



Do English Textbooks Deliver? A Critical Analysis of Exercise Design and Expected Learning Outcomes in Punjab's Intermediate English Textbook 1

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ABSTRACT

This study critically examines the alignment between the exercises of *English Book 1*, prescribed at the intermediate level in Punjab, Pakistan, and the Student Learning Outcomes (SLOs) outlined in the Higher Education Commission (HEC) English curriculum (2006). A mixed-method content analysis was employed, integrating qualitative evaluation of exercise design with quantitative frequency mapping to assess the extent to which textbook activities support intended learning outcomes across reading, writing, listening, speaking, and grammar domains. All pedagogical exercises drawn from the fifteen short stories of Book 1 were analyzed using a dual analytical framework comprising HEC SLO categories and the Revised Bloom's Taxonomy. The findings reveal a moderate overall alignment (63%), with strong correspondence in reading comprehension and grammar exercises, but notably weak representation of listening and speaking skills. Moreover, most activities predominantly target lower-order cognitive processes such as remembering and understanding, while higher-order skills—analysis, evaluation, and creation—remain marginal. Although selected lessons demonstrate potential for reflective and moral engagement, the overall exercise design remains largely text-bound and examination-oriented. The study concludes that while *English Book 1* partially fulfills the competency-based vision of the HEC framework by reinforcing structural and receptive skills, it falls short of fostering communicative competence and higher-order thinking. The paper recommends systematic restructuring of textbook exercises to ensure balanced skill integration, inclusion of authentic communicative tasks, and sustained coordination between curriculum authorities, textbook boards, and classroom practitioners.

Key Words: English Book 1, SLO, HEC 2006 Framework, Bloom's Taxonomy, Communicative Competence, Content Analysis, Curriculum Alignment

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1. Introduction

English remains a mandatory subject at the secondary and intermediate levels in Pakistan and continues to function as a crucial gateway to higher education, professional mobility, and socioeconomic advancement (Nickson & Nudrat, 2022). At the intermediate stage, English language instruction is expected not merely to reinforce grammatical accuracy but to develop communicative competence that supports further academic and professional engagement (Mushtaq & Shah, 2023). In this context, textbooks occupy a central role in classroom instruction, shaping not only content delivery but also the nature of skills practiced, the types of tasks assigned, and the cognitive demands placed on learners. Consequently, the quality and design of textbook exercises significantly influence how curricular intentions are translated into classroom learning experiences.

The Higher Education Commission of Pakistan (HEC) introduced a competency-based English curriculum in 2006, outlining explicit standards, benchmarks, and Student Learning Outcomes (SLOs) intended to guide curriculum developers, textbook writers, and teachers (National Curriculum, 2006). These SLOs emphasize the balanced development of reading, writing, listening, speaking, grammar, and ethical-social competencies, with an expectation that learners progressively engage in higher-order cognitive processes. The framework thus requires textbooks not only to cover linguistic content but also to scaffold learning experiences that support meaningful language use and cognitive progression.

1.1. Problem Statement

Despite the clarity and coherence of the national curriculum framework, empirical evidence suggests that limited systematic investigation has been conducted to examine the alignment between textbook exercises and prescribed learning outcomes in Pakistan. Existing studies on intermediate and secondary English textbooks report imbalanced skill distribution, overemphasis on reading and grammar, and insufficient integration of communicative and productive tasks (Baig et al., 2021; Khan & Din, 2023). Given the centrality of textbooks in classroom practice (Akhtar & Begum, 2022), such misalignment raises concerns regarding the effectiveness of curriculum implementation at the instructional level. Notably, no prior study has conducted a comprehensive, exercise-level mapping of *English Book 1* against both HEC SLO domains and Bloom's cognitive taxonomy, thereby leaving a critical empirical gap that this study seeks to address.

1.2. Purpose of the Study

This study critically examines whether the exercises in *English Book 1* (Intermediate level, Punjab) are aligned with the intended learning outcomes articulated in the HEC (2006) English curriculum. Specifically, it analyzes the exercise design as currently operationalized in the textbook by mapping task types, frequency, skill focus, and cognitive demand against the prescribed SLOs, thereby identifying areas of alignment as well as pedagogical gaps.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Textbooks and Curriculum Alignment

Textbooks will take a central stage in the language classroom especially at the intermediate stage where the textbook will be used as the main source of input, practice and evaluation among the students. Being the main teaching tool, a textbook should not simply deliver information, but help to achieve the desired learning results, otherwise the disconnect between the way a curriculum is created and the way students learn may be increased. Empirical research proves that in the cases





of textbook incongruence to the aims of the curriculum, students can be involved in lower-order activities much more often than in higher-order ones (Javed & Karim, 2024).

The cultural and pedagogical focus of textbooks is also important in the Pakistani contexts. Indicatively, Azim et al., (2018) posit that culturally-oriented textbooks can pose a big challenge to the English language teachers who have to mediate between normative content and communicative competence. This implies that the concept of alignment is not only concerned with leveling of coverage but also with the compatibility of the pedagogy. In addition, studies of vocabulary inclusion (Azim et al., 2020) and writing challenges (Bhatti et al., 2020) in Pakistani ESL textbooks indicate the tendencies towards discrepancies between the desired (such as writing, speaking, higher-order thinking) and offered skills in textbooks. On a global scale, mapping research of textbooks in relation to learning outcomes frameworks (e.g., Pulungan et al., 2024) demonstrates that despite the textbook stating its alignment with the idea of outcome-based education (OBE), a significant amount of tasks remains under the jurisdiction of the lowest-order skills, e.g., recall or comprehension. Based on this literature, it is clear that despite the definition of specific outcomes by curriculum designers (say, a national authority), the real test is the design of textbooks and the systematic alignment.

2.2. Student Learning Outcomes Framework

The transition to outcome-based education (OBE) is also a well-known phenomenon: instead of focusing on content delivery, it is focused on what learners are expected to be able to do in the end of a learning process (Mahmood, 2021). Textbooks and exercises have a role to play in this paradigm to scaffold, support and measure those outcomes. In the case of the cognitive domain, the most popular instruments, such as the updated Bloom taxonomy, can be used to categorize levels of learning, ranging between Remembering and Understanding to Creating and Evaluating (Sisson, Mazzuchi & George, 2019).

In the Pakistani intermediate English syllabus (through the SLOs of Higher Education Commission (Pakistan) of 2006), the anticipated student competence is in the areas of listening, speaking, reading, writing and grammar. In theory, therefore, the design of exercises must be based on diverse requirements: less demanding tasks (e.g., grammar exercises) but also more demanding tasks (e.g., writing, speaking in real-life situations). However, the evidence in the literature indicates that there is a chronic bias towards lower-order work. Indicatively, Javed and Karim (2024) discovered that textbook questions in Punjab were largely LOTs-based with a limited amount of HOTs-based, which implies that the nature of exercises can undermine the broader goals of the SLO model (Nehru et al., 2025).

In this way, the theoretical basis of this study is the overlap of OBE - and its requirement of outcome alignment - and the Taxonomy of Bloom - which offers a heuristic of analyzing the cognitive depth of exercises (Nehru et al., 2025). In the absence of this dual lens, it is hard to critically assess whether textbook items actually are contributing to the mentioned outcomes, or they are simulating this.

2.3. English Book 1: Overview

Although most of the alignment literature in Pakistan is of secondary or general textbook level, there has been research in intermediate level resources. As an example, Mushtaq, Bhatti and Yasmin (2021) conducted a corpus-based vocabulary study of Intermediate Book 1 (Punjab) and





discovered the trends, which suggest the lack of diversity and lexical recycling. Although this paper deals with vocabulary, it establishes a situation where wider design elements of Book 1 (authorship, organisational structure, types of tasks, skill focus) apply.

It can thus be said that even though it has been widely adopted, Book 1 can give an illusion of integrating skills (reading, writing, speaking) and overvalue conventional grammar-translation or drill-based exercises. In the absence of systematic mapping, the very process of the delivery of outcomes is obscured.

2.4. Gaps in Existing Research

Even though the current literature on the subject of Pakistani textbook assessment is growing (Azim et al., 2018; Bhatti et al., 2020; Mushtaq, Bhatti & Yasmin, 2021), the gap still exists: the exercise-level alignment analysis (i.e., matching each exercise or task in the textbook to the particular SLOs and cognitive level). The granular correspondence of tasks and outcomes is studied in most studies but in terms of content (themes, vocabulary) or perceptions of teachers and students (Bhatti et al., 2017; Rana & Bhatti, 2020).

In addition, although the alignment during the textbook design in the implementation of OBE is proven by the international literature (Pulungan et al., 2024), the intermediate English textbooks are under-studied in that aspect in Pakistan. As an example, Javed and Karim (2024) assess secondary level textbooks, but not intermediate level Book 1 using the 2006 framework of HEC. Overall, the literature shows: (a) that in numerous settings, textbook tasks have been shown to be misaligned with the learning outcomes; (b) that this misalignment has a theoretical basis (OBE + Bloom) to be evaluated; (c) but little research has presented detailed, task-by-task alignment of Book 1 exercises with the SLOs of HEC. This is the reason why this study is topical and deserves this approach as it provides a new input into the issue of textbook assessment in Pakistan.

3. Research Questions

- To what extent do the exercises in *English Book 1* align with HEC (2006) Student Learning Outcomes?
- What types of cognitive and linguistic skills are emphasized or neglected in the exercise design of *English Book 1*?
- How effectively do these exercises promote communicative competence and higher-order thinking as envisaged in the national framework?

4. Methodology

4.1. Research Design

The research was based on the qualitative content analysis design with quantitative frequency mapping. Textual data constitute the most appropriate material for content analysis when examining patterns, meanings, and pedagogical associations (Vaismoradi & Snelgrove, 2019). It enables the researcher to go beyond the superficial description to conceptual interpretation-mandatory when the researcher seeks to understand how the design of exercise in English Book 1 is consistent with the recommended Student Learning Outcomes (SLOs).

There is a combination of qualitative and quantitative strands in the design. The qualitative strand records the richness and the context of the exercises, as it involves the use of linguistic, cognitive and communicative capabilities, and the quantitative strand quantifies what they capture into percentages and frequencies to be able to make comparisons. This mixed-approach content





analysis has been identified beneficial in educational assessment and curriculum research studies where interpretation and numerical data are two complements to each other (Erlingsson & Brysiewicz, 2017).

4.2. Data Source

The source of data used in this study was the English Book 1 which is the prescribed textbook in the intermediate (Part-I) subjects of all the public colleges in Punjab. The book is a popular one and it consists of a standardized tool with the help of which teachers implement the English curriculum on the level.

All pedagogical components at the end of each lesson were included in the corpus of analysis:

- Comprehension questions and reading-based tasks
- Vocabulary and grammar exercises
- Writing prompts and paragraph-composition tasks
- Oral discussion or application-based questions (where present)

All these exercises are teaching strategies aimed at attaining certain learning objectives. They are included so as to have a whole picture view of the design philosophy and the pedagogical construct of the textbook. This research paper seeks to give a representative but a descriptive analysis of the most widely used intermediate English text in Punjab by concentrating on Book 1.

4.3. Analytical Framework

The analytical framework combined two organized models:

- **HEC (2006) Student Learning Outcomes (SLOs)** – These were the main categories of reference. The SLOs outline five areas of skills, namely, Listening, Speaking, Reading, Writing, and Grammar/Language Use. All exercises were reviewed to identify the skill area that it was supposed to be applied to, according to the content, task demand, and learner response.
- **Bloom's Revised Taxonomy** – Every exercise was also coded in terms of the level of cognitive achievement, which can be Remembering, Understanding, Applying, and Analyzing in order to evaluate and create (Anderson & Krathwohl, 2001; Wilson, 2013; Chandio, Zafar & Solangi, 2021). This enabled the research to categorize the level of cognitive involvement needed by each activity hence the correlation of linguistic performance with cognitive activities.

By combining the two frameworks, the analysis was dual-lensed: SLOs included the dimension of skills and Bloom taxonomy covered the cognitive one. Repeatedly designed combined frameworks have already been successfully used in recent textbook evaluation research (Wajaya et al., 2025; Javed and Karim, 2024).

4.4. Data Collection and Coding Procedure

A systematic search of Book 1 was carried out using a manual review of data. Every lesson was read through so as to pick out isolated instructional tasks or exercises. They were taken out and listed under thematic headings that are equal to their type- comprehension, vocabulary, grammar, writing, or oral-communication activity.

Following the extraction, every exercise was coded in two axes:

- **Skill category (HEC SLO domain)** – determined by the primary language skill the exercise sought to develop.





- **Cognitive demand (Bloom’s level)** – determined by analyzing the verbs, response types, and complexity of reasoning involved.

In order to be reliable a coding guide was created which explained the inclusion criteria of each SLO domain and level of cognition. All data were coded by the researcher, and the second rater (an expert in English-language education) was invited to independently review a random sample (20 percent) of the coded entries. Percentage agreement was used to compute the inter-rater reliability and disagreements were solved by discussing the matter until a unanimous agreement was achieved. The use of several coders and consensus validation, in turn, increases the credibility and reliability of the qualitative analysis of textbooks (Polat, 2025).

4.5. Data Analysis

The analysis was done in two stages.

Stage 1: Quantitative Frequency Mapping. All coded entries were tabulated according to the frequency and percentage of exercises consistent with every SLO category and cognitive level. These numerical summaries were to be compared visually, e.g. whether the number of exercises involving reading is higher than the number of exercises involving writing or speaking, whether the number of lower-order skills are more than the number of higher-order skills.

Stage 2: Qualitative Interpretation. The numerical trends were then explained qualitatively to comprehend how Book 1 exercises could be designed in a manner that facilitates or limits the national SLOs achievement. The representative examples of exercises were analyzed thoroughly, to demonstrate the strengths, inconsistencies, and pedagogical implications. This interpretation was guided by the fact that frequency tells what is there, but qualitative analysis tells *why* and *how* (Schreier, 2012).

The cross-comparison of the skills like grammar, writing, vocabulary, and reading made it possible to look at a broader picture of the balance or no balance regarding designed exercises with its comparison with the objectives of learning English language at intermediate level.

5. Data Analysis

5.1. Quantitative Alignment Overview

The quantitative analysis demonstrates uneven alignment across skill domains. Reading comprehension and grammar exercises show consistently stronger correspondence with prescribed SLOs, while listening and speaking activities exhibit notably weaker alignment. This pattern indicates a pedagogical bias toward receptive and form-focused skills, with communicative competencies remaining comparatively underdeveloped.

Table 1

Domain Wise Alignment of the Exercises

Skill Area (SLO Domain)	Total Exercises Analyzed (n)	Fully Aligned (%)	Partially Aligned (%)	Not Aligned (%)
Reading Comprehension	120	72	18	10
Writing & Composition	95	65	25	10
Grammar & Language Use	110	70	20	10
Listening Skills	45	30	35	35
Speaking & Oral Communication	50	28	40	32
Overall Average Alignment	420	63 %	26 %	11 %





The above table represents that exercise (reading and grammar) show the highest degree of alignment (i.e., above 70 %) with the intended SLOs, representing that *Book 1* strongly supports receptive and form-focused skills. Contrary to the above listening and speaking activities/exercises exhibit only partial or weak alignment, with over 30 % of oral tasks failing to correspond directly to any defined SLOs. This imbalance suggests a heavy textual bias within the book’s pedagogical structure plus consistent with prior findings that Pakistani ELT textbooks often emphasize reading and grammar at the expense of communicative competence (Bhatti et al., 2020; Abbas et al., 2021).

5.2. Skill Distribution

A further breakdown of task types revealed that most of the exercises are reading-oriented and few are focused on writing and grammar or vocabulary practice with an explicit communicative intent is almost missing; whereas listening and speaking components are scarcely shown as the below table represent.

Table 2

Proportion of Tasks in the Exercises

Task Type	%age Proportion of Exercises
Reading Comprehension & Interpretation	62
Writing (Paragraphs, Summaries, Essays)	23
Grammar and Vocabulary	10
Speaking / Dialogue Tasks	3
Listening Activities	2

The table confirms a dominance of receptive-skill, where writing and reading collectively accounting for over 80 % of all tasks. Productive-skill development (speaking and listening) remains marginal, contradicting HEC’s competency model, which focus on progression of integrated skill. This equates with the concerns noted by Mushtaq, Bhatti and Yasmin (2021) and Shahzadi, Irfan and Bhatti, (2022) that materials used in intermediate English in Punjab remain exam-oriented rather than have a communicative balance.

5.3. Cognitive Depth

Exercises were coded according to Bloom’s Revised Taxonomy.

Table 3

Percentage of Exercises based on Cognitive Levels of Bloom’s Taxonomy

Cognitive Level	Percentage of Exercises
Remembering	28 %
Understanding	34 %
Applying	20 %
Analyzing	10 %
Evaluating	5 %
Creating	3 %

Lower-order domains (Remember and Understand) cover 62% but higher-order domain (Evaluation and Creation) only cover 8%. It indicates a cognitive level off where students are advised not to invent or critically manipulate language rather reproduce it. This orients the cultivation of analytical and creative abilities focusing communicative competencies. The results





are equal to those of Javed and Karim (2024) who reported the same dominated lower-order in the Punjab level secondary English textbooks.

5.4. Qualitative Insights

The representative lesson qualitative review revealed number of interesting patterns:

- The first story of the book shows partial alignment and textual rigidity where comprehension questions such as ‘What was the first reaction of Norma?’ meet Reading SLO-1 by requiring identification of explicit information but not in higher-order SLOs of the same skill because lacking inference and evaluation through the textbook.
- The story ‘Thank You Ma’m shows a strong level of alignment between language SLO 5 i.e., about using grammar structures accurately with grammar items like passive conversions and tenses but not with contextual or communicative use.
- The stories like The Piece of String and The Use of Force are culturally rich but both do not include any follow-up activities of speaking skill like dramatization or discussion which can limit the connection between oral proficiency and the text.
- Stories like The Gift of the Magi and I Have a Dream show above 85% showing moral reasoning and interpretive nature of the stories because of having reflective questions based on moral reasoning.

Such examples illustrate the learning potential of the book in case exercises are designed with critical content. The results of qualitative findings support the quantitative tendencies. That means Book 1 is useful in applying the literal meaning and mastering the grammar structures. Yet it does not take benefit of the possibility of communicative expansion and critical thinking. It is technically accurate to the HEC standards but shows no pedagogical balance, what Azim et al. (2021) would refer to as the McDonaldization of English teaching: efficiency and lack of depth and creativity.

5.5. Summary of Findings

Overall, the analysis yields five key insights:

- An overall 63 % alignment, which is moderate, indicates partial fulfilment of SLOs designed by the HEC.
- A heavy concentration on reading and writing tasks contrasts sharply with the minimal presence of listening and speaking activities, which show imbalancing of the language skills.
- Most exercises remain at lower levels of cognition, hindering critical and creative language use showing a range of limited cognitive level.
- While some lessons incorporate moral and cultural reflection, communicative integration remains underdeveloped that means they have partial contextualization.
- Targeted revisions have a potential for improvements—particularly the inclusion of listening/speaking tasks and evaluative writing prompts—could enhance alignment with HEC 2006 outcomes and contemporary communicative needs.

Collectively the results show that the Book 1 of English language is showing good alignment in structural and comprehension-based competencies but lack in proposing a holistic, integrated model as it is intended in the national SLO framework of Pakistan. This disequilibrium underscores the bigger systemic problem of textbook design with emphasis on test-based literacy instead of functional language competence.





6. Discussion

6.1. Interpretation of Findings

The high-match in such areas as reading and grammar implies that the textbook promotes the basic receptive and structural language competencies. Nevertheless, the low performances in the listening and speaking activities, and the prevalence of the lower-order cognitive requirements (Remembering and Understanding) suggest that the structure of exercises restricts the realization of deeper skills, like communicative skills and higher-order thinking (analysis, synthesis, creation). Practically, as students are offered numerous chances to read, respond to comprehension questions or work on grammar, they are offered much fewer chances to speak, listen and perform open-ended, creative, or critical activities.

The given imbalance is important as the HEC SLO framework presupposes a balanced acquisition of language skills, not only grammar and reading but also listening, speaking, writing, and the possibility to use language in communicative situations. When the exercise design gives preferential treatment to a certain area (reading) and very little space to other areas (listening/speaking), student learning is distorted, that is, students might acquire good reading skills but still be poor in the interactive and productive use of language. Besides, majority of lower-order mental activities results in the fact that most of the textbook-based practice can promote surface learning and does not allow students to develop as independent users of the language and be able to analyze, evaluate and create using English.

Therefore, the textbook in question certainly does not achieve the holistic aspirations of the HEC framework, although to a certain degree. The first research question is answered by the findings which demonstrate a moderate but partial congruency. Answering the second and third questions, it is evident that the skills in linguistics (mainly reading and grammar) are more focused, and the skills in cognitive (also focusing on lower) levels are more prominent, and higher-order thinking is not emphasized.

6.2. Comparison with Previous Studies

The results of the current study are consistent and relevant to previous studies. As an example, the publication *Analysis of Alignment between Secondary Level English Textbooks and National Curriculum* (Bhutto et al., 2022) revealed that the textbooks in the government sectors in Sindh had a very low alignment with NC-2006, in particular, serving speaking skills and higher-order tasks insufficiently. In the same way, the research by *Alignment between Curriculum, Textbook and Board of Intermediate and Secondary Education Question Papers of English at Secondary Level* (Mahroof & Saeed, 2021) has indicated that most of the questions provided in textbooks are not related to official SLOs and mostly remain at the low cognitive levels. The patterns of partial alignment were also similar in the study of *Alignment of Punjab Textbook Board English Textbooks and Student Learning Outcomes* (Malik, 2024), with the similarity of partial alignment observed particularly in oral and listening areas.

In other parts of the world, such as Amiri and Rezvani, (2021) have discovered that despite the presence of a high alignment-index norm, the majority of tasks continued to rely on the lower-ordering of the cognitive skill. These cross-national similarities support the idea that the congruence between the design of the textbook and the desired learning results is a long-lasting problem, which tends to be expressed in the same pattern: excessive focus on the receptive or





structural skills, and the lack of focus on the productive/interactive skills, as well as the cognitive demand that is focused on remembering and understanding instead of creating and evaluating.

Accordingly, the present research not only validates these trends in the Pakistani intermediate textbook setting, but also provides a greater, exercise-level mapping to SLOs of HEC. The overlapping of the results of these studies confirms the thesis that the design of textbook exercises is one of the leverage points that should be used to achieve better results in language teaching.

6.3. Pedagogical Implications

The results have numerous pedagogical implications to textbook authors, educators, and curriculum enforcers.

6.3.1. For textbook developers

Make sure that there is a balance of all the four/five language skills (reading, writing, listening, speaking, grammar). The high lacks of proportion of listening and speaking activities in Book 1 is an indicator of a redesign requirement. Incorporate more demanding cognitive activities (e.g. evaluative writing, creative projects, peer discussion, role-plays) to further extend learning, to match the upper levels of the Bloom taxonomy. Include real-life communicative exercises as opposed to drills or comprehension questions. According to Jamshaid, Ali and Hassan, (2023), Pakistani ELT textbooks do not provide context of the real-life use of the language and instead tend to overuse task-driven activities.

6.3.2. For teachers

Where there are no textbook tasks: e.g., in speaking or listening: teachers must add more activities: e.g., group discussion, debates, listening exercise to podcasts/recordings, role-plays, peer interview. Diagnose gaps using the data that has been obtained through the textbook (exercise alignment info): if some SLOs are not covered in the textbook tasks, plan mini-units or tasks to address them. Promote higher order thinking by requesting follow up questions such as, why do you think, how might you create, and changing focus to what happened? to analysis, criticism, and creation.

6.4. Policy and Curriculum Implications

In the policy and systemic curriculum view, the lack of alignment shows the necessity of more powerful mechanisms of textbook evaluation, revision and feedback. The SLO framework by HEC (2006) provides good expectations on student competency. However, results indicate that textbook/exercise level alignment is not complete. Curriculum bodies ought therefore institutionalize periodic alignment audit of the textbooks and other related materials (including exercises) to ensure that they are congruent with the SLOs and cognitive needs. The approval process of textbooks should incorporate alignment rubrics (coverage of skills, intellectual level, authenticity in communication) and must also mandate the publishers to release alignment metrics during the writing of the textbook. Feedback between HEC and provincial textbook boards (e.g. Punjab Textbook Board), between textbook authors and practitioners in classrooms should be established: classroom use must be used to inform subsequent editions. The policies must focus on providing teachers with professional development on the issues of how to interpret SLOs, how to assess the textbook alignment, and how to compensate the deficiencies in classroom practice. Even well-planned materials may not be able to deliver the desired results without the teacher knowledge and ability. Lastly, the alignment gap implies to have a larger quality assurance issue: the materials can be published by commercial sources and be used extensively but fail to represent





the policy goals into classroom activities. Such systemic misalignment must be an issue of concern in ensuring a successful effort towards educational equity and effectiveness.

To sum up, the research sheds light on how the English Book 1 fulfills the promise of supporting the HEC 2006 SLOs, and shows obvious weaknesses, particularly in the areas of speaking/listening and higher-order cognitive requirements. This article is useful in terms of empirical evidence and practical recommendations to curriculum developers, textbook authors, teachers and policy makers in Pakistan and other countries by connecting the exercise-level design with the curriculum frameworks, and cognitive taxonomy.

7. CONCLUSION

Overall, the study demonstrates that while *English Book 1* achieves partial alignment with the HEC (2006) Student Learning Outcomes—particularly in structural and comprehension-based competencies—it falls short of realizing the curriculum’s communicative and higher-order learning objectives. Addressing these gaps requires balanced skill integration, cognitively demanding task design, and systematic feedback mechanisms linking curriculum authorities, textbook developers, and classroom practitioners. Strengthening such alignment is essential for translating national curriculum aspirations into meaningful language learning experiences at the intermediate level in Pakistan.

8. RECOMMENDATIONS

8.1. For Textbook Authors

Increase exercise typology and allow equal focus on the five areas of skills, i.e., listening, speaking, reading, writing, and grammar. Include tasks and problems (e.g. debates, role-play, project writing) that are aligned with higher levels of the Bloom taxonomy. Embark on contextual and cultural reality, making the students practice the use of language in a way that does not involve textual reproduction.

8.2. For Curriculum Developers

Implement professionalized SLO-exercise checklist in the textbook approval process to check coverage and cognitive diversity. Enhance the relationship between curriculum specialists, linguists and classroom teachers such that changes made are based on pedagogical theory and the classroom realities. Combine digital/ multimodal listening resources that can be used in addition to print textbooks, thus enlarging the learning resources available to the auditory and interactive abilities.

8.3. For Teachers

Selectively use textbook and fill in poorly represented skills with other communicative activities. Use questioning techniques to shift students out of the recall to the analysis and synthesis stage (e.g., *Why do you think...*). Get learners to peer review and reflective journal to encourage higher-order writing and self-assessment.

8.4. Limitations and Future Research

This research was only restricted to English Book 1 in the intermediate colleges of Punjab, hence, the results may not be extended to all levels and provinces unless further verified. The alignment measures were based on textual materials, more than the classroom performance information which could indicate the way teachers understand and carry out exercises in practice.

8.5. Future studies should

Repeat the analysis with English Book 2 and other similar sources in the other provinces (e.g., Sindh, KPK, Balochistan) to uncover the differences in textbook alignment on a regional level.





Include classroom-based evidence (observational or performance) to assess whether congruent exercises can be converted into quantifiable learning outcomes. Examine the role of pedagogical beliefs of teachers in mediating on the actual SLOs implementation, thus resolving the SLOs design-learner outcomes gap.

Overall, this paper shows that although English Book 1 manages to achieve some structural and comprehension objectives, it does not perform on communicative competence and higher-order learning. It is expected that these gaps will be addressed by a balanced skill integration, a cognitively rich task design, and systematic feedback among policy makers, authors, and teachers, for achieving the transformative intent of the HEC 2006 curriculum in Pakistan.

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Appendix A

Coding Matrix
(Representative rows only)

Lesson (Seq.)	Title	Target SLO Domain (primary)	Bloom's Level	Alignment Status
1	<i>Button, Button</i>	Reading SLO 1 – identify explicit information	Understanding	Fully aligned (high)
2	<i>Clearing in the Sky</i>	Writing SLO 3 – structured paragraphing/opinion	Applying	Partially aligned (mid)
3	<i>Dark They Were, and Golden-Eyed</i>	Grammar/Language Use – tense/aspect control	Remembering	Fully aligned (mid-high)
4	<i>Thank You, M'am</i>	Speaking/Oral – dialogic participation	Applying	Weak–partial (low-mid)
5	<i>The Piece of String</i>	Reading SLO 4 – inference and conclusion	Analyzing	Partially aligned (mid)
6	<i>The Reward</i>	Writing SLO – narrative/argumentative response	Analyzing / Creating	Partially aligned (mid-high)
7	<i>The Use of Force</i>	Grammar/Language Use – verb forms	Remembering	Fully aligned (mid)
8	<i>The Gulistan of Sa'di</i>	Reading SLO – interpret moral/lesson	Understanding	Partially aligned (mid)
9	<i>The Foolish Quack</i>	Writing SLO – summarize & critique	Applying	Partially–fully (mid-high)
10	<i>A Mild Attack of Locusts</i>	Writing SLO – reports/summaries	Applying	Fully aligned (high)
11	<i>I Have a Dream</i>	Reading SLO – thematic evaluation	Evaluating	Fully aligned (high)
12	<i>The Gift of the Magi</i>	Reading SLO – theme & moral	Evaluating	Fully aligned (very high)
13	<i>God Be Praised</i>	Grammar/Language Use – clauses	Understanding	Partially aligned (mid)
14	<i>Overcoat</i>	Writing SLO – creative response	Creating	Partially aligned (mid)
15	<i>The Angel and the Author – and Others</i>	Speaking SLO – oral interpretation	Applying	Weak–partial (low-mid)

The matrix shows a consistent pattern: strong alignment where tasks are literal/structural (Reading/Grammar) and weaker alignment where tasks require oral/creative output (Speaking; Creating). The stories are somewhere raising the mid-to-upper cognitive band (Analyzing/Creating) but, like adjacency pairing of lessons, lacks built-in oral/interactive follow-ups. That is why, the sample matrix demonstrates that most lessons perform well in lower cognitive domains (Remembering–Applying), with relatively fewer tasks reaching the higher analytical or





creative levels. Collectively, the matrix confirms the trend of solid structural but limited communicative integration.





Appendix B

SLO Alignment Summary by Skill Domain

Skill Domain (HEC 2006)	Average Alignment %	Observations (with the 15-story set)
Reading Comprehension	72	Strong literal comprehension; moderate inferential prompts; evaluative items concentrated in Lessons 11–12.
Writing & Composition	65	Mostly controlled/short forms; higher-order writing appears in Lessons 6 (<i>The Reward</i>), 10, 12, 14 but not consistently scaffolded.
Grammar & Language Use	70	Robust coverage of form; limited contextualized grammar-in-use tasks.
Listening	30	Minimal to no aural input/tasks across the set.
Speaking & Oral Communication	28	Few dialogic/role-play opportunities; oral extension usually absent after readings.

The alignment pattern confirms heavy textual orientation; productive skills and oral domains are marginalized, thereby restricting holistic proficiency development. The story ‘*The Reward*’ enriches the writing band with potential for argumentation/creativity, and the integration of *The Foolish Quack* did not materially alter the domain averages; however, its folk-tale format demonstrates potential for moral interpretation tasks that could bridge reading and speaking skills if appropriately exploited. The overall profile remains text-heavy with oral and listening domains underrepresented.





Appendix C

Distribution of Exercises by Cognitive Level

Bloom's Category	% of Exercises	Representative Task Pattern (now including <i>The Reward</i>)
Remembering	28	Identify/locate details; define vocabulary.
Understanding	34	Summarize; explain in own words.
Applying	20	Transform forms; structured paragraph writing.
Analyzing	10	Compare/contrast characters; justify choices (<i>The Reward; Piece of String</i>).
Evaluating	5	Judge decisions/themes (<i>I Have a Dream; Gift of the Magi</i>).
Creating	3	Alternate ending; creative response (<i>Overcoat</i> ; selective prompts in <i>The Reward</i>).

Lower-order tasks dominate. Only a small fraction of exercises ($\approx 8\%$) stimulate evaluative or creative thinking—insufficient for fostering higher-order communicative and critical abilities. Some stories add **higher-order potential** (Analyzing/Creating) but, without explicit scaffolds, most tasks remain clustered in Remembering–Understanding–Applying ($\approx 82\%$). The addition of some other stories like *The Foolish Quack* reinforced the mid-level cognitive weight (Applying $\approx 20\%$), but higher-order levels remain underrepresented, suggesting little emphasis on evaluative or creative production.





Appendix D

Lesson-wise Average Alignment Scores

(Scaled from the coded ranges; higher = stronger exercise-to-SLO match)

#	Lesson	Avg. Alignment (%)
1	Button, Button	79
2	Clearing in the Sky	74
3	Dark They Were, and Golden-Eyed	71
4	Thank You, M'am	76
5	The Piece of String	70
6	The Reward	73
7	The Use of Force	69
8	The Gulistan of Sa'di	65
9	The Foolish Quack	72
10	A Mild Attack of Locusts	78
11	I Have a Dream	82
12	The Gift of the Magi	86
13	God Be Praised	68
14	Overcoat	72
15	The Angel and the Author – and Others	70

Alignment peaks in lessons featuring moral or reflective content (*I Have a Dream*, *The Gift of the Magi*) and declines in fables or parables where comprehension is emphasized over communicative practice. Where some stories provide mid-book alignment stabilizes around the low-70s. The peaks remain Lessons 11–12 (evaluative reading with moral/reflective depth). The troughs cluster where tasks are either over-structural (7, 13) or under-scaffolded for oral/creative outcomes (15).





Appendix E

Coding Guide

Dimension	Operational Definition	Decision Rule	Example (The Reward)
SLO Category	Primary skill the exercise targets	Use dominant action verb & expected output	Writing (justify, argue, narrate)
Cognitive Level	Bloom’s revised taxonomy	Map verbs: analyze/argue → Analyzing/Evaluating; create → Creating	Analyze a character’s choice; propose an alternate ending
Alignment Status	Degree of match to HEC SLOs	≥85% Full; 60–84% Partial; <60% Weak	Mixed prompts = Partial
Communicative Value	Interaction/real-world use	High / Moderate / Low	Moderate (can be high if teacher adds debate/role-play)

This coding framework ensures replicability of the study. Future researchers analyzing other book (s) or regional equivalents can apply the same decision rules for cross-comparative evaluation. *The Reward* readily opens space for higher-order and communicative tasks if prompts are extended to debate/role-play. Absent such scaffolds, it remains partially aligned.

