A COMPREHENSIVE ANALYSIS OF ASSESSMENT DESIGN AND VISION IN PAKISTAN'S OFFICIAL ENGLISH LANGUAGE CURRICULUM OF SECONDARY CLASSES

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Abstract

The official curriculum is very important in determining how learning and assessment are done. It guides learning and assessment practices. The effectiveness of assessment mostly depends on the vision and design of the assessment in the curriculum. It is generally considered that the assessment system in Balochistan schools is not effective. As a teacher and curriculum developer, the researcher observed that the assessment design might be one of the main causes of low assessment practices in language classes. The goals and assessment design within Pakistan's Official English Language Curriculum are examined in this study. The study uses Bloom's Taxonomy as a framework to look into the degree of assessment design in the standards, benchmarks, and student learning outcomes (SLOs) of the 2006 curriculum document. The research also examines the methods, practices, planes, mechanisms, procedures, strategies, tactics, and techniques envisioned in the curriculum to assess language. The Bowen, 2009 document analyzed the methods/ procedures used for this research study. Bowen (2009) merged content and thematic analyses, and argued the importance of document analyses as they explore the context, support question development and other methods, can be used as primary and secondary data, helpful in tracking the changes in the phenomenon, help for others analyses, indicated the missing aspects or hidden agenda. The structure of the document is crucial for analysis. The researcher developed a research tool in light of Bloom's Taxonomy cognitive domain.The research study findings show that language competencies are not adequately developed skill-wise in the official curriculum. Standards, benchmarks, and SLO assessment designs mainly concentrate on lower-level action words from Bloom's Taxonomy cognitive domain. Instead of describing assessment processes for language development, the assessment section only defines and emphasizes assessment. Furthermore, the curriculum inadequately addresses the assessment of speaking and listening abilities, and it strongly emphasizes summative testing rather than an ongoing assessment of students' language proficiency. Overall, it appears that the curriculum's assessment design is unclear.

Keywords: Curriculum, Assessment, Language assessment, Students' Learning Outcomes, Standards, Benchmarks, Assessment design, Language curriculum analysis, Bloom's Taxonomy

INTRODUCTION

Background of the study

The curriculum connects learners, educators, and assessments (Nawaz & Akbar, 2022). The development of language skills requires assessment (Cho et al., 2020). It is a crucial component of instruction since it enables teachers to comprehend students' needs, interests, learning preferences, and academic levels, consequently assisting in improving instructional strategies. The assessment also helps planners and policymakers make knowledgeable choices about language development. To make conclusions about people's language-related knowledge, skills, and capacities, it tries to collect evidence that supports those conclusions (Green, 2021). The curriculum is a formal document that includes several different components, including objectives, content standards, recommended teaching strategies, and evaluation protocols. The curriculum includes assessment design and procedures because they are integral to learning and because assessment is necessary for optimal learning (Oliva & Gordon II, 2012). The action verbs used in standards, benchmarks, and students' learning outcomes (SLOs) can be used to evaluate assessment quality, while the content and learning materials created based on SLOs can be used to evaluate assessment value (McMillan, 2017). As a result, the effectiveness of assessment significantly impacts language development.

The four main components of language skills, listening, speaking, reading, and writing, require separate assessment methods for each one (Green, 2021). These skills vary; thus, developing them requires using the right assessment techniques. The quality of learning is substantially impacted by the pedagogical and assessment skills teachers impart in the classroom. To measure the quality of language assessment both before and after education, it is sometimes necessary for teachers to promote multiple language skills during instruction. As a result, teachers need to be knowledgeable about language assessment, have the right assessment techniques for different language skills, and link their teaching methods with the assessment plans. Given that teachers frequently follow the intended assessment design of the curriculum, alignment of the language assessment design within the curriculum with language assessment theories is of utmost relevance. However, it has been noted that traditional assessments and summative exams consistently solely evaluate students on writing assignments, with listening, speaking, and reading skills receiving insufficient attention within the assessment framework. Investigating the assessment design within the curriculum is essential since it acts as the policy document for both instruction and assessment.

Teachers frequently prioritize writing skills because they believe that writing assessments are the main emphasis of the assessment design, according to researchers (Kakar et al., 2021). Traditional reading is included in classroom instruction, but formal reading assessments are frequently inadequate, and speaking and listening skills are frequently ignored. With separate tests given for speaking and listening skills, the assessment strategy, both formative and summative, remains distinct from instruction. According to Gudu's (2015) research, teachers tend to place a greater emphasis on students' reading and writing abilities than their speaking and listening abilities, which limits the opportunity

for students to demonstrate these skills during assessments. Therefore, looking at the curriculum's assessment design is crucial, which acts as the policy document directing instruction and assessment. If assessment methods, both formative and summative, are not correctly developed, the implementation of the curriculum as a whole may be ineffective (Malik et al., 2020). The Pakistan policy documents, national education policy Pakistan (NEPP p. 33), national professional standards for teachers in Pakistan (NPSTP p. 13) National Curriculum Implementation Framework (NCFW, p 69) also stress the importance of assessment and its relationship with the curriculum.

Problem Statement:

The researcher's personal experiences as a student, teacher, and curriculum developer led her to feel the need to look into the assessment design in Pakistan's national English language curriculum from 2006. According to observations, writing skills are the only assessment method now used for language development, and they are summative exams. These experiences have underscored the significance of comprehending the assessment system intended to foster language skills. According to the results of existing research on language assessment, further investigations on rigorous and authentic assessment mechanisms for language development are required. Language skill development has been the subject of research studies, but no research has yet been done to examine the significance of assessment design in Pakistan's English language curriculum regarding assessment. The 2006 English language curriculum in Pakistan examines the assessment design intended in the standards, benchmarks, students' learning outcomes (SLOs), and intended teaching and assessment procedures for secondary classes.

Objectives of the Study

1. To analyze the design and vision of assessment in Pakistan's official English language curriculum.

Research Questions

1. What is the design and vision of assessment in Pakistan's official English language curriculum?

   1.1. How does Pakistan's official English language curriculum align with language assessment theories in evaluating students' language proficiency?

   1.2. What specific assessment methods and tools are utilized in the English language curriculum to assess students' listening, speaking, and reading skills?

   1.3. How does the English language curriculum address the diversity of students' language skills in the areas of listening, speaking, and reading?

   1.4. In what ways does the assessment design of the English language curriculum in Pakistan ensure a balanced approach that fosters comprehensive language development among students?

LITERATURE REVIEW

1. Curriculum and its Relationship with Assessment

1.1 Outcome-Based Education: More debate has surrounded outcomes-based education (also known as OBE) than any other reform strategy in education. Although most educators simply interpret this to mean that educational planning should start with identifying the desired outcomes (assessment design) and finish with students carrying out the tasks necessary to reach those outcomes. A design for education that focuses on student outcomes and is grounded on the idea that anybody can learn is known as outcomes-based education (Henson, 2015).

The terminology used in education to indicate educational outcomes can frequently be confusing. Competencies, objectives, goals, targets, outcomes, dimensions, and expectations are interchangeable. For instance, end-of-year accountability exams assess whether students have met state standards or the overall curricular objectives. Regularly conducted tests are comparable to state exams that follow these standards. Contrarily, particular objectives, and learning targets are directly related to instructional modules and are connected to daily or weekly quizzes, exams, projects, and other assessments. The achievement of standards and competency goals is based on the learning targets (McMillan, 2017)

1.1.1 Clear Targets: Statements of planned learning comprise curriculum documents referred to by various names. The terms "common core state standards," "content standards," "benchmarks," "grade level indicators," and "grade level expectations," as well as "essential learnings," "learning outcomes," "lesson objectives," "learning progressions," and "learning intentions" are a few examples (Chappuis et al. 2012)

1.1.2 Educational Goals: The overarching aim or significant intention of the educational process is outlined in educational goals, which are broad statements describing the expected outcomes for students. They cover the focus areas throughout extended learning periods, which normally last a year or longer and frequently apply throughout all academic years. It can be difficult to quantify goals since they are ethereal and abstract (McMillan, 2017).

1.1.3 Standards and Benchmarks: In the 1990s, "standards" emerged and had a significant impact. It promoted a set of highly defined student goals as the foundation for educational reform. Although the broad student outcomes or objectives were the main emphasis of the standards movement, standards specify the information and skills students must have to fulfill a specific level, course, or curriculum requirement. As a result, comprehensive, long-term goals are intimately related to standards. Since specific objectives match learning targets, the term "objective" has a long history and equally applies to standards (McMillan, 2017). The teacher must know the standards, benchmarks, and SLOs used to measure student progress regardless of the district or school's curriculum. For courses taught in their public schools, state departments of education typically set standards and benchmarks (Marzano & Kendall, 1996).

1.1.4 Educational Objectives and Learning Outcomes: The anticipated student accomplishments to be shown after finishing a course of study are specified in the educational objectives. Long used to define student outcomes, the term "objectives" has undergone several definitions over time, depending on the precise terminology chosen to express the sort of objective, the context in which it is used, and the level of specificity. Miller (2009) describes instructional objectives as "planned learning outcomes," yet the word "instructional" can suggest that the emphasis is on what the teacher does rather than what the students achieve. Student learning objectives have been referred to using terms like behavioral, performance, and terminal objectives. Action verbs (adding, saying, defining, listing, contracting, designing, categorizing, counting, and lifting) are essential in describing these objectives. Action verbs are important because they explain to students what they can do after the instruction. The idea is to describe what students will know and be able to accomplish rather than focusing exclusively on what teachers will do to support students' acquisition of knowledge and skills, regardless of whether the focus is on general or specific objectives. Instructional objectives help in learning activities, such as lecturing, questioning, grouping students, providing individual feedback, and conducting experiments (McMillan, 2017). Homework, tests, in-class assessments, and group discussions can all be used by teachers to assess their students' performance (National Curriculum 2006, p.153). After the academic year, there will be a summative examination (Khan, 2012).

2. Language Assessment and Curriculum

2.1 Curriculum-Based Assessments: The alignment procedure heavily relies on curriculum-based assessments. In addition to curriculum-based assessments, school administrators and teacher leaders can enhance instruction with data-enhanced decision-making and progress tracking (Aubuchon, 2013). Therefore, the recommendations for curriculum-based testing are made because assessment and data collection are increasingly important for closing the achievement gap (Glatthorn et al., 2018). Determine whether the assessment aligns with the most recent version of the state standards. In this context, Khan (2011) makes the case that assessment, a continuous and ongoing process, is crucial for determining how well students do in their academic work.

2.2 Assessment and Curriculum: According to the national curriculum, assessment in the context of language education aims to measure learning as indicated by the student's learning outcomes (SLOs), benchmarks, and standards, primarily utilizing a summative approach (Iahad et al., 2004). Even though the main goals of summative assessment are to evaluate learning and assign grades, it is noteworthy that no feedback is given after the assessment. This lack of feedback could potentially hinder students' understanding of their strengths and areas for improvement. Moreover, the National Curriculum of 2006 places a significant emphasis on testing knowledge rather than considering individualized natural progression, potentially overlooking the specific needs of learners. In terms of language skills assessment, it is observed that only written tests are utilized, raising concerns about the adequacy and comprehensiveness of evaluation methods. Furthermore, the assessment design lacks specific measures for listening and speaking

abilities. Powers (2010) asserts that measuring only one aspect of talent does not provide a holistic understanding of an individual's real-life knowledge and abilities.

2.3 Balanced Approach to Assessment System: The formative and summative information needs to determine a balanced assessment system to understand the effectiveness of pedagogy and the achievement of students. , the local district assessment systems must meet formative and summative data demands at each of the three assessment levels, classroom assessment, interim or benchmark assessment, and annual testing, to assist and promote student success(Chappuis et al. 2010). If assessment methods, both formative and summative, are not correctly designed and developed, the implementation of the curriculum as a whole may be ineffective (Malik et al., 2020).

Research Design

This research used a qualitative research design. A scientific method for comprehending ideas, viewpoints, or experiences is known as qualitative research. This method collects and examines non-numerical data. It aims to explore a topic's breadth and depth, enabling a thorough investigation of intricate occurrences. New ideas are produced via qualitative research, revealing hidden meanings, patterns, and connections (Babbie, 2020). This study used qualitative research to better understand Pakistan's language curriculum's assessment design and examine how it aligns with assessment theories for languages.

Data Collection Strategy:

The methodology for gathering data in this study involves critically analyzing the English language curriculum for secondary courses in Pakistan in 2006. Data was mostly gathered through document analysis. A systematic method for assessing or evaluating printed and electronic documents, encompassing physical and digital sources, is known as document analysis. It is a useful methodology for qualitative research that may be used to examine and evaluate data to derive meaning, obtain new perspectives, and build empirical knowledge. To investigate the assessment design intended within the language curriculum document, the researcher examined it in this study. Standards, benchmarks, and student learning outcomes (SLOs) connected to language assessment were the focus of the analysis. The methodological and assessment portions of the curriculum document were also examined to comprehend the level of assessment design. The researcher wanted to comprehend the alignment of the language assessment design with language assessment theories and to spot any gaps or places for improvement by carefully analyzing the document. The researcher created A data collection tool in alignment with the study objectives and conceptual framework to assure the validity of the data collection procedure. Five specialists from the Bureau of Curriculum Balochistan were then given access to this tool, and they offered their professional insight and feedback. Their input was integrated to increase the tool's validity and guarantee that it accurately extracted the pertinent data from the curriculum material.

Using the model put forward by Bowen (2009), document analysis was used as the method of data analysis in this study. Document analysis is a methodical approach to

assessing printed and electronic documents to extract meaning, gain understanding, and develop empirical knowledge through examining and interpreting data (Bowen, 2009). Documents embody social facts produced, communicated, and used in socially organized ways, according to Atkinson and Coffey (1997, as referenced in Bowen, 2009). Bowen (2009) merged content and thematic analyses, and argued the importance of document analyses as they explore the context, support question development and other methods, can be used as primary and secondary data, helpful in tracking the changes in the phenomenon, help for others analyses, indicated the missing aspects or hidden agenda. The structure of the document itself is important for analyses. The researcher developed a research tool in light of Bloom's Taxonomy cognitive domain. To conduct this study, the English National Curriculum (ENCP, 2006) document's formative, summative, performance, and authentic assessment methodologies and procedures were examined. Another crucial analytical tool for reviewing the ENCP (2006) text was Bloom's taxonomy. Most of the analysis was devoted to the assessments' design as described in these documents. Language assessment theories greatly aided the alignment of the language assessment design of the ENCP (2006) and the language assessment design offered in textbooks. To determine the amount of language acquisition assessment desired and the assessment envisioned in the teaching methodology and assessment chapters, the analysis explicitly looked at the action words used in the standards, benchmarks, and student learning outcomes.

Assessment Design Envesined in English Language Curriculum, 2006 of Pakistan Analyses

The following table lists the forms and assessment levels of Pakistan's Language National Curriculum, 2006. The stages of Bloom's cognitive domain are used as a scale for measurement.

Table 1: Standards

N O	Chapters	Themes Competency of English Language	Bloom's Taxonomy Cognitive Domain Numbers of Action Words Used					
			Knowledge	Comprehension	Application	Analysis	Synthesis	Evaluation
1	Standards	Reading and Thinking Skills	1	2	1	1		
		Writing Skills			2		1	
		Oral Communication Skills			1			
		Formal and Lexical Aspects of Language		1	2			
		Appropriate Ethical and Social Development			1			
		Total	**1**	**3**	**7**	**1**	**1**	

Table 1 displays the competency-based standards level of assessment design using the number of action words while considering Bloom's Taxonomy. Bloom's taxonomy's first three stages are where most of the action verbs employed for the standard fall, suggesting the standard's low assessment level. Since SLOs and benchmarks are subtypes of

standards, standards must also cover higher levels like synthesis and evaluation. It is acknowledged that low SLOs and benchmarks will come from low standards.

Table 2: Benchmarks

NO	Chapter	Themes Competency of English Language	Bloom's Taxonomy Cognitive Domain Numbers of Action Words Used.					
			Knowledge	Comprehension	Application	Analysis	Synthesis	Evaluation
2	Benchmarks	Reading and Thinking Skills				5		1
		Writing Skills	2			4	1	
		Oral Communication Skills			1	1		
		Formal and Lexical Aspects of Language				4		
		Appropriate Ethical and Social Development	1		1	1		1
		Total	**3**		**2**	**15**	**1**	**2**

Table 2 shows the competencies-wise benchmark level of assessment design with the help of the number of action words used considering Bloom's Taxonomy. Most action verbs used as benchmarks are from Bloom's taxonomy's final three stages, indicating a high standard/level for assessment. The other two higher levels must be considered for balance assessment practices because most words fall under the "Analysis" stage. The higher levels of actions, such as synthesis and evaluation, must be included because SLOs are subtypes of benchmarks. It is well-established that low Benchmarks will result in low SLOs.

Table 3: Students Learning Outcomes (SLOs)

NO	Chapter	Themes Competency of English Language	Bloom's Taxonomy Cognitive Domain Numbers of Action Words Used.					
			Knowledge	Comprehension	Application	Analysis	Synthesis	Evaluation
3	Student Learning Outcomes	Reading and Thinking Skills	14	11	12	19	08	04
		Writing Skills	16	01	13	09	06	04
		Oral Communication Skills	01	04	10	01	13	01
		Formal and Lexical Aspects of Language	05	05	13	27	09	02
		Appropriate Ethical and Social Development						
		Total	**36**	**21**	**48**	**56**	**36**	**11**

Table 3 shows competencies-wise students' learning outcomes SLOs' level of assessment design with the help of the number of action words used considering Bloom's Taxonomy. The action verbs utilized for students' learning outcomes are balanced, showing a balanced assessment design, with 105 SLOs in the lower order and 103 SLOs belonging to the upper order.

Table 4: Command Words Used for Standard in English Language National Curriculum, 2006

Competency		Standards	Action verbs of Bloom's Taxonomy used
C 1	Reading and Thinking Skills	S 1	discover and understand
		S 2	Read and analyze
C 2	Writing Skills	S 1	creative writing
C 3	Oral Communication Skills	S 1	use
C 4	Formal and Lexical Aspects of Language	S 1	articulate
		S 2	
		S 3	Understand, use
C 5	Appropriate Ethical and Social Development	S 1	

Table 4 displays the competencies-based standards level of assessment design, with the aid of action words and considering Bloom's Taxonomy. The table shows that the first three phases of Bloom's taxonomy for the cognitive domain correspond to most action verbs used in the standard.

Table 5: Command Words Used for Benchmarks in English Language National Curriculum, 2006

Competency		Standards	Benchmarks	Action verbs of Bloom's Taxonomy used
C 1	Reading and Thinking Skills	S 1	B 1	Analyze
			B 2	Analyze
			B 3	Analyze
			B 4	Analyze, Evaluate, and Synthesize
		S 2	B 1	Analyze
C 2	Writing Skills	S 1	B 1	Analyze
			B 2	Write, analytical
			B 3	Write
			B 4	Plan, comparison, contrast, classification, cause, effect,
C 3	Oral Communication Skills	S 1	B 1	Use
			B 2	Demonstrate
C 4	Formal and Lexical Aspects of Language	S 1	B 1	Pronounce, Communicate
		S 2	B 1	Analyze
		S 3	B 1	Recognize
			B 2	Recognize
			B 3	Analyze
C 5	Appropriate Ethical and Social Development	S 1	B 1	Recognize, practice
			B 2	Develop
			B 3	Understand, Evaluate

Table 5 shows competencies and standards-wise benchmarks level of assessment design with the help of action words used considering Bloom's Taxonomy. The table above explains that most action verbs used in benchmarks fall into Bloom's cognitive domain taxonomy's final three phases, illustrating the higher-level assessment that benchmarks are designed to provide.

Assessment and Student Learning Outcomes (SLOs)

The three main elements that comprise the framework of the English National Curriculum 2006 SLO in Pakistan are content, context, and command or action verbs.

Table 6: Command Words Used for Students Learning Outcomes SLOs in English Language National Curriculum, 2006

Competency		Standards	Benchmarks	SLOs	Action verbs of Bloom's Taxonomy used
C 1	Reading and Thinking Skills	S 1	B 1	9th, 10th	Analyze, identify, define, illustrate, Compare, recognize, arrange, order,
			B 2	9th, 10th	Apply, Distinguish, deduce, use, read, locate, recognize, explore, interpret, extract, summarize, relate, evaluate, apply,
			B 3	9th, 10th	Interpret, analyze, organize, and recognize.
			B 4	9th, 10th	Locate, choose, identify, recognize, comprehend, use, and utilize.
		S 2	B 1	9th, 10th	Read, analyze, identify, recognize, infer, compare, and create.
C 2	Writing Skills	S 1	B 1		Develop, select, write, order, analyze, write, explain, use, incorporate, synthesize.
			B 2	9th, 10th	Analyze, write, narrate, distinguish, state, list, organize, use, anticipate, summarize, evaluate, identify, recognize, interpret, restate, and replace.
			B 3	9th, 10th	Write, analyze.
			B 4	9th, 10th	Develop, select, draft, and plan.
C 3	Oral Communication Skills	S 1	B 1	9th, 10th	Select, use, respond, express.
			B 2	9th, 10th	Demonstrate, restate, explain, modify, exhibit, negotiate, express, summarize, use, identify, analyze, compile, create, negotiate, exhibit, and evaluate.
C 4	Formal and Lexical Aspects of Language	S 1	B 1	9th, 10th	Use, recognize.
		S 2	B 1	9th, 10th	Illustrate, use, examine, deduce, analyze, understand, explore, examine, recognize, and identify.
		S 3	B 1	9th, 10th	Demonstrate, apply, recognize, illustrate, identify, classify, form, and use.
			B 2	9th, 10th	Apply, illustrate, recognize, and Express.
			B 3	9th, 10th	Analyze, classify, identify, use, and recognize.
C 5	Appropriate Ethical and Social Development	S 1	B 1	9th, 10th	
			B 2	9th, 10th	
			B 3	9th, 10th	
				9th, 10th	

Table 6 shows competencies, standards, and benchmarks-wise students' learning outcomes SLO level of assessment design with the help of action words used considering Bloom's Taxonomy. The action verb level intended for SLOs is displayed in the table above. The verbosity of the words revealed the assessment level. The following table's explanation shows that most of the action verbs used for SLOs fall within the first three stages of the cognitive domain of Bloom's taxonomy. The balanced, moderate-level assessment sought for SLOs is demonstrated by several phrases, albeit they also progress into higher levels.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The study's results are consistent with existing literature. However, several results provided new insight into the body of literature. According to certain important findings, the 2006 Pakistani English curriculum's intended assessment design and language assessment theory differed significantly. The recommended assessment level, type, and assessment procedures and their suitable level for language acquisition need more insight. The research studies emphasized the value of assessment design and all essential components of the curriculum documents. Every part of the curriculum includes assessment design and procedures since learning is impossible without assessment (Oliva & Gordon II, 2012).

The phrase (listening and speaking skills are to be developed in the classroom context P.2)" is the only sentence in the first section of LNC, 2006, explicitly stating the assessment design. As a result, even if it must be mentioned in the official curriculum document, the assessment design will be continuous. A paper-and-pencil test cannot assess speaking, listening, and reading language skills. Every skill must be assessed individually using a continuous assessment process. It implies that the assessment design for these skills must be a continuous assessment procedure. However, unfortunately, there is no suggestion about continuous assessment and portfolio in the English language curriculum of Pakistan. The literature also supports continuous assessment practices. The portfolio is a common assessment in the classroom for several topics, including language arts, music, and arithmetic. One of the most important assessment tools for tracking a student's language improvement over time while teaching English as a Second Language (ESL) is a portfolio (Fox, 2014; Fox & Hartwick, 2011; little, 2009). Portfolios enable you to compile and present various performance data, resulting in a rich and comprehensive picture of each student's achievements (Cheng & Fox, 2017, p. 83) (Carpenter & Ray, 1995, p. 34).

No specific assessment techniques are mentioned in the curriculum documents. Four language skills, listening, speaking, reading, and writing, are quite different and call for specialized instruction in teaching methods and assessment techniques. The curriculum developers do not outline particular methods or procedures for teaching and assessing each skill. Amazingly, the curriculum developers advised writing exams for correctly utilizing English in various circumstances without considering assessment procedures. Due to a lack of resources, it was decided that recorded cassettes could not be used for

the listening and speaking skills assessment during the initial stage of curriculum development (p. 2). It demonstrates that the cassette recorder was viewed as a single source for the development assessment of speaking and listening. The document indicates that the same SLOs are suggested for classes 9 and 10, notwithstanding the statement on (page. 3) that the learning outcomes for students were established gradually. This section does not mention any assessment procedures.

Competencies, benchmarks, and standards

The second and third sections of the curriculum document envisioned standards, benchmarks, and SLOs were phrased in a way that indicated the level of assessment. The curriculum's competencies are unclear; the competency "reading and thinking skills" are designed to cover two different thanking and reading skills. Similarly, oral communication covers different natures of listening (receptive) skills and speaking (productive) skills (P.10). There should be specific language competencies supported for assessment practices. Speaking and writing are productive skills, whereas listening, reading, and speaking are receptive skills, according to the researcher Green (2013). To develop each of these skills, particular teaching and assessment procedures are required (Green, 2021, p. 98). As shown in Bloom's taxonomy of verbs, the higher and lower-level assessment plans are illustrated by the action verbs employed for the three objectives. These ideas can be applied to creating study strategies, lesson plans, tests, and textbook preparation. These expressions suggest the level of assessment even in the absence of explicitly stated assessment guidelines. As seen throughout the study, most of the action verbs employed for the standard fall into the first three cognitive domain stages of Bloom's taxonomy. Because the action verbs utilized for this purpose fall under the lower level of Bloom's taxonomy cognitive domain, as shown in tables, most of the standards, benchmarks, and SLOs for English language skill development in the national curriculum of Pakistan, 2006 are low-level. Kakar (2023) offered a similar example.

The action verbs "discover," "understand," and "comprehension" were used (C1, S1). Beginning with the term "will," which neither specifies the student's activity nor the assessment, the standards set the stage for both. The terms "read," "analyze," and "relate" from the second standard may also be used in the assessment process (P.10). Even if the meaning of these statements concerning the assessment method is unclear. Regarding the formulation of objectives, teaching techniques, teaching strategies, and instruction on the one hand and assessment practices on the other, the statements of both standards are unclear. For (C2, S1), the terms "produce," "academic writing," and "creative writing" are suggested when developing assessment procedures. However, the standard's wording is ambiguous and appears to be aims rather than standards. Since the word "will" did not represent any degree of assessment, the development methods for this standard will be challenging. Furthermore, the terms "used" and "communication" from (C3 S1) share a similar character and can be used for assessment. The standard statement, however, specifies that speaking is only covered in oral communication competency (p. 10). Additionally, it used the word "will," and assessment indications are missing. Similar terms, like "articulate" and "use," are also used in (C4, S1, and S3) (p.

10). (C4, S2) lacks any assessment indications and is also vague. However, an action verb cannot indicate the assessment technique (C 5, S1). In essence, all standards are developed using the word "will," which does not specify assessment design or level, and they are all established to meet those aims. There is no standard for listening, although speaking and listening are both parts of the "Oral communication" competency. This exemplifies the low level of the assessment strategy and the low caliber of the standards. The literature indicated that the standard must be higher in level. The idea of "Standards" gained popularity and impact in the 1990s by supporting specific "high-level" student objectives (McMillan, 2017, p.47). The benchmarks are subtypes of standards, and the standards themselves must include higher levels like synthesis and evaluation as SLOs. The benchmarks, SLOs, learning strategies, rules, and assessment techniques are believed to be low if the standards are low. It demonstrates that the curriculum writers should have prioritized the assessment strategy in this section. The language in the benchmark is higher than in the standards (Kakar, 2023). The standards are used to develop textbooks, test items, instructional strategies, and classroom questioning. Furthermore, it guides the whole instructional process, including assessment, so it must be clear and higher level in nature.

The alignment between competency standards and benchmarks is discussed in section three of LNC, 2006. This section explains the benchmarks for all grades in a clustered fashion. For assessing and evaluating reading comprehension of the materials/content covered, the developers of the first competency and standard suggested written assignments (p. 11). In contrast to performance assessment, formative, and continuous assessment, the assessment design envisioned in the curriculum for developing reading and Thinking is evaluative in the written test. Most of the benchmarks' phrasing falls under a higher order of the cognitive domain of Bloom's taxonomy. Comparatively clearer than standards are the benchmark's declaration. Additionally, it is said that reading and writing are related. Thus, written examinations should be used to develop and evaluate them appropriately (p. 13). The curriculum's authors argued that despite the lack of resources and improper testing environments for oral communication skills, it was explicitly included due to its significance (p. 14).

"It is acknowledged that presently all schools might not have the requisite resources and testing conditions appropriate for formal testing of oral communication skills. However, realizing the importance of these skills, these have been included explicitly in the curriculum".

It was clear from this that the assessment design is summative, but the developer claims that this will aid teachers in implementing formative assessment strategies for the development of these skills and direct school administrators regarding the management of necessary resources for the testing of these skills (P. 14). In the benchmarks of competency for "Oral Communication Skills," listening is entirely neglected. Kakar (2023) supported the stance.

Student Learning Outcomes (SLOs)

Student learning outcomes SLOs are quite specific and display the degree of class-based learning. The three Cs of the SLO's statement are content, context, and command words. For the 9th and 10th grades, the National Curriculum of English Language, 2006 SLOs are developed in clusters. Most of the SLOs' statements lack coherence and are not composed of a single notion, making it impossible to effectively conduct the assessment (Kakar, 2023). The curriculum document shows that the SLOs are developed objectively, and it also finds that SLOs are broken up into sections that are all related by a single action word. As statements lacking action words or vague action words do not imply the assessment, the assessment design of such SLOs is unclear (p. 97 to 118). Some statements have two or more ideas linked together by the words "and" and "or" but are not in the form of SLOs and therefore do not make the assessment design clear. Such as (--- words, phrases, or sentences -- P. 97) (identify and recognize --P. 97), (read and recognize --- p. 102) (ask and respond --- p.108), (Select and Use --- p. 103), (write and revise -- p.106), (analyze and compare --- p.106), (recognize and use ---113). Some SLOs are not clear, such as (---- by using prior knowledge --- p. 98.) (--- have a general idea of the text ---- p. 98) (Scan to locate in opinion --- p. 98 (--- relate what is read --- P.99) (make the connection between their own lives and characters ---- p. 102), (Develop focus for own writing   ---- page. 107), (---- agree and disagree politely --- p.109,), (join in a group --- p.109), (use the knowledge --- p.113). These SLOs are not measurable because they are ambiguous. The three Cs, content, command words, and context, are not covered by nearly all SLOs, which does not speak to the clarity of assessment design. Although many of the action verbs employed in SLOs can be found in Bloom's taxonomy's first three stages, several can also be found in higher stages, illustrating the balanced and appropriate level of assessment that SLOs aim to achieve. The cognitive domain is broken down into six levels. Each level denotes a more complex cognitive type. The taxonomy's authors think that while the cognitive domain can sometimes be divided into "lower" and "upper" levels, the knowledge level is lower, and all other levels are higher (McMillan, 2017, p. 51).

The Teaching Methodology

In the teaching methodologies section, the curriculum developers suggested that the instructor allow pupils to express themselves in writing after mastering spoken communication. It is also suggested that reading and writing abilities be emphasized more strongly. There should be individual, couple, and group tasks in the classroom. This section also suggests self- and peer assessments (p. 150). This indicates continuous assessment even though there is no express statement. In addition to creating the syllabus, activities, material, and classroom questioning, quizzes and tests should be administered throughout instruction. The design of the summative assessment is shown. According to the official curriculum document, the four language skills must be developed separately and in tandem for full language development. As teaching strategies, the developer recommended open-ended strategies and questions, oral presentations, the recital of a story, speeches, and reports (p. 150). It is possible to practice continuous and

formative assessment strategies for these sorts of language development. Questioning, discussion, inquiry, cooperative learning, projects, and presentations are only a few of the key techniques that the National Curriculum of 2006 suggests as instructional strategies for language acquisition (p. 152). These plans' contents and assessment methodology both lack adequate clarity. Although they are not addressed or explicitly designed in the official curriculum text, these teaching strategies require assessment practices. Formative and continuous assessment can be employed throughout the learning process because these activities are student-centered and necessary for language development. Laying Cheng and Janna Fox (2017) suggest teaching methods for developing language skills. They claim that the first form is a conversation between a teacher and a student, including conferences, class meetings, group discussions, and whole-class debates. The second category is observational activities, which include group talks, individual projects, practice sessions, and daily tasks. The third task focuses on the student's work, which may include presentations, tests, artwork, self and peer reflections, portfolios, critiques, and reviews (Cheng & Fox, 2017, p. 83).

Assessment

One of the core elements of the curriculum is assessment. The design of the assessments for classes one through twelve is covered in Section 6 of the official curriculum, 2006 document. A skill-based assessment approach is recommended for language assessment and reading and writing tests. The developers advised using two different assessment types. The official curriculum materials include references to formative and summative assessment techniques. It explains how both kinds are essential when designing a method for language assessment. Additionally, it emphasizes the importance of continuous teacher feedback and homework, tests, class discussions, and group discussions as a formative assessment strategy (p.153). The text only refers to the formative assessment methods without further detailing each language skill. The summative assessment, which delivers little benefit to the student and may be done at the end of the term, is the other type, according to the curriculum content. The fact that untrained examiners do not carry out this type of assessment in its genuine spirit is also emphasized (p.153). It also mentions what makes a good test, such as validity, reliability, and practicality, although it is unknown how teachers would interpret this. It is stated that test items must be prepared based on curriculum objectives to assure validity; the significance of assessment ethics is demonstrated by elaborating on the significance of validity, reliability, and practicability (p.153). By concentrating teaching and learning activities on SLOs, the developers highlight the importance of the positive backwash effect. The creators all stress the aim of the assessment, the range of assessment methods, success criteria based on SLOs, and clear procedures for evaluating assessment findings concerning SLOs. In the document, the assessment's goal is described. It is abundantly clear from the written content that the purposes of formative and summative assessment are to advance learning and provide teachers and students with feedback. Data on prior knowledge, student and teacher strengths and weaknesses, instructional strategies, achievement, and progress are all provided through the

assessment (p. 154). However, there is no accurate assessment design to measure student performance and achievement in a language skills assessment.

Techniques for Assessment

The 2006 English National Curriculum in Pakistan specified performance assessments and subjective or objective test types. Additionally, doing student self- and peer-assessments is advised. Additional proposed objective types include multiple-choice, binary-choice, matching items, and interpretive tasks. Short responses, fill-in answers, extended response essays, and semi-objective and subjective test formats are also suggested as assessment methodologies (p. 154). The curriculum developer did not prescribe any method for developing language abilities; instead, they discussed the definitions, significance, and to some extent, the methods of these strategies. Teacher observation, student self-assessment, and peer assessment are suggested to assess student performance (p.156). Although the formative, summative, and continuous assessment procedures are all indicated, this assessment strategy has no grading mechanism. There are no clear guidelines for how teachers should write textbooks or use assessment techniques. It is insufficient to merely provide definitions; educators and textbook authors require explicit guidelines about the assessment design, particularly for promotions and certifications. The developers mentioned no assessment method for improving certain language skills.

Marking tests and grading

The curriculum developer briefly mentions the methods for creating test items and the marking scheme. A rubric for essays and oral presentations by students is part of the National English Language Curriculum 2006. The resources only cover the importance of subjectivity, the marking system, and the objectivity of test items, even though there is a rubric for performance assessment. There is no strategy for the portfolio and little interest in the student assessment system. Because of this, the rubric can only be used to improve learning and not to provide certification. The documents highlight the value of summative assessment as an annual exam for evaluating student achievement and formative assessment for upgrading education. A rubric for distributing grades depends on the students' SLOs and benchmarks. However, there is no accreditation for speaking and listening abilities (p. 157). The curriculum developers mandated that the standards, benchmarks, and students' learning outcomes serve as the foundation for assessment and instruction. The curriculum documents "Competencies, Standards, and Benchmarks should serve as the basis for teaching and assessment" (p. 158). The purpose of the assessment is shown as the comprehension of student development through formative assessment, teachers-made tests, and benchmarks achievement through summative assessment. The inclusion of both objective and subjective items is advised. 40% of the marks are given for application, and 60% are given for knowledge and understanding. The importance of listening and speaking skills are completely ignored (p.158). The research suggests speaking, interview dictation, dialogues, discussions, presentations, and public speaking as speaking and listening assessment strategies. The study also recommends employing tests created by teachers that ask students to give oral

instructions, follow oral instructions, give an oral description, generate summaries of what they hear, answer multiple-choice questions, and take standardized speaking tests. Some listening assessment techniques include taking notes, narrating a tale after listening, peer and self-evaluating student portfolios, and standardized listening tests (Cheng & Fox, 2017, p. 83).

CONCLUSION

After the in-depth critical analyses of the National Curriculum 2006 document, it has been concluded that the anticipated assessment design may be more assertive. The curriculum's competencies are unclear; the competency "reading and thinking skills" are designed to cover two different thanking and reading skills. Similarly, oral communication covers listening (receptive) and speaking (productive) skills. There should be specific language competencies supported for assessment practices. The objectives defined for this curriculum are the standard, benchmark, and SLOs. The investigation shows that benchmarks are higher than standard statements. The statements made by the standards are unclear and unsupported by assessment procedures. The lower-level action verbs employed in standards can be raised to a higher level of Bloom's Taxonomy's cognitive domain. Using higher-order action words,

Similarly, the action verbs employed for benchmarks and SLOs need improvement. SLOs are unclear and designed in clusters for grades 9th and 10th, with more than one action word. It should be developed classes-wise with clear, focused, actionable statements. The curriculum document's assessment section covers only the definitions, categories, and significance of assessments. No proposed framework, process, or design exists to assess language skills. An effective assessment design for every assessment skill needs to be developed. Enhancing the grading system for language skills like speaking, listening, and reading is necessary. While formative, continuous, and performance assessments are important, they should be covered in the assessment section of the curriculum document. The curriculum document must provide specific learning and assessment strategies required for developing each assessment skill.

The research findings would benefit policymakers, curriculum developers, textbook organizers, teachers, assessment conductors, and students in understanding the assessment design for language development and its importance for language skills development. Language curriculum should be revisited and developed considering the importance of every language skill, assessment design, and level of standards, benchmarks, and students' learning outcomes. Standards should be clear and focused. SLOs should be developed class-wise rather than clusters. Continued assessment strategies must be adopted for language skill development. Every language skill should be given appropriate wattage in stacks and due importance. This study was limited to an official document analysis of the curriculum, aiming at the assessment design investigation. Research is needed to understand curriculum developers, assessment experts, teachers, and policy makers' perceptions of assessment design in the curriculum.

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