

AN ANALYSIS OF ENGLISH TEXTBOOKS: EVALUATING UNDERLYING PRINCIPLES AND OBJECTIVES

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ABSTRACT

Language textbook is central to the instructional process of an English classroom. It acts as vehicle for the promotion of specific vision of curriculum. It contains not merely linguistic content or exercises, but have powerful pedagogical and ideological connotations. The nature of content, organization of the textbook and suggested evaluation procedures reflect upon educational policies which are further tied to achieve broader educational and national goals. In this context, besides explicit aspect of a text book, the present study aims at investigating underlying objectives and principles of English text books being prescribed in the schools of Punjab which are affiliated to Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE). In this qualitative framework of study, the prescribed textbooks have been content analysed. The findings of the study reveal that the text books align with learning and pedagogical objectives laid down by NCF (2005).

Keywords: Text book, Instruction, Objectives, Language, National Curriculum Framework

INTRODUCTION

A textbook is, actually, the written content of the curricula. It is important for teaching and learning process because it is designed to increase the understanding and experience of learners (Susanti & Mufidati, 2020). It provides a clear framework for both teachers and students in performing their roles. It supports teachers in structured lesson planning and engaging the students in the classroom (Rezat, 2009). The students navigate their path of classroom learning without any stress or anxiety as textbooks define the margins for them (Despina and Harikleia, 2014). Textbooks support them in reviewing their performance and also act as motivation (Bahari & Salimi, 2021). For the textbook to perform its due role, it must cater to the interest and abilities of learners. At the same time, it must also be acceptable from the point of view of current curriculum content standard.

Designing language teaching textbooks involves taking into account students' language levels, cultures and learning styles (Chen & Hwang, 2020). According to Ayu and Indrawati (2018), the use of an English textbook has significance for both teachers and learners as it provides necessary explanations and activities (Susanti, 2020).

It is vital that the content of a textbook is sufficiently aligned with the aims of the program leading to fulfillment of essential goals underlying a curriculum framework. Different National Curriculum Frameworks provided guidelines for English curriculum for various levels of learning. While going through the recommendations of various NCFs, a transition is observable with respect to the importance assigned to teaching of English at school level. By 1990s, in the phase of globalization, the rise of English as an international language influenced the educational policy concerns in a substantial way. It is significant to review the recommendations of various NCFs to evaluate their recommendations regarding English language curriculum at school level.

REVIEW OF NATIONAL CURRICULUM FRAMEWORK

In general, NCFs approved of 'Three Language Formula' which was implemented 1968. Mother tongue was to be taught as the first language and English as either the second or third language as per the local linguistic contexts of various states.

The Curriculum for the Ten Year School: A Framework (1975) proposed that pedagogically oral-aural techniques of language teaching must be adopted. The learning of languages should not be burdensome and content should be selected from other streams as teaching material.

According to 'The National Curriculum for Elementary and Secondary Education: A Framework' (1988), "Language education has the greatest potential as a means to develop, progressively through various stages, attitudes and values related to all the core components by incorporating appropriate themes and adopting suitable teaching-learning strategies. Hence the learning of language should find a central place in the total educational process."

The NCF (2000) has recommended that such kind of language education has to be introduced in the curriculum which develops creativity and imagination among students. It should "aim at encouraging independent thinking, free and effective expression of opinions and logical interpretation of the present and the past events. It must motivate learners to say things their way, nurture their natural creativity and imagination"

Further, NCF (2005) was the most important document in the context of emerging era of globalisation and resultant rise in demand for English language learning among people. It assigned an important place to English in the light of its global status. It stated, "The level of introduction of English is now a matter of political response to people's aspirations rather than an academic or feasibility issue, and people's choices about the level of its introduction in the curriculum will have to be respected." It strongly supported the implementation of multilingualism in Indian schools. Referring to the three language formula, it stated, "It is a strategy that should really serve as a launching pad for learning more languages".

It further states, "The goals for a second-language curriculum are twofold: attainment of a basic proficiency, such as is acquired in natural language learning and the development of language into an instrument for abstract thought and knowledge acquisition through (for example) literacy. This argues for an across-the-curriculum approach that breaks down the barriers between English and other subjects, and English and other Indian languages." With the onset of the era of globalization, an apparent shift in language teaching policy was visible.

PRESENT STUDY

As text books are the vehicles of curricula, the textbook analysis is a means to identify its peculiar features which leads to establishing its effectiveness.

OBJECTIVE OF STUDY

The objective of present study is to analyse the textbooks in order to examine the underlying objectives and principles of English text books being taught in schools of Punjab which are affiliated to Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE). Its focus is to evaluate current curriculum which is being taught at grade 1, grade 6 and grade 9 in CBSE affiliated private schools.

The rationale behind selection of these grades is that these grades are indicative of beginning of primary education, middle education and secondary education respectively. The content analysis of prescribed text books at these grades will lead to comprehend underlying objectives and principles of curriculum of English language at school level.

SCOPE AND DELIMITATION

This research specifically focuses on the English textbooks published by NCERT and prescribed at Grade 1, Grade 6 and Grade 9 in CBSE affiliated schools of Punjab. The study is delimited to qualitative content analysis of these textbooks to investigate the underlying objectives and principles. It does not evaluate the live implementation of these textbooks in the classroom or gather student feedback, focusing strictly on textual content analysis.

METHODOLOGY

The textbook, which is taken to be an essential component of English language teaching, offer the teachers with a specific structure in the form of syllabus instructions, teaching pedagogy and the contents to be taught. There is clear distinction between the analysis of the textbook and its evaluation. According to McGrath, “analysis is a process which leads to an objective, verifiable description whereas evaluation involves the making of judgments.” Therefore, the analysis of textbooks involves developing a specific set of criteria. The main course textbooks prescribed at these grades were chosen to be evaluated with reference to certain common features extracted from different evaluation criteria.

According to Anjaneyulu, evaluation of teaching contents can be categorised in three types on the basis of literature available in the field of English Language Teaching:

1. Pre-use or predictive evaluation by (Ellis, 1997; McGrath, 2002; Tomlinson, 2003), involves making decisions about the potential value of materials for their users.
2. In-use or whilst-use evaluation by (McGrath, 2002; Tomlinson, 2003), which involves measuring the value of materials while using them or observing them as being used.
3. Post use evaluation by (McGrath, 2002; Tomlinson, 2003). According McGrath, measures the actual effect of the materials on the users. The post use evaluation can measure the actual outcome of the use of the materials.

So, out of these evaluation processes, the second type i.e. in use evaluation has been carried out to assess the current validity and reliability of the English courses being offered at various levels of learning. There are different levels of textbook analysis which provide insights for actual design of content analysis of textbooks.

LEVELS OF TEXTBOOK ANALYSIS

According Littlejohn (1998) proposes a three level analysis.

1. At the first level of analysis the focus is on the physical aspects of materials and how they appear as a complete set or book.
2. At the second level the focus of analysis is on the actual role of learners in the classroom activities, whether language form or meaning is focused, forms of activities and classroom participation and finally the contents of the tasks.
3. The third level examines the implications derived by evaluating the overall aims of the materials, content, task selection and sequencing, teachers and learners' roles, demands of learner knowledge, effects, skills and abilities and the role of materials as a whole. (As quoted by Anjaneyulu 184)

The present content analysis has taken into consideration all the three levels to make it a comprehensive process of reaching at the underlying principles and objectives of teaching. The evaluation of English language curriculum entails the roles of the learner,

teacher, and instructional materials.

Many useful approaches and checklists for evaluation criteria have been proposed by Ellis (1997), McDonough and Shaw (1998) McGrath (2002), Tomlinson (2003), etc., which have variations on the basis of the context which English language teaching provide. Normally the evaluators can choose from the available checklists or they can devise their own criteria to reflect the priorities of their own specific teaching and learning contexts.

From the above relevant literature and best practices, a core checklist was prepared against which the criteria of a good syllabus in terms of contents were selected. The following core checklist has been prepared for carrying out content analysis.

Core Checklist for Curriculum Content Analysis

Aims/Goals

- General statements regarding what needs to be learnt by the end of the course
- Student Learning outcomes are written in measurable terms

Objectives

- Specific statements about what content students should master to attain the goals

Non language outcomes

- Affect cultivation of confidence, motivation, and interest, learning strategies, thinking skills, interpersonal skills and cultural understanding

Learning Content

- Knowledge: vocabulary list, grammar items
- Skills: Listening, speaking, reading and writing

Implementation

- Approaches and Methodologies
- Teaching Principles
- Teaching Suggestions

Assessment/Evaluation: Who, What, How and for what purposes

- Who should carry out the assessment/evaluation?
- What should be evaluated?
- How is the evaluation best done?
- For what purpose should the evaluation be done?
- Proficiency Tests
- Rubrics provided

Here is detailed analysis of main course books of Grade I, Grade VI and Grade IX prescribed by PSEB and CBSE Boards.

Marigold: The Textbook for Grade-I: Prescribed by Central Board of Secondary Education

The text book contains 10 units containing one story and one poem in each unit

Goals/Aims

- To inculcate creativity and initiative among learners through participative learning, and not just imparting a predetermined set of knowledge.
- To develop language skills through the usage of mother tongue at the initial stages of English language learning.
- To create linkage between learners' life with their life outside the school to remove the gap between the school, home and community.

Learning Objectives

A detailed "Note for Teacher" clearly specifies learning outcomes along with suggestions for conducting activities for achieving/reaching to these objectives. The following learning objectives are common to all units:

- To develop listening skills by reading aloud with correct pauses and clear speech.
- To develop pronunciation through reading practice.
- To develop speaking skills by involving students in contextual conversations.
- To provide exposure of English language through introduction of new vocabulary items.
- To train the learners in drawing different patterns to develop motor co-ordination skill.
- To raise awareness regarding environment.

The learning objectives specific to different units are tabulated as under:

Unit1

To introduce the learner to a process of learning following the concept 'From near to far'.

Unit 2

To develop vocabulary and speech patterns through conversation.

Unit3

To develop the skill to identify and discriminate objects, pictures, colours, shapes etc.

Unit 4

To carry out participative activities the students be given the freedom to choose their groups and tasks.

Unit 5

To conduct such activities which students like to do.

Unit 6

To involve children in interesting activities about their environment.

Unit 7

To introduce children to animal sounds and encourage children to listen to all the sounds on their way to school.

Unit 8

1. To involve children in Observation and Conversation about what they observe and in expressing their viewpoint.
2. To engage the students in reading aloud from the text.
3. To nurture among children skill of craft making.

Unit 9

To enable the children to nurture imagination through speaking and writing sentences of text as well as from the environment.

Unit 10

1. To familiarise the students with different occupations.
2. To develop imaginative thinking and the ability to write and speak sentences independently.
3. To involve children in role play activities.
4. To make them practice lower case and upper case alphabets.
5. To introduce some thoughts on friendship, basic hygiene, compassion for animals, peace and sensitivity to their environment.

LEARNING CONTENT

The text book contains 10 units containing one story and one poem in each unit followed by varieties of individual and group activities involving listening, speaking, reading and writing skills. The activities includes recitation, reading, vocabulary development, relating class room tasks to home environment of children, learning formation of alphabets, matching pictures with words etc. Relevant visual content is present to support the process of learning.

IMPLEMENTATION

Approaches and Methodologies: The text book is divided in units and each unit containing story/poem is followed by a detailed chapter entitled ‘Note for the Teachers’. It describes teaching methodology in a very precise manner and at the same time, clear instructions for organising language activities have been specified. An important role has been assigned to mother tongue for developing LSRW. In the initial stage mother tongue may be brought into use to teach English language skills. The teacher has been instructed not to point out corrections to the students, rather constantly encourage students to express themselves. The activities have to be so designed that students experience happiness instead of boredom in the classroom. Participative learning is the key to learning LSRW in English. Through the teaching of story/poem the students have to be trained in all the four language skills i.e. listening, speaking, reading and writing.

EVALUATION

The text book contains review questions and test exercises for the evaluation of students’ comprehension.

Honeysuckle: Textbook for Grade-VI: Prescribed by Central Board of Secondary Education

GOALS/AIMS

The basic goal of education at this level has been to evolve an education system which is child-centred and interdisciplinary. The aims of education at this level as highlighted by English textbook have been:

- To discourage rote learning and sharp boundaries between different subject areas.
- To inculcate creativity and initiative among learners through participative learning, not to just impart a predetermined set of knowledge.
- To encourage children to reflect on their own learning and to pursue imaginative activities and questions.
- The children must generate new knowledge through engagement with the information passed on to them.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- To develop listening skills by making learners read aloud with correct pauses and clear speech.
- To develop pronunciation through involving them in reading practice.
- To develop speaking skills, involving students in contextual conversations.
- To provide exposure of English language through introduction of new vocabulary items.
- To train the learners in drawing different patterns to develop motor co-ordination skill.
- To raise awareness.

LEARNING CONTENT

The National Curriculum Framework, 2005 recommends that children's life at school must be linked to their life outside the school. This principle marks the development of syllabi and textbooks and signifies going away from the conventional practice of bookish learning which has continuously been shaping our system and causing a gap between the school, home and community. The English textbook for Class-VI contains three units, further consisting of 10 chapters containing stories and poems. Each unit is preceded and followed by varieties of individual and group activities involving listening, speaking, reading and writing skills. The activities include practice of LSRW along with vocabulary and grammar exercises. Each lesson contains simultaneous explanation of new vocabulary items.

IMPLEMENTATION

Approaches and Methodologies: The text book is divided into units and each unit containing story/poem is preceded by a detailed chapter entitled 'Note for the Teachers' describing teaching methodology in a very precise manner and at the same time containing clear instructions to carry out language activities for developing LSRW. Each chapter begins with the note 'Pre-Reading Activity' meant for context building of the chapter in hand.

Teaching Suggestions: The textbook has a number of suggestions for teachers such as,

- To encourage learners to work in pairs and small groups and let them go beyond the textbook through a variety of language inputs for natural use of language.

- To build on the exercises given in the textbook and design more task based activities in keeping with learners' interests, needs and surroundings. To employ free-response exercises (with more than one possible response).
- To promote reading habits through story reading (not merely teaching stories as texts), story retelling, choral reading, shared reading, etc.
- To create class libraries for exchange of books and shared reading. The library may also move with children to the next higher class.
- Poems need not be taught line by line, word by word. The teacher may give a model reading but let every child read the poem on her/his own to feel the richness of language, rhythm and music of words. Exercises accompanying the poem are more for understanding the poem as a whole than for teaching language items.
- To encourage learners to tell new stories, narrate anecdotes, compose short poems in English or in their own language and talk about pictures, illustrations in the book. There is no need to pay much attention to error correction. Constant exposure, practice and correction in the form of feedback will help them improve themselves gradually.
- Every page has a column for words and meanings. Encourage children to write down other words they find difficult, along with their meanings, in this column.
- To introduce advertisement as a genre by introducing advertisements on social concerns, such as, educating the girl child, environment protection.

These general guidelines are followed by chapter wise guidelines for teachers to conduct variety of activities effectively for developing working command over English language.

Teaching Principles: Under the heading 'Notes for Teachers' fundamental principles of language teaching have been delineated which underpins the framing of curriculum. These include:

- Learning a language means using it for a wide variety of purposes. Language is best acquired when attention is focused on meaning, not on form.
- Words and phrases not closely related to objects and action remains empty and lifeless to young learners. Language comes alive when presented in meaning-making contexts.
- Words/phrases that are used to accomplish many useful purposes follow a certain system inherent in the language itself. Learners become familiar with the system through continuous exposure to the language in meaning-focused situations.
- Interaction, discussion and sharing of ideas among learners provide opportunities that elicit 'real' information about them and their experiences and opinions.

EVALUATION

The text book contains questions and exercises through which teacher evaluates students' comprehension.

Beehive: Textbook for Grade-IX as Prescribed by Central Board of Secondary Education

Goals/Aims

The National Curriculum Framework, 2005, recommends that children's life at school must be linked to their life outside the school. This principle marks the development of syllabi and textbooks and signifies departure from the legacy of bookish learning which continued to

contour our system and caused a gap between the school, home and community. The concern has also been to discourage rote learning and also the presence of sharp boundaries between different subject areas. The basic stance has been to evolve a learning environment which is child-centred and interdisciplinary.

Learning Objectives

The learning objectives have been explicitly described for the guidance of teachers. These are:

- To develop listening skills by reading aloud with correct pauses and clear speech.
- To develop pronunciation through involvement of students in reading practice.
- To develop speaking skills by engaging students in contextual conversations.
- To provide exposure of English language through introduction of new vocabulary items.
- To train the learners in drawing different patterns to develop motor co-ordination skill.
- To raise awareness about social and cultural environment.

Learning Content

The text book contains 11 units containing stories and poems. Beehive, a textbook in English, is based on the new syllabus in English which was prepared as a follow-up to the National Curriculum Framework (2005). Each unit is followed by varieties of individual and group activities involving listening, speaking, reading and writing skills. The activities include practice of LSRW along with vocabulary and grammar exercises.

Implementation

Approaches and Methodologies: The curriculum calls for an approach that is rich in comprehensible input and adopts a language-across-the-curriculum and have multilingual perspective. The text book aims at helping the child to read for meaning and to learn to communicate in English with confidence and accuracy.

The text book is divided into units and each unit containing story/poem, is preceded by a detailed chapter entitled ‘Note for the Teachers’ describing teaching methodology. There are clear instructions about the language activities to be carried out for developing LSRW.

The students must be encouraged to work in pairs and small groups and to go beyond textbook by providing a variety of language inputs.

Teaching Suggestions: Under the heading ‘Notes for Teachers’, the fundamental principles of language teaching have been delineated which provide conceptual framework to curriculum. These are:

- Central place has to be assigned to the learner in the process of teaching and learning. Learner-friendly language has to be used in the instructions, and the exercises and activities are addressed to the child. In this process the teacher is a facilitator or a co-learner. Words and phrases not closely related to objects and action remains empty and lifeless to young learners. Language comes alive when presented in meaning-making contexts.
- A rich variety of reading material has been provided to include the literary, cultural and sociological dimensions of texts. The themes range from childhood and

adolescence, to disability, talent and achievement, to music, science, and contemporary social and environmental concerns. The range is as inclusive as possible, keeping in view the interest and cognitive development of the learners. The book draws on different genres such as story, biography and autobiography; science fiction; humour; travelogue; and the one-act play.

- The poems help learners explore this great source of language, derive the joy of learning through poetry, and understand the music of words. The different types of poems such as the lyric, the ballad and the humorous poem add enrichment to learners' experiences. There is no need to talk about the poet or the background of the poem, unless the poem seems to demand it. The students should be guided to comprehend the poem through the visual, the auditory, the tactile, the intellectual, or the emotional channels, and to understand the suggestiveness of the images.
- The learners must be helped to develop the skill of predicting and anticipating what follows. The task 'Before You Read' given at the beginning of each unit is meant for this purpose. Learners should be encouraged to participate in this activity.
- The section 'Thinking about the Text' attempts to move from surface level understanding of the text to critical thinking. Through the comprehension exercises given here learners should be helped to infer meaning. There are a few questions which ask for the readers' judgment; they aim to bring out the learners' deeper understanding of the text.
- Vocabulary enrichment has to be attained through a variety of tasks on the usage of words closely related in meaning, matching words to meanings, word building (including phrasal verbs), and reference to the dictionary. An activity on the use of the index has been included.
- Attention has been drawn to grammar-in-context that emerges out of the reading text, e.g. the use of the tenses and voice, reported speech, conditional and subordinate clauses or phrases, and adverbs.
- The communicative skills have been exercised by tasks on Speaking and Writing. The Speaking tasks call for learners to work in pairs or groups, (for example) to present an argument, express a viewpoint, express contrasts, seek or give an opinion, introduce a speaker, tell a story, enact or read out a play in parts, etc.
- There are a variety of writing tasks for developing writing skills such as: help writing newspaper report, an article for a school magazine, argumentative writing, narration, description, and picture interpretation.
- Opportunities for writing in groups and pairs have to be provided to get into the task of writing.
- Dictation has been introduced in its current, updated form as a variety of activities designed to integrate the language skills of listening, prior reading, language processing and recall, and writing, including the appropriate use of punctuation in meaningful contexts.
- Some exercises also allow scope for the learners' languages to support one another's by asking for reflection on relevant words, or poems or stories in other languages; and attempt (preliminary as they may be) to attend to the process of translation. Activities have been suggested to bring out the relatedness of the learners' school subjects.

Evaluation

The text book contains questions and exercises through which teacher evaluates students' comprehension.

Underlying Principles and Objectives of Curriculum

The aims of teaching English as second language are informed by the recommendations of National Curriculum Framework (2005). The principal of linkage between school life and the life beyond school had been the point of departure for framing the aims. The basic intent is to make the whole educative process completely child centred and interdisciplinary. The methodologies of teaching and evaluation process are important parameters of ensuring achievement of the goal. In order to avoid making syllabus burdensome for children, child psychology has played its role in structuring knowledge at different stages of learning. In order to ensure that, instead of stress and boredom, children experience happiness in the classroom, opportunities for contemplation, discussion in groups and practical experience are recommended to be arranged in the classroom for the students.

After analysis of the Main Course English text books for grades I, VI and IX prescribed by CBSE boards, certain educational objectives and principles of designing the curriculum have emerged explicitly. Development of fluency in LSRW is the generic principle which underlies the contents of textbooks including chapters as well as the exercises and activities. Grammar proficiency as a learning objective instructs the teachers to adopt functional approach. Instead of prescribing grammar rules, the learners should be trained in grammar use in meaningful contexts. The principle of linkage of classroom education to the outside world of learners is quite perceptible at grade I, the stage when the learners begin their explorative pursuits. Learning happens through utilisation of learners' experiences at home and in surrounding environment.

The language is perceived to be meaning making tool. Instead of focusing on 'form' aspect of language, it has to be learnt in meaningful contexts. Any language teaching process which is devoid of its focus on language's basic communicative role remains empty and lifeless to learners. Language comes alive when presented in semantically relevant contexts. Continuous exposure to communication, discussion and sharing of ideas provide the students opportunities for the use of language for self-expression.

Activity based child centred curriculum is the next principle which guides the selection and grading of course content. The objective is to design the textbooks in such a manner that rote memorisation receives discouragement and the learners experience happiness in the classroom instead of boredom. The text books contain both pre-reading and post reading activities which are to be carried at individual/ group levels.

In view of these principles, teaching methodology has received central attention and has been painstakingly delineated for the guidance of the teachers under the heading 'Note for Teachers'. For successful delivery of curriculum, right pedagogical choices are must.

It is emphasised that the teachers should create such a learning environment which is more participative and collaborative. Instead of being in the role of passive recipient of predetermined knowledge, if children are partners in generating new knowledge, it will develop creativity and inventiveness among them.

In class I, NCERT Text book recommends multilingual approach to be adopted for English language teaching. According to experts, the use of learners' mother tongue extends support to the process of second language learning. It is crucial to encourage students to speak and

write in a non-threatening environment where they are not pinpointed for small error in language usage. Attractive reading material has to be put in use for capturing students' interests. The language teaching should instil confidence and motivation to speak and interpret language in the classroom.

Learners' interest along with creativity is one of the prime concerns in the selection of content and deciding the nature of activities. At Grade VI, it is suggested to avoid resorting to translation of story/poem to ensure that students experience joy of reading. The activities are to be so planned that inquisitiveness of learners last till end. A number of activities aim at making students express themselves creatively.

The language learning is stated to be a skill which can be attained with continued practice in relevant context. Individual and group practice sessions are focused at developing LSRW. Vocabulary building is one of the important concerns of language learning. A number of activities are part of back exercises such as fill ups, usage of words in sentences, crosswords etc. As a pre reading activity, use of dictionaries has been recommended to explore meaning of words occurring in a specific lesson.

The objective is also to sensitise children for social concerns and issues. In the form of back activities, such content is provided which becomes instrumental in social and cultural growth of the students.

To sum up, modern pedagogical principles are the basis for designing the textbooks. The role of teacher is not of knowledge giver rather he/she has been allocated the role of co-learner and facilitator of learning. The learning goals can be success fully achieved by making learning life centred and child centred.

Significance of the Study

This study holds practical and theoretical significance for several key stakeholders in the education ecosystem:

- Curriculum Developers and Authors: Provides data-driven insights to refine, update, and balance future textbook editions.
- Educators: Empowers teachers to recognize the limitations or biases in their assigned materials, allowing them to supplement lessons effectively.

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