



## RESEARCH PAPER

### Evaluating the Effectiveness of the Grade 12 English Textbook in Developing Communicative Competence in Muzaffarabad, AJ&K

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## ABSTRACT

This study aims to evaluate the effectiveness of the Grade 12 English textbook prescribed by Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Board of Intermediate Studies to develop Oral communication skills of students in Muzaffarabad, Azad Jammu & Kashmir. The research examines how the textbook fosters key oral communication skills, including pronunciation, speaking, vocabulary, grammar, and real-life-based language use through structured activities. A mixed-method approach was employed using qualitative and quantitative tools including checklist questionnaires and thematic analysis. A sample of 200 students from five different government and private colleges from Muzaffarabad AJ&K was randomly selected. The findings revealed that classrooms and English lessons are largely teacher-centered with textbook taught traditionally limiting students' oral communication skills. Based on the findings, it is recommended to integrate student centered and real-life interaction activities in the textbook and train the teachers in interactive and communicative methods to enhance oral communication skills of students.

## KEYWORDS

Textbook Evaluation, Oral Communication, Interactive Teaching, Communicative Language Skills, English Language Teaching

## Introduction

The current study in this regard focus on Grade 12, Intermediate level college students who are at a critical transition point in their academic and social life. Hence, the majority of students face communicative challenges to engage in educational or social interaction confidently and proficiently. As outlined in the National Curriculum of English, 2006 and textbook objectives students at the Intermediate level (Grade 12) require appropriate communicative competence and abilities to interact in a globalized world and to navigate in social, academic, and professional situations. It was very important to explore the gaps in proficiency and examine the curriculum standards, textbook, and teachers' practices.

The current research focused on how the textbook supports speaking, grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation and real-life language use, especially through tasks like role-playing, group discussions, debates, grammar practices, and dialogues. The evaluation also closely examined the exercises related to vocabulary, grammar, intonation, and pronunciation as a contribution to the holistic development of students' oral communication skills.

The textbook contains exercises related to writing skills, comprehension, and grammar, whereas the instructive methods of teaching do not comply with the methods prescribed by the National Curriculum of English.

Pakistan is an underdeveloped country and the lack of proper training of teachers to use complementary materials along with textbooks and little to no guidance at teachers' end towards students to use materials for language proficiency led to over-reliance on textbooks for studying English. In an economically underprivileged country like Pakistan, textbooks are the only tool for teachers to use for teaching, so is the case for students. Students rely on mere textbooks as the only source of information and learning. For teachers in Pakistan, textbooks are the translation of academic goals and National curriculum objectives (Haq & Haq, 1998; Bednarz, 2004). Taking the notion of achievement in exams or tests is not merely confined to paper/pencil tests, but representative of the student's wider achievement inclusive of his social, emotional, and physical development.

Aftab, et al (2014) investigate how textbooks influence learning experiences and how these materials are rendered the backbone of ELT methodologies. English is taught and learned as a second language in Pakistan, hence opportunities to speak English outside the classroom are uncommon. Students have less exposure to listening and speaking practice inside and outside the classroom. This inhibits students' chances to have real-life practice and thus limits the development of fluency. It is a common observation that classrooms in Muzaffarabad are dominated by teacher-centered methods and less emphasis on real-world practice and competence. Students are underconfident and not assured of their abilities after completing the textbook. The current study aims to fill the gap and assess the impact of textbook on Grade 12 English students and identify the weaknesses and strengths of the textbook.

## **Literature Review**

Learning English as a second language has been the subject of scholarly debate and discussion for decades all over the globe. The current research derives its path through a review of scholarly work done in linguistics to assess and evaluate the efficiency of English textbooks. The research study builds on literature guiding towards understanding the role or efficacy of Textbooks in impacting Students' English language Proficiency, navigating the research landscape through assessing the Alignment of English language activities and educational materials with outlined goals and standards with some research studies revealing the factors affecting socially appropriate use of English.

Here is a brief overview of research to fit the current research study into a wider and global academic context of the significance of evaluation of English textbook keeping a close view of events chronologically and thematically relevant to the current shape of English language teaching particularly in Pakistan.

The academic system of a country is liable to incorporate the English language into the curriculum to better equip the learners with skills and competencies and not merely the content and subject knowledge. This is achieved through a well-planned and thought-out curriculum specially designed for a particular nation (White, 1975). White (1971) highlights the significance of the development of a curriculum and its comprehensiveness and inclusivity of all components like skills, instructions, instructional methods, as well as objectives to better view the strengths and shortcomings of the curriculum in the developmental and implementation stages. Siddiqui (2020) brings to light the state of English as a second language in Pakistan, and how Pakistani students rely solely on English course books to improve their knowledge about the content and learn speaking skills. Improvement and advancement in course books are directly proportional to the improvement and effective implementation of the curriculum in a developing country like Pakistan. McGrath (2002) and Tomlinson (2003) proposed a textbook evaluation framework. These two frameworks incorporate elements of internal evaluation and post-use evaluation to give a comprehensive

overview of not only the content but also assess the effectiveness of the textbook. In this regard, a systematic examination of book objectives, teaching context, instructional design, and the way it incorporates linguistic and cultural elements is conducted. This close investigation is done to assess how well the textbook aligns with the outlined goals and facilitates students at an intermediate level. This framework guides the current study to evaluate textbook at the Grade 12 level and explores whether the prescribed English textbook aligns with the needs of students at an intermediate level.

Shahzad, Saeed, and Imtiaz (2023) examined the coursebook of Grade 8 by the Punjab Textbook Board to assess the four skills of the language using the checklist method of analysis. The study assessed the objectives stated in the textbook and their alignment with the materials and teaching methods. The findings reveal the textbook fulfills all the theoretical, physical, and content requirements required by the learners.

Kausar, et al, (2016) in their study highlight that textbook incorporating exercises and activities based on authentic oral communicative competence result in better communication outcomes. Another study brings to attention a counterargument about textbooks in Pakistan, Syed, et al (2019) argue that textbooks in Pakistan fail to meet learners' requirements and have underdeveloped language quality with a heavy focus on exam patterns and assessments. Careful selection and evaluation of textbooks is therefore very crucial to language development and proficiency.

There are two sides to the situation with two extreme ends on the scale regarding the choice of the use of textbooks. On one end of the scale, textbooks are thought of as labor-saving tools for teachers to help them save time and effort to prepare materials all the time. On the other hand, the other end renders textbooks as rubbish skillfully marketed for stakeholders, publishers, and authors' gain (Brumfit, 1979). Tickoo (2003) argues against the constraint textbook to adapt materials to the suitability and needs of individual learners. (Garinger, 2001) cautions teachers against the restrictions textbooks impose and urges them to use already published materials as far as they do not come in the way of creativity and systematic and apt language teaching. At the same time, it is believed that textbooks are an invaluable asset to both the teacher and the learner. For him, textbooks provide models for writing and grammar practice and exercises. Textbooks are considered indispensable for teachers and learners to provide suitable syllabi as per Tickoo (2003). Lammie (1999) comments that often the textbooks being in use in the classroom ultimately become the curriculum. Textbooks are scarcely used for any positive reasons save for time and a labor-saving way for teachers. Another factor indicates that not all teachers are trained to design materials for individual students' needs. Hence textbooks at large provide ease and a common roadmap for all the learners within the suggested curriculum. Aftab et al (2014) conclude the research by triangulation of data and findings by reinforcing the belief that textbooks of English fail to meet the needs as well as the interests of the learners. The incompatibility of textbooks combined with that of learning goals i.e. fluency and skills in the target language hampers effective learning and subsequent communication. The reviewed literature illustrates how the use of communicative exercises promotes and develops the communication skills of the learners and how the absence of these oral communication practices impacts learning.

The research shows textbooks are the most frequently used tool to navigate through lessons and activities to further their teaching practices. Textbooks are the most widely used and most conventional tool to implement curriculum goals in developing countries like Pakistan as expressed by Mahmood (2010). Textbook use is a regular practice to implement curriculum goals and lesson practices by almost all the teachers in schools at any level due to the factors already being discussed above. All this discussion about the use and heavily

employed textbooks reveals another thing; textbooks have several advantages, as they provide a roadmap to both learners and teachers. Textbooks serve as a guide for new teachers and potential learning for learners, “a tool for regular students” and “a powerful media for teaching and learning” (Govt. of Pakistan, 2000, p.23). Since Pakistani students are at a loss to communicate in English as they lack communicative competence, thus a thorough evaluation in the context of Language textbooks in Pakistan are conducted. Aftab et al (2014) highlight varied shortcomings in the research and pinpoint an urgent need to address the selection of textbook exercises to enhance the oral competence of ESL learners in Pakistan.

Hence there are more studies in the Pakistani context that evaluate the efficacy of textbook for oral competence and count for the factors of any misaligned goals and targets. Syed, Quraishi, and Kazi (2019) evaluate the Grade VIII English textbook endorsed by the Punjab Textbook Board to highlight the imbalance between oral proficiency skills and their meaningful application thus hindering the communicative competence of students. The study while using a qualitative approach claims that the textbook does not cater to the learners’ future academic goals and professional requirements. The research study argues that several activities do not contribute to the development of oral communication of learners.

Younis and Shah (2022) conducted a study to explore the impact of textbook taught at the secondary level to investigate linguistic competence, sociolinguistic competence, and pragmatic competence among the learners. The study employed qualitative descriptive approaches using the CEFR test as a data analysis tool and revealed that several competencies like discourse competence and functional competence are included in the textbook. However, some essential competencies like communication competence are absent in the textbook. Thus, textbook analysis reveals that there is a lack of communication competence

## Research Methodology

The present study involves the following steps that show the overall methodology used in this research:

### RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

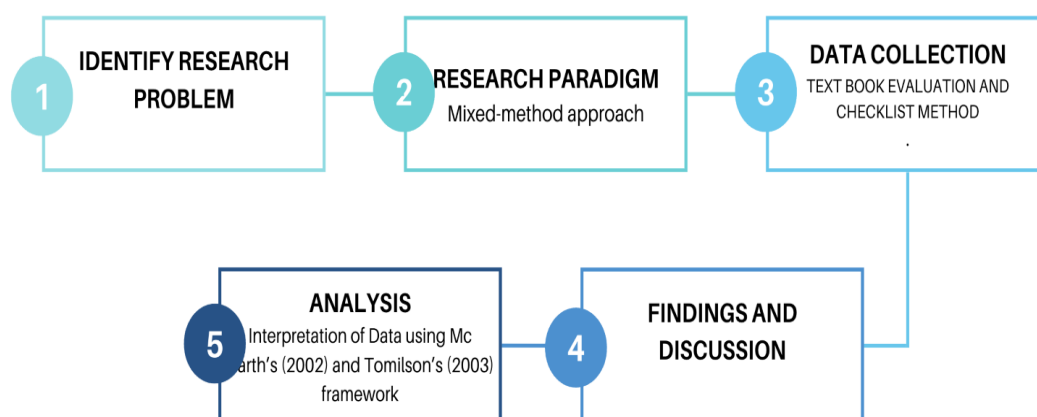


Fig 1 Overall research methodology used in the study

## **Research Design**

The research employed a mixed-method approach using both the qualitative and quantitative design to collect and analyze the data. The data is mainly gathered from selected case study of Grade 12 students studying at colleges in Muzaffarabad AJ& K.

## **Population**

The population formed was based on students attending five different colleges (public and private) in Muzaffarabad. Everyone attending the college, at Grade 12 gets an equal chance to be selected as a sample. The current study chose smaller data sets to study detailed below.

## **Sample Size**

A sample of 200 students was formed and was derived from five different colleges of Muzaffarabad, state of AJ&K including both the private and government-run colleges. The researcher visited all the selected colleges to collect data for checklist questionnaires. This was based on convenience and giving equal chance to participate in the research. The researcher ensures that sampling for the current study is representative of the population, which is important for making inferences about the population based on the sample data. random sampling is chosen as this yields better outcomes and is more representative of the population.

## **Data Collection Methods**

### **Instruments**

The current research explores the impact of English textbook on the communicative competence of Grade 12 students. The instrument used for this study was a checklist questionnaire. This study draws on combining theoretical and practical frameworks using McGrath (2002) and Tomlinson (2003) for evaluating textbooks and another framework by Cunningsworth (1995) for analyzing the participants' responses obtained through checklist questionnaires. The textbook is analyzed systematically for its thematic contents, oral communication activities, and grammar practices and drills. These activities are analyzed thematically to study their' alignment with the National Curriculum of English standards to support communicative competence.

The analysis involves a multi-stage evaluation process and combining it with Cunningsworth's (1995) evaluation framework to check the proficiency of students and the impact of English textbook on improving students' oral communication.

Quantitative analysis is also integrated to study students' responses and perceptions regarding their proficiency in oral communication. This is done through gauging their proficiency on a Likert scale of 1 to 5 using SPSS statistical analysis and presented in percentages through tables. Hence the evaluation process of this research was composed of two stages: close examination of the textbook through exploring various exercises in the textbook and the second stage of the research study is an assessment of impact of the textbook on the development of the oral communication skills of the students.

## RESEARCH FRAMEWORK

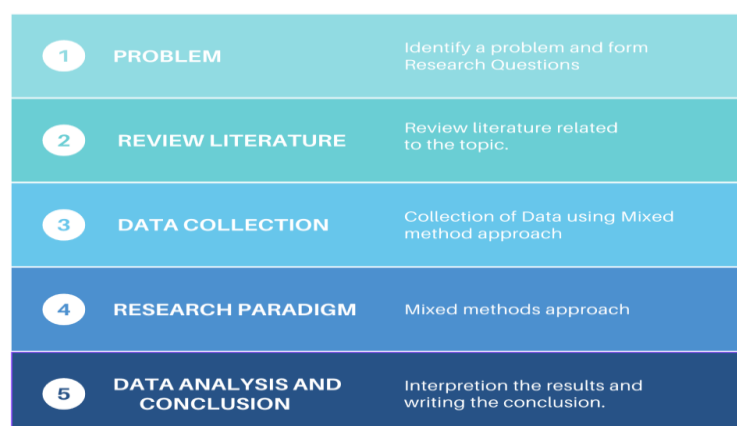


Fig 2 Research Framework of the study

### Reliability and Validity

The reliability of the research is established by incorporating well-established frameworks already being used in research of similar nature. For the detailed assessment of the Grade 12 English textbook, two frameworks were adopted and integrated as proposed by McGrath (2002) and Tomlinson (2003) along with Cunningsworth's (1995) checklist. These two frameworks incorporate elements of internal evaluation and post-use evaluation to give a comprehensive overview of not only the content but also meaningfully assess the effectiveness of the textbook. SPSS analysis is also done to ensure the validity of the findings of the research.

### Statistics

The students' self-assessment is evaluated by a structured questionnaire drawing from Alan Cunnings' checklist for language evaluation. The questionnaire comprised 25 items adapted from Alan Cunnings' checklist to assess students' perceptions about the oral communication activities included in the Grade 12 English textbook as specified by the KPK Board, Peshawar. SPSS statistical tool was used for data analysis. Descriptive statistics present tabulated information in terms of means and percentages obtained through students' responses on the Likert scale. This analysis provides an objective understanding of students on the effectiveness of oral communication in the Grade 12 English curriculum.

### Ethical considerations

Ethical guidelines were completely adhered to. Participants were informed of the purpose of the research study and their anonymity was assured. Consent has been taken from the college authorities and the participants. It was ensured that data derived from the participants would be solely used for this current study.

### Results and Discussion

The current textbook evaluation reveals various activities support to engage and promote learning. Exercises like pronunciation drills, intonation practice, and sentence parsing activities help in achieving linguistic accuracy. Exercises on idioms, synonyms/antonyms, and verb usage enrich vocabulary development. The texts comprise a range of poems, one novel (abridged), and cultural narratives that allow exposure to different literary styles. The cultural representation in the book balances local with global themes. It celebrates Pakistani culture through units based on tourists and national figures. The

textbook also includes broader issues like racism and colonialism to represent universal and diverse values. Moreover, the textbook contains stories of Chinese and Nigerian folklores which add a sense that the textbook aims to create global awareness; therefore, it can be maintained that the textbook contains cross-cultural appreciation through portraying issues like cultural diversity, folklore, racism, national heroes, and the likes.

The skills embraced in the textbook include vocabulary, sentence parsing, oral communication, thinking skills, comprehension skills, and forms of verbs. The internal evaluation of the textbook and its contents reveals how these skills are integrated to help students perform better. Here is a breakdown of these skills and their occurrence in the textbook

### **Oral Communication skills**

It has been found while analyzing the textbook that Oral communication exercises form a major part of the textbook and can be found in all 19 units of the book. It has been found that activities like role-plays, group discussions, debates, and dialogues impact the learning of listening and speaking in all positive ways. Since each of the 19 units integrates oral communication with regular practice thus it boosts a student's confidence and fluency when speaking English.

### **Vocabulary**

The textbook focuses on vocabulary building as it is evident from the textbook reading that vocabulary exercises are provided in units 1, 8, 9, and 13, which cover different themes. It is unveiled through evaluation that challenges the students face are things like critically examining clues, making inferences of meaning, and associating words with roots that are mostly Latin or Greek. For instance, "patriotism" is derived from the Latin word "patria," which means fatherland, while "decapitate" is from the Latin word "caput," which means head. Such associations are an intensification of knowledge in terms of word etymology.

### **Parsing the sentences**

Units 5, 6, and 14 of the current textbooks include parsing exercises that help students build skills with a way of breaking down sentences to allow for analysis of sentence structures/parts. These help learners locate the grammatical components comprising subjects, predicates, clauses, and phrases. The evaluation unveils that this exercise trains a student to break down any given sentence into smaller and more manageable parts for analysis purposes. Such exercises lay the groundwork for even more complex grammar ideas as it teaches the students how to recognize sentence patterns, then gradually develops a systematic approach into the analysis and formulation of complicated sentences.

### **Synonyms/Antonyms**

Evaluation of the textbook discovers that exercises on exploring synonyms and antonyms are embedded in Units 1, 2, 4, 18, and 19. These exercises and topics aim to help learners in improving word-choice, because they are provided with skills to build an understanding of relationships of meanings of words or nuances between the similar meanings

### **Comprehension Questions**

The evaluation of textbook identifies comprehension questions as the repeated exercise throughout the whole textbook, keeping students constantly engaged with the

reading material. These comprehension exercises focus on making students analyze texts and infer and interpret meanings. The comprehension exercises typify the focus of the textbook on developing comprehension skills that are not limited to surface reading.

## Grammar

The textbook evaluation and close examination discover that grammatical exercises are contextually interwoven throughout the 19 units of the textbook. These exercises include activities integrating use of conditional sentences, transitional words, compound and complex sentences, tenses, direct and indirect speech, among other sentence types. It has been demonstrated that each unit is mainly focused on some specific aspects of grammar and not all the above practices. The grammar activities as well as other activities like root word identification (morphology), intonation (pronunciation), Idioms and phrases are incorporated in the textbook to have a holistic approach towards learning skills to use in real world situations.

## Evaluation of the effectiveness of oral communication skills among Grade 12 students

This section utilized a quantitative approach to assess the impact of oral communication activities within the Grade 12 English textbook as suggested by the National curriculum for language learners in Muzaffarabad, Azad Jammu & Kashmir (AJ&K). A total of 200 students were involved in the study, with the sample distributed equally across the four colleges selected: Government Post Graduate College (with an equal ratio from Government Post Graduate College for Boys and Government Post Graduate College for Women), two Intermediate Private Colleges, and an Intermediate Science College. The results obtained from the questionnaire were categorized into four key themes: improvement in speaking skills, understanding academic targets, enhancing confidence levels, and achieving goals in speaking. These four key themes offer valuable insights into the effectiveness of oral communication activities in the Grade 12 English curriculum. These themes allow insight into the extent to which the curriculum emphasizes to develop of fundamental linguistic skills, including speaking and listening, both considered essential for effective communication. Together, these themes guide the assessment of the impact of the curriculum; inform improvements, and help tailor teaching methods to better meet the needs of students in language learning.

## Impact on Speaking Skills

The results from the checklist revealed that only 15% of the participants believed the oral communication activities of the Grade 12 English curriculum to be able to effectively enhance their capacity for speaking, with strong agreement at a respective level of 5% and 10%. However, no one strongly disagreed with the statement, indicating that even though some may not view the activities as effective, they do not view them as counterproductive either.

**Table 1**  
**Impact on Speaking Skills**

| Response Category | Percentage (%) |
|-------------------|----------------|
| Strongly Agree    | 5.0            |
| Agree             | 10.0           |
| Neutral           | 50.0           |
| Disagree          | 35.0           |
| Strongly Disagree | 0.0            |

## Understanding Academic Targets

The result from the checklist demonstrates that 22% of students believe that the oral communication activities of the Grade 12 English curriculum were effective in helping them understand the academic targets; 8% of respondent claim that they strongly agreed, and 14% respondents expressed "agreed". A large proportion of respondents making the number to 43% was neutral in expressing their response; this might be a case of uncertainty.

Hence it reveals that even if these exercises do not link positive associations with most of the students; they are least found mismatched with their academic orientation.

**Table 2**  
**Understanding Academic Targets**

| Response Category | Percentage (%) |
|-------------------|----------------|
| Strongly Agree    | 8              |
| Agree             | 14             |
| Neutral           | 43             |
| Disagree          | 35             |
| Strongly Disagree | 0              |

## Enhancing Confidence Levels

The results from the checklist indicated that only 15% of the students reflected that the oral communication activities in the Grade 12 English textbook have effectively enhanced their confidence levels. This included 6.7% who strongly agreed and 8.3% who merely agreed. A significant portion of respondents, 40.8%, remained neutral in expressing their satisfaction with the textbook content and its exercises, manifesting uncertainty about these activities if they helped them build confidence in speaking.

**Table 3**  
**Enhancing Confidence Levels**

| Response Category | Percentage (%) |
|-------------------|----------------|
| Strongly Agree    | 6.7            |
| Agree             | 8.3            |
| Neutral           | 40.8           |
| Disagree          | 44.2           |
| Strongly Disagree | 0              |

## Achieving Goals in Speaking

The results from the checklist pointed out that only 23.5% of the students expressed the view that the activities of oral communication in the Grade 12 English curriculum were efficient in helping them meet the goals set for speaking and 4.3% strongly agreed while 19.2% only agreed. The findings further reveal that a considerable section, 23.3% of respondents was neutral.

This suggests that although the activities are not claimed as highly effective by the respondents, they are at least not considered entirely irrelevant to the speaking goals of students.

**Table 4**  
**Achieving Goals in Speaking**

| Response Category | Percentage (%) |
|-------------------|----------------|
| Strongly Agree    | 4.3            |
| Agree             | 19.2           |
| Neutral           | 23.3           |
| Disagree          | 53.3           |

Strongly Disagree

0

The Grade 12 English textbook includes oral communication exercises intended to improve speaking skills, align with academic targets, boost students' confidence, and help achieve speaking goals. However, it was observed that the heavy reliance on traditional, teacher-centered methods severely limited students' engagement with these activities. Although the textbook contains exercises specifically intended for the development of communication among students, the absence of instructive and student-centered teaching strategies left most students passive in communication skills. This hinders their efforts to engage in speaking practices and lack proficiency. This accounts for why nearly half of the students provided neutral or negative responses regarding their level of engagement in the oral activity.

The textbook evaluation manifests that textbook exercises for oral communication are linked to the aimed academic goals of the learners. However, the teachers' concerns were mainly about teaching content with minimal efforts directed at connecting the exercises to the student's progress in academics. In consequence, the students could not develop an understanding of how the textbook activities can strengthen their academic goals. This was mirrored in the survey, with a high percentage of students remaining neutral or disagreeing about whether the activities helped them understand what they were supposed to know. Similarly, the evaluation of the results indicates that despite the textbook's emphasis on building students' confidence through speaking exercises, the absence of interactive opportunities in the classroom such as public speaking and role-plays manifests that the opportunities in the textbook remained underutilized. The survey reveals this shortcoming, as a large percentage of the students indicated that the activities did not help them boost their confidence.

## Conclusion

The analysis of the Grade 12 English textbook reveals both its strengths and weaknesses in promoting the effective acquisition of language skills. A well-structured approach integrating linguistic skills with cultural awareness and critical thinking provides an overall foundation for language development in the current textbook.

However, the study has pointed out major shortcomings in the way oral communication skills are practiced. The lessons are more teacher-centred and instruction oriented leaving less room for learners to practice textbook exercises. This results in misaligned curriculum goals and instructional strategies that lead to low student engagement and limited proficiency of learners in oral communication, as revealed through students' feedback.

## Recommendations

To overcome these challenges and mismatched curriculum goals and instructional practices, a shift toward more dynamic, interactive teaching methods is essential. Teachers need to integrate inquiry-based, communicative tasks that mirror real-life language use to better align with the National Curriculum's objectives. Fostering a more engaging learning environment allows students to fully develop their language skills, refining communicative competence, so that they are well prepared for the challenges of the ever-increasing globalized world. It is thus possible for Grade 12 English students to realize their full potential in communication by not only fostering academic success but also cultivating a much wider objective of communicative competence.

Based on the findings of this study, there are several avenues for future research to address the issues identified concerning the proficiency in English language of students including examining textbook impact in other regions of Pakistan, as well as studying how curriculum reforms can be more effectively implemented in the classroom. Research can also be elaborated to find cultural and linguistic factors affecting the communication.

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