Shaikh and Memon., 2021 revealed that all of the reading comprehension questions in grade 10 books published by STB were at remembering level. This paper builds on this literature to provide a systematic, task level quantification of this pattern for Grade 5 in Sindh and compares it with an international curriculum, thereby establishing the severity and the avoid ability of this cognitive limitation. The dominant form of assessment, which follows the framework of fill-in-the-blanks and MCQs, stems from an assessment philosophy that is based on transmission-based pedagogy and is inconsistent with the clear aims of the SNC (2020) in the area of critical thinking and twenty-first century competencies. As outlined in Section 6.4 and confirmed by Bhutto et al.,2022, there is systemic coherence issue between curriculum statements and assessment tasks and this will have a detrimental effect on the SNC's reform goals if not addressed.

The Cambridge curriculum meanwhile, has a wider spread of the tasks across all six levels of Bloom's Taxonomy, with 46% of the tasks at higher-order levels, which is a clear result of the curriculum's explicit focus on developing thinking skills alongside language skills. This is consistent with OECD (2022) data that students in systems which focus on higher-order assessment tasks score better in international tests of problem solving and reading. Moreover, the tasks in the Cambridge curriculum are primarily integrated, where almost half of the tasks involve two or more language skills being used at the same time, which further supports the view of Harding and Kremmel., 2016 that integrated assessment reflects the language use that occurs in real-life more accurately than the isolated testing. These can be seen as a programme of learning which focuses on real communicative performance, not on isolated, recall-based assessment.

The results corroborate previous comparative research by Shaikh and Memon., 2021 who reported a similar cognitive imbalance at Grade 10, but only in the context of reading comprehension questions. In the present study it is shown that such a trend occurs in all task types at Grade 5, where the learning habits are established, and that the cognitive imbalance may be more important. The contribution here, however, is not just to confirm that Cambridge materials are more cognitively demanding, but to identify exactly where, and how, these differences are present, which can be of immediate use to a team of curriculum revision makers. However, acknowledging the resource and infrastructure gap between the private and the public sector classrooms in Pakistan, it is important to note that the cognitive benefits of Cambridge are not necessarily reflected in other outcomes in different contexts. However, there is meaningful reform that can happen in STB's existing structures and resources: If we switch out a portion of closed-ended questions for open-ended questions, add one integrated task per unit, and link at least one HOTS task to each stated learning objective, there is significant progress without needing a structural change.

## **Conclusion**

The objective of this study was to comparatively examine the usage of assessment techniques in Grade 5 English textbooks of the Sindh Textbook board and Cambridge Primary curriculum by focusing upon the cognitive demand levels, integration of language skills, and the connection with the learning objectives mentioned in the textbooks. Systematic content analysis of 312 discrete assessment tasks provides a clear and actionable picture of the evidence.

To answer RQ1, the STB textbook uses mostly closed-ended, structured tasks, meaning that 70% of the tasks are either fill-in-the-blank, MCQ or short-answer questions, whereas the Cambridge textbook includes a wider range of tasks, with almost 60% of the tasks being either open-ended, guided writing or creative.

For RQ2, the STB's assessment design has a strong focus on lower-level cognitive components of Bloom's Taxonomy (LOTS), with 78% of tasks at those lower levels, while the Cambridge assessment design has a more balanced distribution of tasks (46% LOTS). This result aligns with the results of the studies conducted by Ahmed et al.,2023; Mansoor.,2023; Shaikh & Memon.,2021 during primary and secondary English textbook research in Pakistan.

In response to RQ3, the Cambridge curriculum is a strong supporter of integrated language skill development given that 46% of tasks involve two or more skills simultaneously, while only 4% of STB tasks involve such integrated language skill development. The oral skill assessment is almost completely lacking in the STB textbook.

The results of these findings have obvious implications for curriculum reform in public education system in Pakistan. This content analysis is complemented by further studies employing classroom observation, student performance analysis, as well as further research studies with long-term follow-up of how curriculum changes affect learning outcomes.

## Recommendations

- Increase HOTS tasks to a minimum of 30%, beginning with at least one analyzing-level question per comprehension passage.
- Add at least two integrated tasks (reading + writing, or listening + speaking) per unit.
- Train teachers to identify cognitive levels in tasks and supplement textbook exercises with higher-order questions.
- Pilot an oral component in primary English board examinations to generate systemic washback pressure on textbook and classroom assessment design.
- Conduct classroom observation studies on how textbook assessment tasks are implemented and experienced by teachers and students.

## References

- Ahmed, I., Lashari, A. A., & Golo, M. A. (2023). Evaluating primary-level English textbooks of Single National Curriculum through the lens of Bloom's taxonomy. *Pakistan Languages and Humanities Review*, 7(3), 352–361. [https://doi.org/10.47205/plhr.2023\(7-III\)31](https://doi.org/10.47205/plhr.2023(7-III)31)
- Anderson, L. W., & Krathwohl, D. R. (Eds.). (2001). *A taxonomy for learning, teaching, and assessing: A revision of Bloom's taxonomy of educational objectives*. Longman.
- Bhutto, F. A., Syed, H., Rajput, A. S., Shah, S. T., & Chachar, Z. (2022). Analysis of alignment between secondary level English textbooks and national curriculum: A comparative study of public and private schools in Sindh, Pakistan. *Journal of Language and Literacy Education*, 18(1), 1–24.
- Black, P., & Wiliam, D. (2009). Developing the theory of formative assessment. *Educational Assessment, Evaluation and Accountability*, 21(1), 5–31. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11092-008-9068-5>
- Brookhart, S. M. (2010). *How to assess higher-order thinking skills in your classroom*. ASCD.
- Cambridge Assessment International Education. (2023). *Cambridge primary English curriculum framework (Stages 1–6)*. Cambridge University Press. <https://www.cambridgeinternational.org>
- Carless, D., & Winstone, N. (2023). Teacher feedback literacy and its interplay with student feedback literacy. *Teaching in Higher Education*, 28(1), 150–163. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13562517.2020.1782372>
- Coombe, C., Davidson, P., O'Sullivan, B., & Stoyhoff, S. (Eds.). (2012). *The Cambridge guide to second language assessment*. Cambridge University Press.
- Darling-Hammond, L., Flook, L., Cook-Harvey, C., Barron, B., & Osher, D. (2020). Implications for educational practice of the science of learning and development. *Applied Developmental Science*, 24(2), 97–140. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10888691.2018.1537791>
- Green, A. (2014). *Exploring language assessment and testing: Language in action*. Routledge.
- Harding, L., & Kremmel, B. (2016). Teacher assessment literacy and professional development. In D. Tsagari & J. Banerjee (Eds.), *Handbook of second language assessment* (pp. 413–428). De Gruyter Mouton. <https://doi.org/10.1515/9781614513827-027>
- Krippendorff, K. (2018). *Content analysis: An introduction to its methodology* (4th ed.). SAGE.
- Landis, J. R., & Koch, G. G. (1977). The measurement of observer agreement for categorical data. *Biometrics*, 33(1), 159–174. <https://doi.org/10.2307/2529310>
- Lincoln, Y. S., & Guba, E. G. (1985). *Naturalistic inquiry*. SAGE.
- Mansoor, Y. (2023). An assessment of cognitive domain of Bloom's taxonomy use in the exercises of Grade-V English textbook. *Propel Journal of Academic Research*, 3(1), 1–27.
- OECD. (2022). *PISA 2022 results (Volume I): The state of learning and equity in education*. OECD Publishing. <https://doi.org/10.1787/53f23881-en>

- Panadero, E., Andrade, H., & Brookhart, S. (2018). Fusing self-regulated learning and formative assessment: A roadmap of where we are, how we got here, and where we are going. *The Australian Educational Researcher*, 45(1), 13–31. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s13384-018-0258-y>
- Putwain, D. W., & von der Embse, N. P. (2021). Cognitive-behavioural intervention for test anxiety in adolescent students: Do benefits extend to school-related wellbeing and clinical anxiety? *Anxiety, Stress, and Coping*, 34(1), 22–36. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10615806.2020.1800656>
- Shaikh, M., & Memon, S. (2021). A comparative study of Grade 10 English textbooks of Sindh Textbook Board and Cambridge O Level in the perspective of revised Bloom's taxonomy. *Journal of Development and Social Sciences*, 2(4), 310–320. [https://doi.org/10.47205/jdss.2021\(2-IV\)27](https://doi.org/10.47205/jdss.2021(2-IV)27)
- Wiggins, G., & McTighe, J. (2005). *Understanding by design* (Expanded 2nd ed.). ASCD.
- Wiliam, D. (2018). *Embedded formative assessment* (2nd ed.). Solution Tree Press.